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This paper was originally submitted as a dissertation in completion of the requirements for the degree Masters in Global Migration. The views expressed in this paper are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of UCL's Migration Research Unit.

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UCL Migration Research Unit Working Papers

No. 2017/4

**Escalator Regions in the
21st Century: Examining the
relationship between social
mobility and internal migration
within England and Wales
during recent decades**

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between internal migration and social mobility has been encapsulated by Fielding's (1992) escalator theory of social mobility. The theory comprises of three components: stepping on, riding up and stepping off. The first relates to the in-migration of young adults. The second requires that migrants and non-migrants engage in intra-generational upward social mobility. The third states that those that leave do so toward the end of their working life having experienced social mobility and entered the highest socioeconomic positions. Research has positioned the London-Southeast as the best performing escalator region in England and Wales during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.

However, the evidence base for the theory has yet to extend to the 2000s, and so the paper aims to examine the performance of regional escalators in England and Wales during the first decade of the 21st Century. In addition, the paper also compares the performance of the escalator in the London-Southeast in the 2000s with the 1990s to determine the impact of various phenomena that took place during the 2000s. The analysis utilises annually released internal migration statistics and the Office for National Statistics Longitudinal Study of England and Wales (ONS-LS) to examine the three components of the escalator theory.

The findings conclude that the London-Southeast was England and Wales' dominant escalator region during the 2000s and that as an escalator it functioned better in the 2000s than in the 1990s. More specifically, the region experienced a net gain of and was the most popular destination for highly-educated young adults. The London-Southeast was also the region whereby migrants and non-migrants had the greatest chance of experiencing upward social mobility and entering the service class. Those that stepped off the London-Southeast escalator were also slightly older and further along the life course than out-migrants from other regions, but were still highly represented by those in the early and middle stages of their working lives and those who were in high socioeconomic positions. Finally, the London-Southeast was as popular in the 2000s as it was in the 1990s among young adults. However,

the latter decade saw a greater share of in-migrants entering the service class, and also a greater share of out-migrants represented in the service class than the earlier decade, demonstrating that the escalator had strengthened.

WORD COUNT: 11 811

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The main dataset used in this paper is not openly available for public use. Therefore, the permission of the Office for National Statistics to use the Longitudinal Study is gratefully acknowledged, as is the help provided by Chris Marshall, Rachel Stunchbury and Wei Xun of the Centre for Longitudinal Study Information & User Support (CeLSIUS). CeLSIUS is supported by the ESRC Census of Population Programme (Award Ref: ES/K000365/1). I alone am responsible for the interpretation of the data.

Gratitude is also extended to my supervisor Jurgen Essletzbichler for the discussions we had early on during the process and the valuable suggestions he made throughout, and to Adam Dennett for providing me with the opportunity to briefly discuss my topic in person with Tony Fielding and Tony Champion, on whose research this paper is based.

Finally, thanks go to my family for providing me with the support, motivation and encouragement that has kept me going throughout.

Table of Contents

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES	1
INTRODUCTION	2
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	5
The Social Mobility Escalator Theory	5
Extending the Escalator Theory	6
The Performance of Regional Escalators in England and Wales	7
Escalator Regions in International Contexts	9
BACKGROUND TO THE 2000s	12
Economic Processes.....	12
Demographic Processes	13
Social Processes	15
DATA AND METHODOLOGY.....	17
Data.....	17
Methodology	19
RESULTS.....	22
Escalator Regions in the 2000s	22
Stepping On.....	22
Stepping Off	27
Comparing the London-Southeast’s Escalator in the 1990s and the 2000s	30
Stepping On.....	30
Riding-Up.....	31
Stepping-Off	33
DISCUSSION	35
CONCLUSION	39
REFERENCE LIST	41

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Figure 1– Regional net migration of 16-24 year olds in the years ending June 2002, June 2005 and June2011..... 22

Table 1 – Share of regional migrants aged 16-24 who arrived in each region in the years to June 2002, June 2005 and June 2011..... 23

Figure 2 – Proportion of highly-educated regional migrants aged 20-25 moving to each region between 2001 and 2011..... 24

Table 2 – Regional transition rates for different migrant groups between 2001 and 2011..... 26

Table 3 - Characteristics in 2001 of those migrating out of each region between 2001 and 2011 (% within each characteristic)..... 28/29

Table 4 – Share of migrants aged 16-25 from each region that entered the London-Southeast between each intercensal period..... 31

Table 5 - Transition rates of those who migrated to the London-Southeast from all other regions between 1991 and 2001 and 2001 and 2011..... 32

Table 6 - Characteristics of those leaving the London-Southeast in each intercensal period (% of those in each characteristic)..... 33

INTRODUCTION

Social mobility, although a complex concept, appears to have captured political imaginations in recent times. Entering political discourse through the interests of Tony Blair's New Labour government (Goldthorpe, 2013), it was procured and prioritised by the coalition government who published a detailed strategy within a year of forming a government (HM Government, 2010, HM Government, 2011). This has continued into the current Conservative government, who set up the Social Mobility Commission within months of gaining power. Clearly, there is significant interest in understanding how the life chances of people in Britain can be improved.

Internal migration has been championed as one means. Extensive research has uncovered a link between a greater propensity to experience upward social mobility and internal migration. This relationship has a well-documented history, encapsulated by the escalator theory conceived by Tony Fielding in the early 1990s (Fielding, 1992). Links between migration and upward social mobility have since been shown to occur in the 1970s (Fielding, 1992), the 1980s (Fielding, 1995), and the 1990s (Champion et al., 2014). However, evidence from the first decade of the new millennium has yet to be uncovered. Data unavailability has been the primary reason for this. Testing regional escalators and applying the escalator theory is most commonly achieved through an analysis of the Office for National Statistics Longitudinal Study of England and Wales (ONS-LS), a dataset that uses Census information to trace a large sample of people every ten years. On December 1st 2013, the ONS-LS encompassing the update for the 2011 Census was published, allowing for an investigation into the prevalence of social mobility in the 2000s (Lynch et al., 2015). The first aim of this paper, therefore, is to extend the evidence base of the escalator theory to the 2000s by examining the relationship between social mobility and spatial mobility (migration) and the performance of regional escalators in the intercensal period between 2001 and 2011. However, processes such as these do not occur in temporal isolation. There were a number of events and processes that occurred during the 2000s that have the potential to disrupt the workings of the escalator and the ability to engage in social mobility, such as the Great Recession and the rise in immigration. In order to understand whether these changes can influence the relationship between social and spatial mobility within the UK it is vital that regional escalators are compared between decades. This follows into the second aim.

The study will compare the performance of the London-Southeast's escalator in the 2000 with its performance in the 1990s. The London-Southeast has been the dominant regional escalator in England and Wales since at least the 1970s, and is therefore well suited as a monitor of any significant changes. More specifically, the study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. How did the escalator components in the regions of England and Wales perform in the intercensal period between the 2001 and 2011 Censuses?
 - 1.1. Which region received the greatest number of young, educated adults in the 2000s?
 - 1.2. Is there evidence that those who migrated during the decade were more likely to achieve upward social mobility compared to those that did not?
 - 1.3. Which region was most successful at allowing both its migrant and non-migrant populations to engage in upward social mobility during the decade?
 - 1.4. In which region did the characteristics of those who out-migrated best match the criteria for the stepping-off component of the escalator?

2. How did the three components of the escalator theory compare in the London-Southeast between the 1990s and 2000s?
 - 2.1. Were there differences in the in-flows of young adults between the two intercensal periods?
 - 2.2. Did the London-Southeast facilitate the upward mobility of migrants and non-migrants in the 2000s to a greater or lesser extent than in the 1990s?
 - 2.3. How did the characteristics of those leaving the London-Southeast compare between the two decades?

The remainder of this paper consists of six additional sections. Firstly, an appraisal of previous literature is carried out. This provides an evaluation of the escalator theory, examines research that has sought to extend it and focuses on its empirical base. Secondly, the background to the 2000s in Great Britain is explored in order to understand how the various processes that occurred had the potential to disrupt the workings of regional escalators. Following this, the data and methodology used in answering the research questions are described, evaluated and justified. The fourth section presents the results of

the analysis and answers the questions posed above, while the fifth discusses their significance and importance within the wider context. The final section provides some concluding remarks and provides suggestions for further research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Social Mobility Escalator Theory

Tony Fielding originally proposed, justified and applied the social mobility escalator theory in explaining the relationship between intra-generational social mobility and internal migration in 1992 (Fielding, 1992). The 'escalator theory', as it will henceforth be referred to, has become one of the most established and well-versed theories in literature examining spatial differences in career and societal trajectories. The theory includes three parts: stepping onto, riding up and stepping off the escalator. The first component relates to the internal movements of young adults whereby regions experience a net gain of individuals entering higher education and the labour market for the first time. Those who have relocated to the region, along with those native to the region, subsequently need the opportunities to engage in upward mobility if they are to meet the second criteria and ride up the escalator. This usually occurs by upward movements in the labour and housing markets through wage increases, promotions and housing upgrades. The third component specifies that a region needs to be characterised by the out-migration of those who are well-established in the labour markets and those coming to the end of their working lives. As will be discussed in more detail below, the region combining London and the South East (the London-Southeast) has been established as the principal escalator region in England and Wales.

