

## Book Review

### Reviewed by

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**Keywords:** specialized education, work pathways, intra-European mobility, the velvet revolution, education and work, spatial pathways.

The book *Student and Graduate Mobility in Armenia* was written by David Cairns and Marine Sargsyan. David Cairns is a principal researcher at the Centre for Research and Studies in Sociology, ISCTE-University Institute of Lisbon, Portugal. Marine Sargsyan is a Ph.D Candidate at Roma Tre University, Italy.

The audience of the book will be students and scholars of mobility, youth, employment and education. Based on interviews with the students and graduates in Armenia and its diaspora, the book provides insight into some of the challenges involved in moving abroad. It also explores the reasons for student and graduate mobility in Armenia, such as political movement, social environment, historical ties, impact on life, hopes for future, etc. It not only contributes to the research of student and graduate mobility in Armenia, but also has significance for research in other countries.

The main purpose of this book is to gain an in-depth understanding of the “mobility” of students and graduates in Armenia, with a view expanding to other regions, and to make some valuable insights in to the “mobility” choices of students and graduates. The book tries to break some of the long standing beliefs about “mobility,” and gives a new interpretation of the word. It does not limit the word "mobility" to the concept of a spatial cycle any more. It defines "mobility" as a normal social phenomenon and academic resource. The “mobility” in the book focuses on the learning and working migration paths of high-quality youth and talent. It mainly

explains why the mobility of Armenian students and graduates occurs. It attempts to answer the questions, such as: where do the students and graduates gather? What kind of support will be required and what kind of difficulties will be encountered during the migration? Why do some people intend to stay in Armenia?

It is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 outlines the research background, including a brief exposition of social, economic, political and historical background, and introduces the research method and research fields. Chapter 2 is a theoretical explanation, which conceptualizes decision-making about mobility as a reflexive process. Chapter 3 highlights the main spatial channels in the form of qualitative interviews, especially relations with Russia, the United States and the European Union. Chapter 4 focuses on employment by continuing the interviewee's description and discusses the experience of working inside and outside Armenia in order to gain insights into the challenges of the domestic labor market and the attractiveness of moving elsewhere. Chapter 5 discusses the potential significance of Armenia's recent political changes on the lives of students and graduates. The last chapter of the book allows researchers to understand Armenia's potential political impact on talent mobility and discusses the signs of hope that may ultimately help shape future mobility plans.

After reading the book, we can't help but have deep questions about what those "mobility" issues are. We keep breaking our default concepts and stepping out of our knowledge circle. The book allows us to think about some issues from the perspective of case figures.

First, the physical term "reflection" appears frequently in this book. The book expands reflection in terms of internal conditions and external environment, and then proposes "internal conversation" and "external conversation." Whether Armenian students and graduates choose to move abroad to study or work is impacted by the dual protection of internal and external circumstances. This mobility decision is internally affected by life planning, family, friends, colleagues, finances, etc. The choice to move abroad is also affected by external factors like the political or economic factors of their home country versus their destination.

Additionally, the current problem of student and graduate mobility is a very new research issue that has aroused widespread concern in the academic community. However, many current studies focus on the description of the phenomenon of student and graduate mobility, without explaining why people move--let alone considering the origin and ontological significance of mobility. In this book, the author chose 51 interviewees to conduct loose-type interviews. This way, the interviewees could express their true feelings instead of adopting a unified answer style, which is often rigid and cannot be truly understanding of some of the helplessness and compromises behind the phenomenon. It provides a new paradigm for investigations in student research. The phenomenon is just an external appearance. Academic research is not only to describe how the external appearance is, it is more important to explore what causes this phenomenon.

Furthermore, in the book, mobility of Armenian students and graduates is mainly concentrated in the United States, the European Union, and Russia. Why is there a large gap in attractiveness in different places? For Armenian students and graduates, the United States, the European Union, and Russia have become their main destinations, mainly in terms of economic, social, political, and historical links. People's mobility may be driven by positive factors, or they may be forced to choose to move because they cannot meet their needs at home.

As scholars from China, we see some similarity in our student and graduate mobility. China is

now developing very fast, and there are a lot of opportunities. But we need to ask why there are still many students and graduates choosing to study abroad, even work abroad. Most of the students and graduates who can emigrate to the U.S. from China are supported both internally and externally. The internal personal factor guarantees the mobility. When moving abroad, you must have family relationships, family financial support, and excellent personal performance. The external environment is a driving factor for student and graduate mobility. The convenience of visa applications has facilitated student's and graduate's mobility. But we can also find a very peculiar phenomenon. With the gradual increase of age, many people return to their hometown from abroad, perhaps because of their attachment to the motherland. These people move back and forth between the two realms of ideal and reality.

The "mobility" of the author's words is no longer confined to the displacement of geographical position, but endowed with the dual artistic conception of reality and ideal. The words reflect the reasons, locations, difficulties and national policy orientation of most students and graduates who choose to study and work abroad. This not only prepares students who are about to go abroad with indirect practical experience, but also provides many scholars with a new thinking space for social mobility.