One of the major benefits is its ability to help explain why individuals with similar education and work outputs, but living in different places, experienced different occupational pathways (Fielding, 1992, Champion, 2012). It stems from research demonstrating that employment outcomes, including job attainment, unemployment length and attitudes to work, were clearly biased in favour of school-leavers in the South compared to those in the North of England, even with social class accounted for (Ashton et al., 1988, Fielding, 1992). Nonetheless, the original theory, and its application in empirical research, does have its critiques, stemming from both Fielding himself and beyond. Champion et al (2014) highlight how it has led to the spatial fetishism within some academic research whereby the focus is on one region, for example the London-Southeast. This is demonstrated in the work of Findlay et al (2009), who focus on the occupational outcomes of Scots in the London-Southeast, and White (2003), who examined Scottish and Welsh-born

migrants in London. A second critique is one posed by Fielding (1992) in that the theory fails to capture the complex ways in which migration and social mobility interact. This is somewhat the fault of the data used in examining the escalator function because it does not allow one to appreciate when upward (or downward) social mobility occurs in relation to migration. The onus has been placed on research undertaken in the two decades since the publication of Fielding's original paper to extend and alter the escalator theory in response to these critiques.

Extending the Escalator Theory

In answer to the oversight of the complex relationship between social and spatial mobility, various researchers have attempted to add to the escalator theory. The introduction of elevator and traveller movements by Findlay et al (2009) is one example. For them, there are two pathways that lead to upward occupational (social) mobility within an escalator region: escalator movements and elevator movements. In the first instance, occupational progression occurs because an individual is required to migrate onto a regional escalator in order to obtain a higher status position, and therefore spatial and social mobility occur simultaneously. The second instance is more sequential. Initially, relocation to the escalator region does not bring about social mobility and is thus termed a traveller movement, a process most commonly seen among university graduates who move in search of their first job. Only once an individual is embedded in the labour market and has secured employment does upward mobility occur in an elevator movement (Findlay et al., 2009). Overall, this adaptation of the escalator theory serves it well by addressing the original's inability to identify some of the different means through which social and spatial mobilities interact.

Nevertheless, even this appreciation of the complex trajectories of social and spatial mobilities is arguably too constricted. It suffers from the same narrow-minded focus that has plagued economic migration theory in that it does not consider the broader context within which migration decisions take place. To an extent, this is the fault of the approach to the escalator theory and its reliance on quantitative data analysis. Conradson and Latham (2005) are one of the few to examine the escalator theory with a qualitative research design.

Through extensive interviews with New Zealand university graduates living in London, they were able to develop a four-point typology based on what pulled individuals to London. While they inevitably recognise the pull of the London escalator in career progression, migrations motivated by cultural determinates are also uncovered, in line with more general moves away from purely economic explanations. For some, social mobility opportunities are trumped by the experience of living and working abroad (ibid). Rather than being deemed failures through their inability to engage in social mobility, these cultural-motivated migrations instead need to be evaluated within individual contexts that reflect the lived experiences of the migrant. It is highly likely that this appreciation of the ways in which migration can enrich a person culturally as well as economically and socially is the basis of many commentators referring to these regions as *human capital* escalators rather than *social mobility* escalators (see the extensive work on escalator regions by Tony Champion).

The Performance of Regional Escalators in England and Wales

Since its conceptualisation in the early-1990s the escalator theory has undergone nearly 25 years of extensive research and rigorous examination in the context of England and Wales. Fielding (1992) was first to provide empirical evidence. Using data taken from the ONS-LS covering the 1970s and the NHS Central Register covering the 1980s, he was able to demonstrate that the London-Southeast met the criteria for all three components of the escalator theory. However, this was only possible through the assumption that the upward social mobility experienced in the 1970s could be applied to the 1980s, a risky assertion when attempting to introduce a new theory. Not content with simple predictions, Fielding went on to demonstrate that the London-Southeast indeed had just as dominant an escalator in the 1980s as it had in the 1970s (Fielding, 1995, Fielding, 2007). The same has since been shown for the 1990s. Champion et al's (2014) work, while adopting a city-region approach, demonstrated the advantages to career progression possessed by both migrants and non-migrants by virtue of being located in London rather than any of the UK's nine 'second-order' cities. They also re-affirm Fielding's (1992) findings that migrants were more likely to engage in social mobility and reach higher socioeconomic positions relative to their non-migrant counterparts, further highlighting the important relationship between social mobility and spatial mobility.

Importantly, however, Champion et al (2014) do not fall into the trap of fetishizing London and its escalator, rather they highlight its dominance relative to the rest of England and Wales. There exists an explicit assertion that the escalator function occurs outside of the London-Southeast, albeit with less prominence, the implications of which will be discussed later. In particular they point to Manchester '*being seen as a 'mini London''*' (Champion et al., 2014: p.430). Understanding why migrants, both internal and international, choose regions like the North West and cities like Manchester over the dominant London-Southeast again involves considering the qualitative literature. As with Conradson and Latham (2005), Devine et al's (2003) findings from in-depth interviews with high-skilled employees in Manchester highlight the non-economic determinants of migration decisions and outcomes. These include personal ties with the broadly-defined 'North', and dissolutions with living and working in London, having spent a period of time in the capital. The call for a greater appreciation of non-economic motivations are echoed further internationally, as in Rérat's (2014) explanations of why Swiss graduates return to their rural home.

Examining the experiences of those outside the London-Southeast has also taken on greater importance following the re-configuration of the stepping-off component of the escalator theory. A number of studies have concluded that individuals spend less time on the escalator and leave at younger ages than assumed by Fielding (1992). Chief among these is Champion (2012), who examines the stepping-off process from a lifecourse perspective covering the period from 1966 to 2001. While his conclusions, that those entering the escalator region eventually leave it again, is in line with the escalator theory, it goes against the criteria that those leaving are coming toward the end of their careers. Instead, he determines that of the people who left the London-Southeast by 2001, having entered between 1966 and 1971, three-quarters had left by 1981 and spent less than 15 years on the escalator. In addition, leavers in 1991 were mostly represented in the 16-29 age group. These results are echoed elsewhere. Of all Scots returning home from the London-Southeast in 2001, two-thirds were aged between 15 and 44, while only 20% were aged between 45 and 74 (Findlay et al., 2008). The repercussion for the analysis conducted here is that a regional escalator cannot be examined in isolation but in relation to the performance of other regions. This presents a flaw in the escalator theory. The way it was originally conceptualised by Fielding (1992) results in analysis that focuses on individual regions. Yet all

regions have in-flows of young, educated adults and individuals within every region experience upward social mobility. Thus every region has an escalator function, as made clear by Champion (2012), the performance of which becomes relevant only in relation to others. It is this that should drive research that applies the theory. The need to examine the relative performance of escalator regions is compounded by the lack of baselines from which regions can be tested.

Escalator Regions in International Contexts

The escalator theory has also been tested internationally through the investigations of occupational pathways among international migrants in their destination country. This research has been important. It has been repeatedly observed, including by Fielding's (1992) original paper, that occupational vacancies are sometimes filled from abroad, and consequently it is of interest to examine how the escalator performs for international migrants. Firstly, for many people international migration may involve downward social mobility (Fielding, 2007). This is most commonly conceptualised as over-qualification. In Europe and North America, unrecognisable or a lack of qualifications and language barriers among immigrants often leads to the obtainment of low status jobs below their skill level (Papademetriou et al., 2009). Related to the escalator metaphor, this can be seen as a downward movement with evidence coming from Southern European countries (Vidal-Coso and Miret-Gamundi, 2014, Parella et al., 2013, Simón et al., 2014) as well as Germany, the UK and among Romanian immigrants. (Granato, 2014, Aleksynska and Tritah, 2013, Alexandru, 2012). While the evidence presented here is of country-wide downward escalator movements, escalator region-specific analysis has drawn similarly negative conclusions for international migrants. Fielding (2007) finds that many immigrants self-defined as 'black' and 'Asian' who entered the London-Southeast in the 1980s experienced downward mobility into blue collar work and unemployment. There is, therefore, some substance to the claim that escalator regions do not perform well for certain foreign-born individuals who often experience downward rather than upward social mobility following their migration.

Of course, migration is a much more complex phenomenon than this general conclusion portrays. Many immigrants do engage in upward social mobility following a

relocation to an escalator region. Conradson and Latham (2005), despite emphasising migration motivations unrelated to career progression, find case studies of New Zealanders being drawn to the London-Southeast with the aim of improving their social standing. Similar findings have also been found among inter-company transfers between the London and New York financial districts, where time spent abroad is often a prerequisite for promotion and job advancement (Beaverstock, 2005). While pushing the boundaries of what is considered 'international migration', Findlay et al (2009) also demonstrate upward social mobility occurring among Scots living in the London-Southeast during the 1990s.

Unfortunately, research into the prevalence and performance of escalator regions that focuses on internal migration in other countries is limited. Most of the evidence does indeed come from the UK, with only a small number of exceptions. Evidence from the US in the 1970s has shown a positive association between spatial and occupational mobility, with the likelihood being that this relationship, as in the UK, has become a structurally embedded process that will have been preserved in the decades since (Lin and Christiadi, 2006). Also in recent years, Tony Fielding has focused his attention on Japan's escalator regions, however this does little to extend the concept given that Japan's spatial and societal trajectories differ to that of Western countries. Nonetheless, what his conclusion demonstrates is the difficulty in applying generalised, Western-centric theories to non-Western countries (Fielding, 2007).

What implications does the previous research discussed subsequently have on the research conducted in this paper? Already discussed has been the need to examine individual escalator regions in relation to the other regions in England and Wales. Secondly, while useful in furthering our understanding of how social and spatial mobility interact, research and typologies that have extended the original escalator theory are yet to be encapsulated by it. Therefore, the analysis conducted below will test the three components of the original escalator theory laid out by Fielding (1992), to determine its relevance in the first decade of the 21st Century. Thirdly, the analysis will look at interactions between internal migration and social mobility, rather than international migration. This is to allow continuity and comparability with much of the related literature.

However, before discussing the methods and presenting the results, the study needs to be justified. The clear dominance of the London-Southeast region over the decades raises questions over the need to expand the evidence base. If the region displayed similar

dominance in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s to the point where it appears to be structurally embedded into the workings of British society, surely we would expect the same to occur in the 2000s? While this is an understandable objection, simply *assuming* that it would be the same would be to ignore the context within which the 2000s was played out and the significant events and processes that took place. The following section will therefore outline some of these contexts and processes and explain how each could impact on the performance of escalator regions.

BACKGROUND TO THE 2000s

A benefit of undertaking this study five years after the latest Census is that it has access to the wealth of reflective research that has been undertaken since 2010. There now exists a substantial body of literature that has looked to describe, expose and understand the social, economic and demographic trends, processes and events that took place in the first decade of the 21st Century. Applying this, it is possible to understand what happened during the 2000s and how the performance of regional escalator could be affected.

Economic Processes

With regard to influential economic processes, the economic recession that dominated the last years of the decade and beyond is likely to be the most damaging. Coined the 'Great Recession' by many commentators, it was a result of a financial crisis in 2007-2008 that began in the United States and resulted in the first global economic recession since the end of the Second World War (Verick and Islam, 2010). It was particularly challenging for the UK, not least because of the interconnectedness of the London and New York financial districts. Officially, the UK experienced six quarters of uninterrupted negative growth, resulting in a recession that lasted around 18 months from the second quarter (Q2) of 2008 to Q3 of 2009, making it the longest lasting in the G7, though not the deepest in terms of the proportion of GDP lost (Campos et al., 2011, Allen, 2010).

Despite its global ramifications, the Great Recession and its impact had a particular geography. Cecilia Campos and her colleagues at the ONS provide the most comprehensive account of the regional geography of the recession's impact in the UK (Campos et al., 2011). Consider the job market as an example. While unemployment and redundancy rates rose and employment and job vacancies fell in all regions of the UK over the course of the recession, this betrays regional variations. Job vacancies fell over 40% between June 2008 and June 2009 in the North West, Yorkshire and The Humber and the South East, whereas London witnessed a fall of less than 30% (ibid). Also, increases in redundancies-per-thousand employees in the year to Q2 2009 was greatest in the West Midlands with an increase of ten, and smallest in the East with an increase of one. These regional differences become more apparent when the trends in unemployment are observed. There was a forty-nine

percentage-point difference between the 80% rise in unemployment experienced in Yorkshire and The Humber between early 2008 and early 2010 and the 31% rise seen in London; although a 32% rise in the North-West dismisses a North/South regional divide. The regional disparities continue when Campos et al (2011) looked at wage and salary growth over the recession period. Between 2007/08 and 2009/10 these grew at an annual average of 5% in the East of England, however the North East and the East Midlands experienced no growth, and negative growth was experienced in the West Midlands and in London. All of this serves to highlight how variable the impacts of the recession were for different regions, but what does this mean for the performance of escalators?

The various macroeconomic impacts of the recession have the potential to impact all three components of a region's escalator. Firstly, a rise in unemployment and a contraction in the number of jobs available limits a major determinant of interregional migration in Great Britain. One estimation suggests that over 30% of moves between regions are employment-related (Dixon, 2003), and thus there is the possibility that interregional migration may have slowed during the last years of the 2000s. Secondly, redundancies, lay-offs and stagnant wage growth during the recession will have impacted on people's occupational mobility. This, combined with a fall in house sales during the recession (Campos et al., 2011), can seriously inhibit a region's ability to provide opportunities for upward social mobility, and limits the extent to which people can move up the escalator. Finally, as a result of stagnation in social mobility, a potential loss of human capital and assets and the difficulty in negotiating the housing market, the ability to step off the escalator may have become more difficult.

Demographic Processes

A demographic process of increasing prominence during the 2000s was the rise in immigration. Between 2000 and 2009, the stock of foreign-born in the UK increased by over 50% to reach approximately 7 million by the end of the decade, representing 11.4% of the UK population (Rienzo and Vargas-Silva, 2016). Just as the economic recession had a regional geography, so has UK immigration. It is clear that London is a focal point. Over 40% of foreign-born migrants in the UK in 2000 were in London, and while this had dropped to 37%

by 2009, migrants in Inner and Outer London made up 38% and 31% of their respective populations at the end of the decade. In comparison, the foreign-born in the East Midlands made up 8% of the region's population, and in Wales it was 5% (ibid). However, even a regional comparison masks important area specific increases. Likely a result of historically large migrant in-flows, the percentage increase in the number of migrants in London over the decade was relatively small in comparison to those without historic migration flows. In contrast to the 21% increase in the stock of foreign-born residents in Inner London between 2000 and 2009, South Yorkshire, Tyne and Wear and Greater Manchester experienced increases of 132%, 129% and 109% respectively (ibid).

The key impact on the performance of the escalator caused by the rise in immigration is the increase in competition for jobs and houses. Over three-quarters of the rise in employment between the accession of the EU8¹ in early 2004 and the onset of the recession in early 2008 was accounted for by foreign-born individuals, limiting the opportunities of natives to enter and move up within the labour market (Campbell et al., 2014). Similarly migrants, in particular more recent migrants such as those coming from the EU8, were more likely than established migrants and UK natives to privately rent and less likely to own a house (Vargas-Silva, 2015). This exerts pressure on overburdened renting markets, and again can restrain the ability of natives to progress up the housing ladder.

While the movement of people into the UK from abroad has increased, there have been numerous studies using a variety of methodologies and datasets confirming that overall migration within the UK has been falling in recent decades. Champion and Shuttleworth (2016), using the ONS-LS, find that the 17.7% fall in the propensity to migrate between the 1970s and the 2000s has been nearly exclusively driven by a fall in short-distance migration, particularly among older age groups. Importantly, however, they find little or no change between decades in the migration rates of young adults. These mirror the conclusions of Smith and Sage (2014). In their examination of internal migration in the 2000s, they find that not only were young adults more migratory than other age groups, as one would expect, but that they were exempt from the trend in other age groups that saw migrant numbers fall between 2004 and 2005. In addition, they add to the evidence of falling

¹ Refers to the eight countries from Central and Eastern Europe who became member states of the European Union in 2004. The eight are: Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Slovakia, The Czech Republic and Poland

internal migration among those aged 65 and over (Smith and Sage, 2014). A more detailed picture of the decline in the UK internal migration system in the 2000s is provided by Lomax et al (2014). Firstly, they find a reversal in flows between the North and the South of England. While the North gained from the South in the first half of the decade, this trend reversed in the second half and was *'driven primarily by an increase in migration from urban north to the urban south'* (Lomax et al., 2014 p.41). Secondly, they conclude that much of the overall decline was due to a reduction in urban to rural flows. While this has not been significant enough to reverse the process of counter-urbanisation that has occurred in previous decades, when combined with Rae's (2013) findings that inner cities experienced population growth during the 2000s it signifies that it is slowing. Thirdly, Lomax et al (2014) highlight the importance of London in the UK's internal migration system as both a major source of, and destination for, internal migrants. Each of these trends has a potential influence. Obviously, the reduction in migration intensities described will impact the regional in- and out-migration levels. However, the third component of the escalator is more likely to be affected than the first, given the declining trend in older-age migration compared to the consistent trend in young adult migration.

Social Processes

An example of a social process that has the potential to disrupt the workings of the escalator during the 2000s was the rise in both the numbers and proportion of young adults who attended and completed university. Between 2000 and 2010 the share of graduates in the UK working population increased from just under a quarter to over a third, with the number of people obtaining their first university degree being 44% higher in 2010 than it was in 2000 (ONS, 2013, Bolton, 2012). Certainly, part of this increase can be attributed to Tony Blair's target of encouraging half of all young people into higher education by 2010 (Lupton and Obolenskaya, 2013). In effect this has the same impact as immigration whereby the labour market becomes saturated, with demand for jobs outpacing supply. This, along with a reduction in demand for skilled labour following the Great Recession, can mostly explain why 45% of graduates in the second quarter of 2010 were employed in 'non-graduate' roles, up from 37% during the same period in 2001 (ONS, 2013). Both the recession and a rising supply of well-educated labour may also explain the stagnation in

graduate wages toward the end of the decade. Graduates aged between 21 and 30 in 2015 had the same median salaries in nominal terms (£24,000) as they did in 2008 (BIS, 2016). The surplus of skilled labour can therefore limit the ability of a region to allow upward occupational progression, hence its potential to disrupt the workings of an escalator.

Having developed an understanding of how regional escalators in England and Wales have performed in previous decades and the context within which escalators have performed during the 2000s, it is possible to develop some hypotheses to guide the empirical sections of this paper. Firstly, it is predicted that the London-Southeast will continue to be the dominant escalator region relative to other regions in England and Wales. This is due to the regions continuing importance within the UK economy, its importance in the UK's migration system (Lomax et al., 2014), and its growing reputation as a global city that can offer opportunities not available elsewhere. Secondly, the ability for non-migrants and migrants in the London-Southeast to enter the service class will be greater in the 1990s than for the 2000s, driven primarily by the processes outlined above. Thirdly, it is predicted that the stepping-off process in the 2000s will continue to be dominated by younger age-groups, rather than those coming to the end of their working lives (Champion, 2012). However, it is likely that those stepping-off will still be in the advanced socioeconomic positions.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Data

The analysis undertaken in this study makes use of two datasets. The first is the annual publication of UK internal migration statistics by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Unfortunately, there is no central register for formally recording internal migrations within the UK. Instead, the figures combine data from the Patient Register Data Service (PR), the NHS Central Register (NHSCR) and the Higher Education Statistics Authority (HESA). The annual release of PR data and the weekly release of the NHSCR allows a migration to be recorded by identifying when an individual, traced by a unique NHS Number, registers a change of General Practitioner (GP). The data, therefore, measures change of local authority rather than change of address. However, it has been recognised that many young people, in particular male students, fail to register with their local GP following a move to or from university. They are subsequently omitted from internal migration statistics solely reliant on GP data. To remedy this, migration flows are supplemented by data from HESA, which provides both term-time and home addresses and enables the ONS to capture the migrations of students, which account for a large proportion of internal migration in the UK (ONS, 2015). While the student adjustment method has now been included in all internal migration statistics released since June 2010, it has also been retrospectively applied to data going back to internal migration in the year to June 2002.

The second dataset used in the analysis is the Office for National Statistics Longitudinal Study of England and Wales (ONS-LS). In testing the escalator theory in the UK context it is the most popular and useful dataset available. Using Census and life events data, the ONS-LS provides a detailed, linked record for a sample of individuals born on one of four dates selected in the calendar year. This creates a sample of over half a million people at each Census, equal to around 1% of the population of England and Wales. Starting at the 1971 Census, data has now been collected and made available for each of the Censuses conducted since. This includes the 2011 Census following the release of the 2011 Longitudinal Study data on 1st December 2013 (Lynch et al., 2015). By collecting information on those that enter the ONS-LS (through births and immigration) and retaining the information of those that leave (through death and emigration), the dataset contains

information on over 1 million individuals. The samples of interest here are those present at the 1991 and 2001 Censuses, equal to 418,204, and those present at the 2001 and 2011 Censuses, equal to 421,795 (Lynch et al., 2015).

The benefits of using this dataset over other longitudinal studies in England and Wales such as the 1970 British Cohort Study or the British Panel Household Survey are numerous. The first, its size, has already been mentioned. The second is the scope of its coverage and therefore its ability to be representative of the whole British population. This is confirmed both by a very high Census response rate (94% in 2001 and 2011) and observed sampling fractions corresponding with what would be expected of a representative sample (Lynch et al., 2015). The third benefit is its low attrition rate, aided by the legal requirements of completing the Census and reporting life events. Fourth is the wealth of individual but anonymised data available. The ONS-LS contains information on characteristics such as social class, employment, health, education and migration patterns, as well as detailed information on family members. These individual characteristics can subsequently be traced through the decades.

However, the dataset does have weaknesses. Relatively low attrition rates do not guarantee complete tracking between Censuses as a consequence of individuals existing the ONS-LS with no record of death or emigration. Additionally, coverage only extends to residents of England and Wales, whilst residents of Scotland and Northern Ireland are recorded in their respective longitudinal studies. While incorporating all three studies is possible, it was beyond the timing and scope of the study. Thirdly, certain questions and answers lack continuity between Censuses. For example, information on highest qualification is categorised differently in 1991 to how it is in 2001 and 2011. Similarly, different topics become important as time passes. Detailed questions regarding ethnic status and religion, for instance, were first asked in 2001 and therefore cannot be compared to previous Censuses (ONS, 2004). Fourth, due to the detailed personal information included, non-disclosure of sensitive information is of upmost important to the ONS. Sample sizes are consequently restricted to 10, which in some cases limits of the analysis that can be conducted. Other weaknesses of certain variables and definitions used in the analysis will be examined in the methodology section below.

Methodology

The two main aims of this paper and the corresponding research questions utilise different research designs. Comparing the function of each region's escalator during the 2000s takes a longitudinal approach, while comparing the performance of the London-Southeast escalator between the 1990s and the 2000s involves a cross-sequential approach. Nonetheless, both involve testing the three components of the escalator theory and therefore use the same methodologies. They are also both conducted at the same spatial scale, which is regional. There are 10 recognised regions covering England and Wales: The North East, North West, Yorkshire and The Humber, East Midlands, West Midlands, East of England, London, South East, South West and Wales. For the purpose of this analysis, London and the South East are combined into one region, known as the London-Southeast. This follows the lead of various other studies and is a result of the interconnectedness of the labour markets of London and the South-East.

Examining the stepping-on component of the escalator theory will involve comparing the net migrations of young and educated adults to determine whether a region was a net gainer or a net loser. It also examines the destination of all regional young adult migrants to determine which region received the greatest share. For the 2000s, ONS internal migration data is used, however this only goes back as far as the year to June 1999, and to only the year to June 2002 for data that is adjusted for student migration. Therefore, comparing the stepping-on procedure in the London-Southeast in the 1990s and 2000s uses the ONS-LS by looking at the young adults whose region of usual address differed between Censuses. For the migration of educated young adults, the ONS-LS is used. Lack of continuity between Censuses, however, limits the ability to compare decades and therefore is used only in the longitudinal analysis between 2001 and 2011.

Testing people's ability to ride-up a region's escalator involves examining the social position of ONS-LS members at one Census and comparing it to the next. The analyses utilise the National Statistics Socioeconomic Classification analytical classes (NSSEC Class) to determine the social position of an ONS-LS member at a given Census. Based on occupational information derived from Census answers, each ONS-LS member can be grouped into one of seven working and four non-working NSSEC Classes. These are:

- *Class 1: Higher Managerial, Administrative and Professional Occupations (including employers in large organisations);*
- *Class 2: Lower Managerial, Administrative and Professional Occupations;*
- *Class 3: Intermediate Occupations;*
- *Class 4: Small Employers and Own Account Workers;*
- *Class 5: Lower Supervisory and Technical Occupations;*
- *Class 6: Semi-Routine Occupations;*
- *Class 7: Routine Occupations;*

and:

- Never Worked and Long-Term Unemployed;
- Full-Time Student;
- Occupation Inadequately Described;
- Not Classifiable for Other Reasons.

A transition rate is then used to measure the prevalence of upward social mobility among a population group in similarity to Champion et al (2014). The transition rate in the context of this paper is the proportion of all those in work but not in the target social class at the beginning of the period (including full-time students) who are in the target social class at the end of the period. The target social class in this context are NSSEC Classes 1 and 2, which will henceforth be known as the 'service-class'. The transition rate therefore measures the proportion of those in the non-service class at one Census who are in the service class at the Census ten years later. Unfortunately, this definition is unable to capture small upward social movements within or between the NSSEC Classes categorised as service and non-service. Though this would provide a more nuanced and detailed analysis, it is likely that they would violate ONS disclosure rules and therefore an aggregated measure of social mobility is applied here.

In common with other papers on the topic, the analysis will compare the transition rates for migrants and non-migrants in order to isolate the impact of migration, but this requires clarification. There is little consensus on what the term 'migrant' explicitly defines, and is instead used as a one-size-fits-all term covering varying degrees of distance and time

(Anderson and Blinder, 2015). In this paper, an ONS-LS member is defined as a migrant if their region of usual address at one Census is different to their region of usual address at the next. Hence they are internal regional migrants within England and Wales. A non-migrant is an ONS-LS member whose region of usual address is the same at both Censuses ten years apart. Obviously this has some limitations. Firstly, it assumes that only one migration has occurred during a ten-year period. For less spatially-mobile, older ONS-LS members this may be the case, but for those with a greater propensity to migrate, such as young adults, it will likely exclude the multitude of movements involved in moving to and from university and into the labour market. Secondly, the definition excludes moves that occur within regions and within local authorities. However, given that only one-quarter of intra-regional and 8% of intra-authority moves were motivated by employment or education, they are unlikely to have been related to a change in occupation and are therefore not relevant to the study (Dixon, 2003). On the other hand, employment and education were motivations for over 50% of inter-regional moves between 2000 and 2003 and will therefore more likely to have involved a change of work place (Dixon, 2003). A third limitation of the definition is that it will also ignore out-migrations and subsequent returns that occur between Censuses, driven by perhaps a failure to gain employment and a return to the parental home (Sage et al., 2013). The limitations of the definition of a migrant unfortunately cannot be overcome, especially as breaking down migration below region-to-region would risk breaking ONS non-disclosure rules. However, they are outweighed by the details in which the ONS-LS is able to inform on individual occupational and social class pathways. Defining migrants in this way also maintains continuity between previous research that has studied the relationship between spatial and social mobility.

Due to subsequent research countering Fielding's (1992) stepping-off component, it is not appropriate to look solely at the migration of older people. Rather, the approach taken here is to examine the characteristics of those that migrated out of each region during the inter-censal period to determine if they were in advanced social positions. This will be achieved using the ONS-LS.

RESULTS

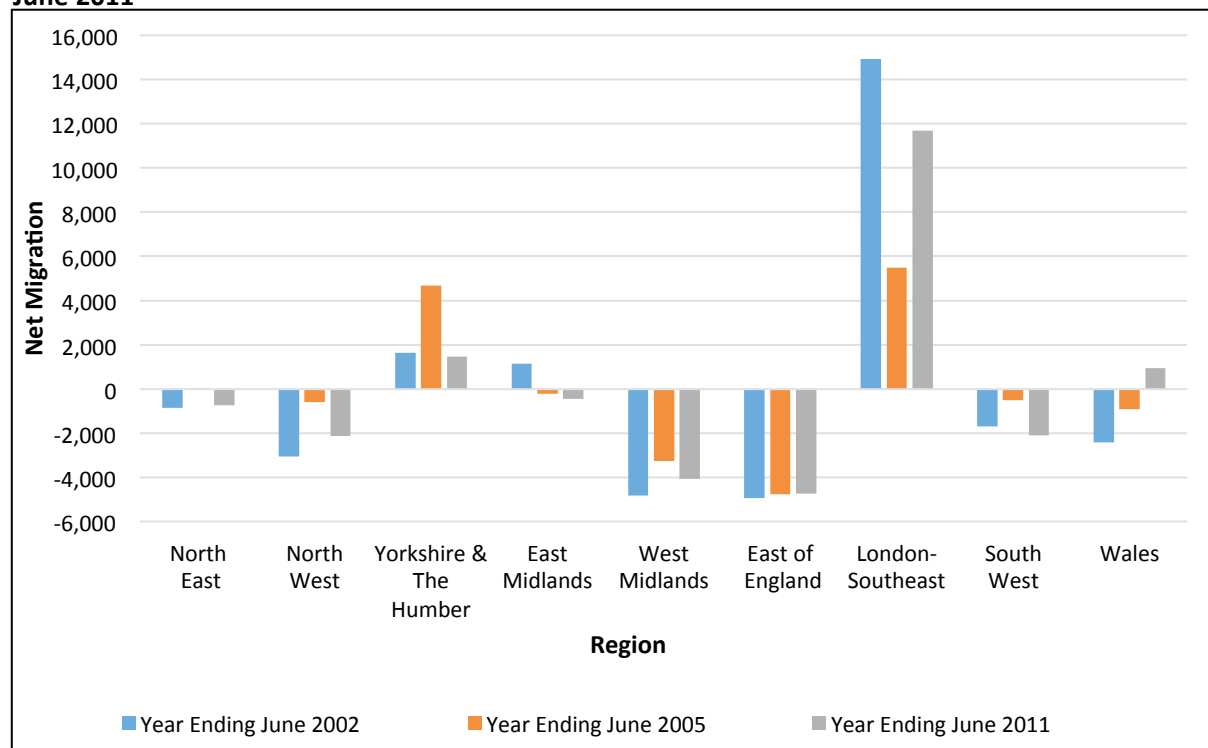
As per the aims of this paper, the findings discussed in this section are split into two. The first section compares the performance of the escalator in each region during the 2000s, focusing on all three of the stepping-on, riding-up and stepping-off components. The second part will then compare the performance of the London-Southeast's escalator between the 2000s and 1990s.

Escalator Regions in the 2000s

Stepping On

Examining the stepping-on component involves comparing the regional migration of young adults. Firstly, we can look at net migration for various years during the 2000s. *Figure 1* shows the regional net migration of 16-24 year olds in the years ending June 2002², June

Figure 1– Regional net migration of 16-24 year olds in the years ending June 2002, June 2005 and June 2011



Source: ONS, 2003, 2006, 2012

² This year is chosen for two reasons. Firstly, it covers most of the period covered by the intercensal period between the 2001 and 2011 Censuses. Secondly, it is the earliest internal migration data available that has been adjusted for the improved estimation of student migration.

Table 1 – Share of regional migrants aged 16-24 who arrived in each region in the years to June 2002, June 2005 and June 2011

Region of Destination	Year to June 2002 (%)	Year to June 2005 (%)	Year to June 2011 (%)
North East	4.5	4.7	4.5
North West	10.6	10.8	10.6
Yorkshire & The Humber	11.2	11.7	11.4
East Midlands	11.1	11.1	10.9
West Midlands	9.7	9.9	9.8
East of England	10.5	10.6	10.5
London-Southeast	26.1	24.8	25.9
South West	10.8	11.1	11.1
Wales	5.3	5.5	5.3

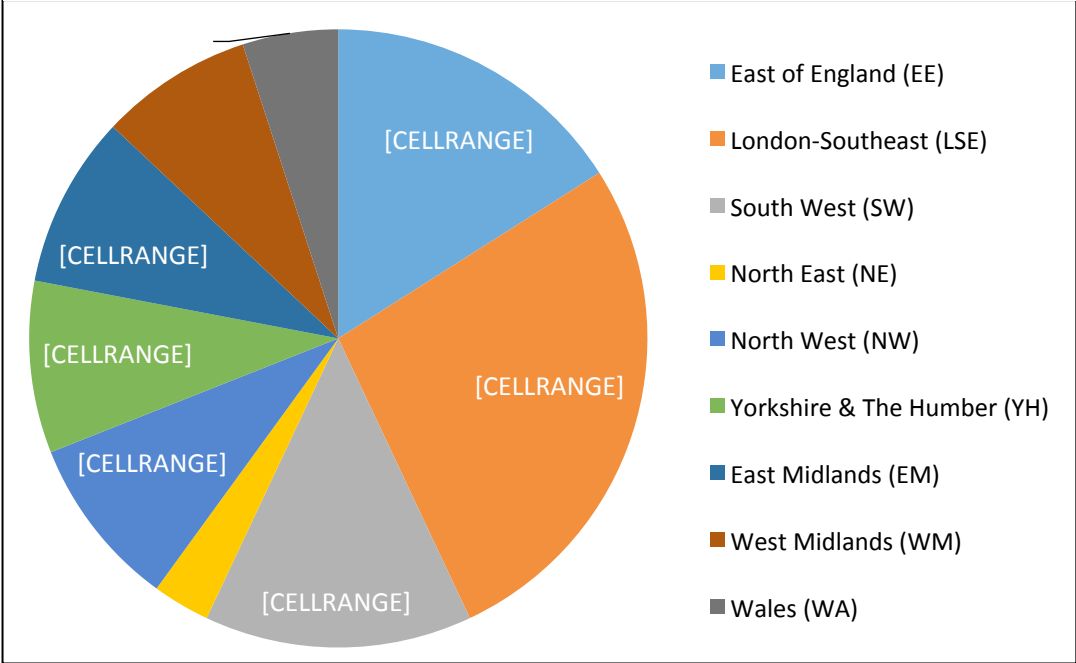
Source: ONS, 2003, 2006, 2012

2005 and June 2011. Immediately the dominance of London-Southeast is clear. For each of the three years the region received far more 16-24 year olds than it lost resulting in net migration levels that dwarfed other regions. Only Yorkshire and The Humber experienced positive net migration for all three years. The North West, West Midlands, East of England and the South West experienced a net loss of young adults in all three years. It is also possible to analyse the popularity of each region during the 2000s. The information in *Table 1* shows the share of regional migrants aged 16-24 who arrived in each region in the same three years as above. Again the London-Southeast stands out. With only slight variations it was the destination for around a quarter of all those who regionally migrated in each of the three years. The second most popular regions, Yorkshire and The Humber, received fewer than half as many.

Both *Figure 1* and *Table 1* provide overwhelming evidence that the London-Southeast was the dominant destination for young adult regional migrants. However, it cannot inform

on the preferred destination of highly educated young adults and those with the greatest promotion potential discussed in Fielding’s (1992) original paper. If the London-Southeast were to be the most popular destination for the highly educated at the start of their career than it would comfortably meet the stepping-on criteria in the 2000s. The ONS-LS is well suited to answer this. *Figure 2* shows the proportion of educated young adults who moved to each region between 2001 and 2011. It uses a sample comprised of ONS-LS members present at the 2001 and 2011 Censuses who were educated to degree level or higher in 2001, regionally migrated between Censuses, and were aged between 20 and 25 in 2001, thus covering those aged 20 to 35 at the time of migration. Clearly, the largest share moved to the London-Southeast. This result, along with the others presented above, confirms that the London-Southeast was the most popular region of destination for all young adults and highly educated young adults in the 2000s, thus meeting the criteria for the first component of the escalator theory.

Figure 2 – Proportion of highly-educated regional migrants aged 20-25 moving to each region between 2001 and 2011



Source: Office for National Statistics Longitudinal Study

Riding Up

The second step in determining the dominant regional escalator in England and Wales during the 2000s is to examine the social progression of migrant and non-migrant

populations. The ONS-LS is, again, uniquely positioned to provide this information. Firstly, the transition rates for all regional migrants and non-migrants can be compared to determine whether migration provided any benefit. Both figures were obtained from a sample of ONS-LS members who were present at both the 2001 and 2011 Censuses, were aged 16-65 in 2001 (and 26-75 in 2011³), and were in employment or were full-time students at both Censuses as measured by their NSSEC Class. For all those who did not regionally migrate between 2001 and 2011 the transition rate was 18.7%, equal to 29,628. This indicates that, for all non-migrants, the number of individuals in the non-service class in 2001 but in the service-class in 2011 was 29,628, which represents 18.7% of all those in the non-service class in 2001. The corresponding transition rate of 36.7% for all those who migrated between 2001 and 2011 is significantly higher and indicative of a migration premium. Equal to 4,082 people, it denotes that well over a third of those not in the service class in 2001 before they migrated were in the service class in 2011. Clearly, regional migration has an effect, but did this migration premium differ by region of destination?

The ONS-LS allows this regional comparison. The transition rates and migration premiums for non-migrants, in-migrants and out-migrants for each of the nine regions in the 2000s are given in *Table 2*, and are based on the same sample criteria as above. The second column looks at the non-migrants in each region. Clearly, a non-migrant had the greatest chance of achieving upward social mobility if they lived in the London-Southeast region. Of those living in the region and not in the service class in 2001, 22.3% had entered the service class by 2011. The second greatest chance was offered in the East of England, while the North-East and Wales offered the joint lowest chance, with only 15.9% of non-migrants entering the service class during the decade.

The third and fourth columns in *Table 2* are important in the context of this paper. The third column gives the transition rates for all working-age migrants that entered each region during the 2000s, while the fourth gives the difference between the transition rate for those entering a region and the non-migrants within a region. The first trend to note is that a migrant premium existed for all regions. In other words, those that migrated to each

³ Additional criteria for this sample and all samples derived from the ONS-LS was that the age of an ONS-LS member at a particular Census was 10 years greater than at the Census before. While one would expect 100% of those aged x at Census A to be aged $x+10$ at Census B, closer examination of the ONS-LS revealed the figure to be 97-99%. It is unknown where the discrepancy in ages arises from, however as a safeguard all those whose age at Census B was not 10 years greater than at Census A were excluded from the samples.

Table 2 – Regional transition rates for different migrant groups between 2001 and 2011

Region	Transition Rates for Non-Migrants (%)	Transition Rates for Migrants Entering Each Region (%)	In-Migrant Premium	Transition Rates for Migrants Originating from Each Region (%)	Out-Migrant Premium
North East	15.9	31.8	15.9	38.2	22.3
North West	18.3	37.4	19.1	42.6	24.3
Yorkshire and The Humber	17.1	34.6	17.5	40.5	23.4
East Midlands	17.2	31.0	13.8	39.5	22.3
West Midlands	16.7	32.8	16.1	36.4	19.7
East of England	18.6	32.9	14.3	38.9	20.3
London-Southeast	22.3	51.3	29.0	30.8	8.5
South West	18.3	32.7	14.4	41.1	22.8
Wales	15.9	27.3	11.4	38.2	22.3

Source: Office for National Statistics Longitudinal Study

region during the 2000s, regardless of destination, were more likely than the non-migrant residents to enter the service class. This is demonstrated by the in-migrant premiums all being positive. Secondly, for all regional migrants it is overwhelmingly clear that those entering the London-Southeast had the greatest chance of experiencing upward social mobility. Over half of those who made this move entered the service class during the 2000s, compared to 27.3% of those who moved to Wales. Interestingly, though, there was little difference in this likelihood for moves to regions other than the London-Southeast. While noting the difference between the London-Southeast and the North West, the regions with the highest and second highest transition rates, was 13.9 percentage-points, the range for all other regions bar the London-Southeast was only 10.1 percentage-points. This strongly indicates that while migrants experienced a greater likelihood of upward social mobility compared to those who did not migrate, it makes little difference where they migrated to if the destination region was not the London-Southeast. As expected, the London-Southeast

was the region that offered the greatest chance of experiencing upward social mobility and entering the service class during the 2000s for both its non-migrant and migrant populations.

The final two columns of *Table 2* compound the evidence of a migration premium. If migration were to have little effect on social progression, then we would expect people originating from a region to have similar transition rates to those who stayed within a region. The fact that migrants from each region had a greater chance of entering the service class demonstrates the benefit accrued from migration. Transition rates for out-migrants were greater than for non-migrants in every region, however the rate for migrants leaving London-Southeast stands out as an anomaly. This is likely to do with the characteristics of those leaving rather than an example of migration not having an impact.

These results are clear. In England and Wales, the London-Southeast region was best able to facilitate the upward social mobility of both its migrant and non-migrant populations into the service class compared to all other regions. This phenomenon has now been shown to occur in the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s and 2000s.

Stepping Off

The final element in examining which was the principal escalator region in England and Wales in the 2000s is to investigate those stepping-off the escalator. A selection of characteristics of ONS-LS members who were aged 16 and over in 2001, were present at the 2001 and 2011 Censuses, and who out-migrated from each region between 2001 and 2011 are provided in *Table 3*. The first characteristic to note is the heavy representation of young adults in those who do leave each region, however disparities emerge when regions are individually examined. For the London-Southeast, and to a lesser extent the East of England, those that left were slightly older than out-migrants from other regions. For all regions excluding these two, the 16-20 and 21-25 age groups made up between 32% and 36% of all those leaving. For the London-Southeast and the East of England it was 21% and 29% respectively. In contrast, the 26-30 and 31-35 age groups accounted for 30% and 28% of those leaving the London-Southeast and East of England respectively. In the other seven regions they accounted for between 23% and 26% of leavers. The tendency for out-migrants from the London-Southeast to be older and further along in life is confirmed by a greater

Table 3 - Characteristics in 2001 of those migrating out of each region between 2001 and 2011 (% within each characteristic)¹

Characteristics		NE ² (%)	NW (%)	YH (%)	EM (%)	WM (%)	EE (%)	LSE (%)	SW (%)	WA (%)	
Age Structure³	16-20	18	19	19	17	18	15	8	18	19	
	21-25	16	14	17	15	16	14	13	14	15	
	26-30	14	13	14	15	13	15	16	12	13	
	31-35	11	12	12	11	10	13	14	11	10	
	36-40	10	8	9	10	10	10	11	8	7	
	41-45	6	6	6	8	7	7	7	7	6	
	46-50	5	6	7	7	6	6	7	5	6	
	51-55	5	7	5	6	7	6	8	6	7	
	56-60	4	5	4	4	4	5	6	6	5	
	61-65	2	4	2	3	3	3	4	4	4	
	66-70	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3
	71 +	4	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	5
Marital Status	Single	49	47	49	47	47	46	42	46	50	
	Married	35	39	37	40	40	43	45	40	39	
NSSEC Class	Class 1	12	12	13	15	12	15	15	13	12	
	Class 2	25	22	23	25	23	28	29	23	22	
	Class 3	11	10	11	10	10	13	14	11	9	
	Class 4	2	6	5	6	5	5	6	6	8	
	Class 5	6	7	5	6	6	6	7	6	5	
	Class 6	10	11	10	9	12	10	11	11	10	
	Class 7	8	7	7	8	7	6	6	6	6	
	FT ⁴ Students	17	18	17	14	15	12	7	15	19	

Table 3 (continued)

Characteristics		NE (%)	NW (%)	YH (%)	EM (%)	WM (%)	EE (%)	LSE (%)	SW (%)	WA (%)
Economic Position	Employed PT ⁵	9	8	9	9	8	8	9	8	9
	Employed FT	43	42	44	47	45	51	53	43	36
	Self Employed	3	6	6	6	6	6	8	6	8
	Retired	7	6	5	5	6	6	6	9	9
	Student	18	19	18	14	15	13	8	15	20
Selected Economic Positions in 2011	Employed PT	13	11	12	11	11	11	13	11	11
	Employed FT	44	46	50	51	45	48	40	47	45
	Retired	18	18	15	16	18	17	20	20	21
	Student	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	2

¹ Does not include all possible options within each characteristic, therefore % do not all add up to 100

² Abbreviations given in *Figure 2*

³ Only includes those aged 16 and over

⁴ Full-Time

⁵ Part-Time

Source: Office for National Statistics Longitudinal Study

share being married relative to leavers from other regions. In fact, the London-Southeast was the only region to have a greater share of its out-migrants married than single.

Interestingly, the London-Southeast is matched by the East of England and to a lesser extent the East Midlands with regard to the social position of those that left during the 2000s. In each of the three regions, the proportion of those leaving in NSSEC Classes 1 and 2 (the service class) was 44%, 43% and 40% respectively, compared to an average of 35% for the other six regions. Additionally, the London-Southeast's leavers were mostly represented by those in full-time employment and least represented by those who were students in 2001. Helpfully, the ONS-LS can inform on the economic positions in 2011 of those that left each region during the 2000s. The proportion of those who were retired is especially revealing. While less than 10% of leavers in every region were retired in 2001 before they moved, this jumps to between 15% and 21% by 2011, strongly indicating that a regional migration for some is related to an end of an individual's working life, as laid out in the original theory.

To summarise, the London-Southeast was closest to meeting the criteria for the stepping-off component of the escalator theory. Those that left the region were slightly older than in other regions, however, as predicted, they were dominated by those in the early or middle periods of their careers, rather than by those coming to the end of their working lives. Yet, crucially, those leaving were heavily represented by those in the service class, which confirms a stepping-off process had taken place following a ride up the social mobility escalator. There were also those who combined regional migration with retirement. The above results confirm that the London-Southeast region was England and Wales' most prominent escalator between 2001 and 2011.

Comparing the London-Southeast's Escalator in the 1990s and the 2000s

Having ascertained that the London-Southeast region continued to be England and Wales' prominent escalator region in the 2000s, the remainder of the section will compare it with the previous intercensal period.

Stepping On

Firstly, a comparison of the in-migration of young adults. As outlined previously, ONS internal migration data does not cover the entirety of the 1990s and so is not a useful source when comparing internal migration between decades. Instead the ONS-LS can be used. The London-Southeast was by far the most popular for internally migrating 16-25 year olds during both decades, with very little change. For ONS-LS migrants in this age group present at both the 1991 and 2001 Censuses, 30% had moved to the London-Southeast between 1991 and 2001. The corresponding figure for the intercensal period between 2001 and 2011 was 31%. This popularity remains when migrant flows from each region are compared. *Table 4* shows the share of migrants from each region that entered the London-Southeast during each intercensal period. Geography certainly influences the popularity of the region. Those on its border, the East of England and the South West, sent most of their migrants to the London-Southeast in both decades. However, its popularity fell among those coming from the East, whereas it rose among migrants from the South West. London-Southeast also rose in popularity among migrants from the North East, Yorkshire and the Humber, the West Midlands and Wales.

Table 4 – Share of migrants aged 16-25 from each region that entered the London-Southeast between each intercensal period

Region of Origin	1991 – 2001 (%)	2001 – 2011 (%)
North East	30	33
North West	33	33
Yorkshire and The Humber	26	32
East Midlands	36	33
West Midlands	34	36
East of England	60	57
South West	54	56
Wales	35	37

Source: Office for National Statistics Longitudinal Study

Riding-Up

Many of the events and processes during the 2000s discussed in Section 3 had the potential to impact on social mobility more so than migration. Thus, it is important to compare the London Southeast escalator between decades to determine whether the region was able to socially mobilise people to a lesser or greater extent. *Table 5* presents and contrasts the transition rates for people who moved from each region to the London-Southeast during each intercensal period, along with the rates for all in-migrants combined and non-migrants. It is based on a sample of those who were present at the start and end of each reference period, were in a working NSSEC Class and were aged between 16 and 65 at the beginning of each intercensal period.

The second and third columns present the transition rates for each intercensal period. In both it was those migrating from the North East that experienced the greatest chance of entering the service class. In the 1990s the lowest chance was offered to those from Wales, whereas in the 2000s it was those from the East of England. However, it is the last column that provides the vital answers. This depicts the difference in transition rate between decades. A positive value indicates that transition rates were higher in the 2000s than the 1990s, whereas a negative value means the opposite. As observed, migrants from every region, bar the East of England where there was no change, experienced an increased

Table 5 - Transition rates of those who migrated to the London-Southeast from all other regions between 1991 and 2001 and 2001 and 2011

Region of Origin	1991-2001 (%)	2001-2011 (%)	Difference
North East	54	62	8
North West	51	60	9
Yorkshire & The Humber	46	57	11
East Midlands	49	51	2
West Midlands	46	52	6
East of England	47	47	0
South West	42	49	7
Wales	41	48	7
All Migrants to London-Southeast	47	51	4
All Non-Migrants in London-Southeast	24	22	-2

Source: Office for National Statistics Longitudinal Study

likelihood of entering the service class during the 2000s than migrants in the 1990s. The importance of this cannot be understated. In spite of the various events and processes that had the potential to disrupt the London-Southeast's ability to allow upward social mobility, regional migrants relocating to the region were more likely to enter the service class during the 2000s than they were during the 1990s. The escalator appears to have strengthened. However, this has not been a universal improvement. As the final row highlights, for non-migrants, a group already disadvantaged compared to migrants, the proportion of those entering the service class fell by two percentage points.

Stepping-Off

Table 6 - Characteristics of those leaving the London-Southeast in each intercensal period (% of those in each characteristic¹)

Characteristics		1991-2001 (%)	2001-2011 (%)
Age Structure²	16-20	11	8
	21-25	16	13
	26-30	16	16
	31-35	12	14
	36-40	8	11
	41-45	8	7
	46-50	6	7
	51-55	7	8
	56-60	6	6
	61-65	4	4
	66-70	3	2
	71 +	3	4
Marital Status	Single	38	42
	Married	52	45
NSSEC Class	Class 1	10	15
	Class 2	25	29
	Class 3	20	14
	Class 4	6	6
	Class 5	5	7
	Class 6	12	11
	Class 7	8	6
Economic Position	Employed Part-Time	7	9
	Employed Full-Time	54	53
	Self Employed	8	8
	Retired	7	6
	Student	6	8
Economic Positions at end of Intercensal Period	Employed Part-Time	11	13
	Employed Full-Time	40	40
	Retired	15	20

¹ Not all options included in every characteristic, so % do not all equal 100

² Only includes those aged 16 and over

Source: Office for National Statistics Longitudinal Study

The final part of this results section compares the characteristics of those leaving the London-Southeast in each intercensal period. These are summarised in *Table 6*. Those leaving in the 2000s were slightly older than those in the 1990s, however again they were mostly represented by graduates and those early on in their working lives, not those of student age nor those nearing retirement. Similar proportions of out-migrants were aged between 21 and 35 in both periods making up 44% of those leaving in the 1990s and 43% of those leaving in the 2000s. Leavers in the latter intercensal period were less likely to be married and more likely to be single than those

in the 1990s. However, despite the age structures of those leaving indicating that they were young adults, there is evidence that points towards people leaving the London-Southeast after they had ridden up the escalator, and that this was a more common phenomenon in the 2000s than the 1990s. Primarily, out-migrants between 2001 and 2011 had a greater representation among those who had reached the service class. Additionally, while the proportions in full-time employment and retirement were similar at the start of both intercensal periods, a greater share of those leaving in the 2000s were retired by the end of the reference period. In summary, those stepping-off the London-Southeast escalator in the 2000s were more representative of those described in the escalator theory than leavers in the 1990s, as they were slightly older, held more advanced socioeconomic positions and were more likely to combine out-migration and retirement.

DISCUSSION

The findings conclude that the London-Southeast was England and Wales' dominant escalator region during the 2000s and that as an escalator it functioned better in the 2000s than in the 1990s. More specifically, the results show firstly that the London-Southeast was the most popular destination for both young adults and young adults educated to at least degree level, with the region gaining far more than it lost throughout the first decade of the 21st Century. Secondly, it was confirmed that the ability to achieve upward mobility and enter service class occupations was greater for those that migrated than for those that did not. This was true both for people migrating into each region and those migrating out of each region. Thirdly, the findings concluded that the London-Southeast was also the region whereby migrants and non-migrants had the greatest chance of experiencing upward social mobility and entering the service class. Fourthly, it was demonstrated that those leaving the London-Southeast were slightly older and further along the life-course than out-migrants from other regions, but were only partially represented by those coming toward the end of their working lives. Finally, the London-Southeast was as popular in the 2000s as it was in the 1990s among young adults. However, the latter decade saw a greater share of in-migrants entering the service class, and also a greater share of out-migrants represented in the service class than the earlier decade, demonstrating that the escalator had strengthened following the start of the new millennium.

These findings have important implications. They ground the escalator theory further in empirical evidence. The ability to enter the service class has now been shown to be greater for those that step onto the escalator (i.e. those who migrate) compared to those who did not migrate in the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s and now the 2000s. The London-Southeast has also been confirmed as the foremost escalator region in each of these four decades, adding to and strengthening the research conducted by Fielding (1992, 1995, 2007) and Champion et al (2014). This is demonstrative of its importance in both national migration and economic systems and indicates a national divide, with people living in and migrating to the South continuing to have an advantage over those moving to and living in the North. Combined with the switch in migration streams, whereby the South gained people from the North in the second half of the decade (Lomax et al., 2014), the well documented North-South divide within the UK is likely to have extended to the skill levels prevalent in each

region. The dominance of the London-Southeast extends further to the migrations of young adults. The London-Southeast's popularity during the 2000s among those at the start of their working lives draws comparisons with the findings of Lomax et al (2014), Smith and Sage (2014) and Sage et al (2013). The growth in popularity from regions further away, such as the North East and Yorkshire and The Humber further reflects the increasing pull of the region and the growing difference between North and South. The findings also highlight the limitation of the stepping-off component of the escalator theory. As with the findings of Champion (2012) and Findlay et al (2008), those leaving each region during the 2000s were dominated by younger individuals contrary to what would be expected if following the original escalator theory. Nonetheless, those that left the London-Southeast were heavily represented by those in the service class, indicating that they were stepping-off the escalator having ridden up it. Of particular significance is the limited impact had by the external events and process that manifested during the 2000s. It was predicted that the combination of increased immigration, a huge economic recession and an increasingly highly educated working population would diminish the London-Southeast's ability to promote both non-migrants and migrants into the service class. While this was the case for non-migrants, itself an interesting result, migrants coming from every region were actually more likely to enter the service class in the 2000s than the 1990s. This indicates that the workings of an escalator are somewhat shielded from some of the external processes that one would expect to influence it.

However, can these differences in the likelihood of entering the service class for those that migrate and those that do not be solely attributed to the process of migration? So far there has been a disregard for how the personal characteristics of those that migrate may be influential in determining their social mobility pathways in the region of destination. While Champion et al (2014) dismiss general characteristics such as age and gender, Gordon (2015) proposes that personal ambition to achieve success in the job market is partially what allows people to ride up the escalator faster. Migration, even regionally within a country, involves some kind of risk, a cost that needs considering as per the human capital migration theory. For migrants to succeed, they therefore need to have the ambition and the belief that they can overcome these costs, with those lacking this ambition not engaging in migration in the first place. Nonetheless location does matter. Even if internal migrants

conform to the human capital theory of migration by accounting for the costs and benefits of migrating and having the ambition to succeed, this success is still most likely to occur in city regions, such as the London-Southeast (Korpi and Clark, 2015).

The London-Southeast ability to socially promote its population more effectively than other regions may also be explained by shifts in employment structures. The share of employment accounted for by low-skilled work in the UK fell between 1997 and 2013, as did the proportion of the UK workforce employed in low-skilled jobs (Migration Advisory Committee, 2014). Conversely, the numbers in high-skilled jobs increased. This shift toward high-skilled employment among UK workers could explain the upward trend in those entering the service class. Secondly, London has experienced greater labour market polarisation than any other area in Britain since the 1990s, meaning that the growth in its low-skilled and high-skilled jobs have outpaced those in the middle (Kaplanis, 2007). One prominent explanation for this hollowing-out process is the out-sourcing of middle-skilled jobs (Kaplanis, 2007, Migration Advisory Committee, 2014). The loss of these jobs, the increase in available high-skilled jobs, and the increase in the share of low-skilled jobs held by the non-UK born, results in those remaining on the London-Southeast escalator only able to enter high-skilled jobs if they are upwardly mobile. This can explain both why the London-Southeast's escalator out-performed other regions in the 2000s and the region's escalator in the 1990s.

While there is evidence that dominant escalator regions become so structurally embedded in a nation's economy that external phenomena have little impact, the results suggest that it can be altered by longer-term processes that bring about structural or societal change. For example, the lack of older people represented in those stepping-off the escalator, while suggestive of a general fall in the internal migration propensity of older people, may also be due to changes in the life-course of younger people. It is recognised that migration is not solely driven by economic motives and the desire to improve wages above everything else. Rather, it accounts for non-economic determinants. There is an increasing trend toward people only wanting to live in metropolitan areas for as long as they have to or until they have achieved a specific goal, which usually involves progressing into a high status job. Once this is achieved, non-economic factors take over. These may involve the desire to start and raise a family in less built up and greener surroundings that allows for a greater

quality of life. Given that these life events occur in the late-twenties and early-thirties it would explain why the exodus from the London-Southeast is made up of this age group. Following this logic, it could be argued that the effects of other structural changes, such as the rise in higher education, may not have begun to alter the workings of an escalator given that they are relatively new phenomena. It would be of interest to examine whether a more highly-educated working population results in saturated labour markets and the affects that this may have on social mobility in the years and decades to come.

Despite the insights provided by this study, it does have limitations. One of these is that the relationship between social and spatial mobility cannot be separated, meaning it is not known when social mobility occurs in relation to a regional migration. While the traveller and elevator movements introduced by Findlay et al (2009) provide a means through which the relationship between the two can be envisioned, these types of movements cannot be examined using the ONS-LS. This provides some issues. If an individual experiences an elevator movement (occupation progression without migration) and then migrates without further changes in occupation, the upward movement is attributed to the region of destination rather than the region of origin where it actually occurred. Similarly, if a social movement occurs after a migration but in a separate intercensal period then it would not be recorded as an upward movement. A second limitation is that the impacts of commuting could not be accounted for. It is very likely that a number of people could live in one region but commute to work in another given that 13% of workers have a commute time greater than 45 minutes (ONS, 2011). This is especially the case for those who step off the escalator during their late-twenties and early-thirties and migrate to commuter towns outside major metropolitan areas having reached a high socioeconomic status. It is those in the higher managerial and professional occupations who are most likely to have the longest commute (ONS, 2014). The ramification is that people can be accredited with riding up an escalator that they did not, due to the fact that they were riding the escalator in the region where they worked, not where they lived.

CONCLUSION

This paper had two primary aims. The first was to examine the function of regional escalators in England and Wales during the 2000s. The second was to compare the function of the escalator in the London-Southeast region in the 2000s to that of the 1990s. Following a statement of these aims, a review of the literature was undertaken. This defined and explained the escalator theory as conceived by Tony Fielding in the early 1990s (Fielding, 1992). The theory was then critiqued and accompanied by an examination of the attempts to extend and adapt the theory through greater exploration of how social and spatial mobility interact. The empirical evidence base supporting the theory was then presented. Prior to addressing the aims of the paper, a background to the 2000s was provided. This highlighted some of the events and processes that occurred during the decade and how these had the potential to disrupt the workings of regional escalators.

Both aims were examined by studying trends in the three components of the escalator theory. This included looking at the in-migration of educated young adults, the ability of non-migrants and migrants to enter the highest socioeconomic classes, and the characteristics of those who out-migrated. The study drew on annually released ONS internal migration data and, more importantly, the Office for National Statistics Longitudinal Study of England and Wales (ONS-LS), both of which were evaluated. The first finding was unsurprising. The London-Southeast continued to be the dominant escalator in England and Wales by attracting educated young people, allowing them, along with its resident population, the greatest chance of riding up the social mobility escalator, and then losing those who had reached the highest socioeconomic classes. However, in contrast to the original theory, those that stepped off the London-Southeast escalator were not all nearing the end of their working lives, but were in their late twenties and early thirties, as was predicted following the work of Champion (2012). The second finding was more illuminating. The London-Southeast's escalator performed better in the 2000s than it did in the 1990s despite the various events and processes occurring throughout the 2000s that had the potential to disrupt it. It would appear that the function of the escalator is relatively protected from outside influences, although there is a possibility that underlying societal changes do have an influence.

Related both to these results and the limitations of the study presented in the preceding section, there are areas of enquiry that could benefit from further research. There needs to be attempts to isolate the effects of migration on social mobility in order to ascertain the extent of the causality in the relationship. This can be done either by supplementing analysis of the ONS-LS with separate surveys (as carried out by Findlay et al (2009)) or by examining the social pathways in one intercensal period of those who migrated during the previous intercensal period, as advocated by Champion et al (2014). Secondly, this study has only compared the performance of the London-Southeast escalator between decades. Consequently, there is scope to examine how other regions compared between decades. There is also the possibility to examine the escalator theory from a life course perspective given that we now have data covering four decades. This would allow a full investigation into how individual lives are affected by the experience of stepping on, riding up and stepping off a regional escalator. Social mobility is a dynamic concept, and spatial differences in life chances requires an in-depth understanding if these differences are to be reduced. Internal migration offers one explanation and one remedy, but it requires more investigation before the relationship is fully understood.

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