

INTRODUCTION

Parallel Lives and Segregation



In 1996, German sociologist Wilhelm Heitmeyer coined the term 'Parallelgesellschaft' in a newspaper article describing the results of an enquiry into the lifeworlds of young Turks in Germany. He used the term as a warning: if things continued the way they were, certain religious-political groups active among Turkish youngsters might go on to develop an inscrutable 'parallel society', separated from the majority (Heitmeyer 1996). The term lay dormant for a while, but reappeared in the aftermath of the murder of Dutch filmmaker Theo Van Gogh in 2004. Meanwhile in the United Kingdom, the Community Cohesion Review Team – set up after the riots that swept across the country in 2001 – had coined a similar concept, that of 'parallel lives'. The team's report expressed a concern about the extent to which 'the physical segregation of housing estates and inner city areas ... [was] compounded by so many other aspects of our daily lives', for example in 'separate educational arrangements, community and voluntary bodies, employment, places of worship, language, social and cultural networks'. From their observations, the team concluded 'that many communities operate on the basis of a series of parallel lives. These lives often do not seem to touch at any point, let alone overlap and promote any meaningful interchanges' (Cantle 2001).

Since then, the terms 'parallel lives' and 'parallel societies' have come to be part of standard vocabulary. Both in political discussions and in the public debate, the idea that some ethnic minorities are in fact living separately from the majority has become a basic assumption, backed up by a certain amount of empirical data. Decades of research producing different kinds of

‘segregation indices’ (Saltman 1991, 1–2) have shown occasionally high rates of residential concentration for specific immigrant groups in specific parts of European cities, and research mapping segregation and mixing at the level of individual social networks has shown a low occurrence of close relationships across ethnic boundaries (Leibold, Kühnel and Heitmeyer 2006). This kind of research however generally focuses on situations that are characterized by extreme levels of concentration and segregation, paying a lot less attention to more commonly occurring patterns of dispersion and mixing. Such a focus is related to the policy-orientedness of migration research, which means that it is mostly interested in what is perceived as problematic. Indeed, the whole discourse of ‘parallel lives’ is far from neutral. In general, only the lives of those populations that are politically constructed as troublesome (such as Pakistani in the United Kingdom, Algerians in France, or Turks in Germany) tend to be framed in these terms. Groups that sometimes exhibit equally high degrees of segregation, such as expatriates in metropolises around the world, are hardly ever accused of living in ‘parallel societies’. Clearly, the issue of class is at stake here, as patterns of concentration and segregation of high-income groups are not problematized, whereas those of low-income groups are. Further, it is remarkable that the research hardly ever focuses on the majority group. The extent to which ‘indigenous populations’ allow for people with a different ethnic background to live, work and go to school amongst them and become part of their social lives is much less the object of scrutiny than the other way around (Martinovic 2013). In the political and the public discourse, this translates into the fact that the blame for ‘parallel lives’ is clearly put on the ‘others’, the immigrants and their descendants. However, research that looks at diversity in practice from different angles comes to very different conclusions than the research cited above. It shows how ‘despite the alarming talk about immigrants and minorities concentrating in ethnically diverse neighbourhoods and related worries about social cohesion ... people of diverse ethnic backgrounds do get along in shared urban spaces’ (Pratsinakis et al. 2017, 103–104).

The results of such empirical research looking at the social relations of people ‘on the ground’ also go against the grain of the popular theory claiming that ethnic diversity *an sich* should be seen as a cause for the loss of social cohesion in Western societies. Popularized by American sociologist Robert Putnam as the ‘hunkering down-thesis’ (Putnam 2007), this theory has strengthened many policy makers in their belief that social problems in diverse neighbourhoods need to be tackled first and foremost in terms of (ethnic) diversity. However, as different scholars – amongst whom Putnam himself in his 2007 paper – have indicated, the premises on which this theory is based have a number of shortcomings. One of those is that the data used by Putnam (as by many other scholars) provide a static picture of reality, and do not allow

for a dynamic interpretation of what are essentially processes over time. The importance of this is demonstrated, for example, by Gesthuizen et al., whose research refuted the effect of ethnic diversity as such, but did find proof for the impact of a change in the degree of diversity through recent immigration (Gesthuizen, van der Meer and Scheepers 2009, 131–33). Another problem with the hunkering down-thesis is that the concepts it uses – ethnic diversity and social capital – are so broad that they in fact become all-encompassing, which makes it difficult to understand the exact meaning of the relations between them. There is a need to break them down into more specific concepts, that can inform us better about what is actually going on (Gijsberts, van der Meer and Dagevos 2012). By making a detailed reconstruction of how newcomers from different countries of origin – some problematized, some not – found their place at work and in the neighbourhood, what kind of social capital they developed there, and how all of this changed over time, this book hopes to contribute to both the parallel lives- and the social cohesion-debate.

A Time-Related Thwarting of our Knowledge

The policy-orientedness of migration-related research is not only reflected in its subject matter, but also in its history, with the bulk of research appearing after the mid-1970s. With a few exceptions,¹ postwar labour migrants in Europe initially aroused little interest from the receiving states, and thus from the social scientists working there. Only with the outbreak of the economic crisis did these immigrants and their descendants become the centre of attention (Cottaar, Bouras and Laouikili 2009, 17–20). Therefore, not only is our knowledge of their integration patterns limited in time; it is essentially limited to a context of crisis and economic hardship. What we think happened during the first thirty years of postwar labour migration is more inspired by our imagination than based on actual research. For example, in his excellent work on immigrant integration in a Dutch city, Peter Reinsch states ‘When I consider the historical background of much European immigration, rooted in the demand for unskilled labourers to do menial work that indigenous Europeans were unwilling to do, an image arises of oppressed immigrants populating factory production lines occasionally interspersed with an indigenous overseer’. However, he immediately concedes, ‘no local statistics are available from the “guest worker era” of the 1960s and 1970s that would corroborate the image of more secluded laborers in the past’ (Reinsch 2001, 197).

The provenance of such ideas is certainly related to the approach taken by a number of iconic studies on postwar labour migration, such as the classic *Immigrant Workers and Class Structure in Western Europe* by Castles

and Kosack. Basing their work on a Marxist interpretation of macro-scale developments, these authors described the position of foreign workers as follows:

Immigrant workers in France, Germany, Switzerland, and Britain are usually employed in occupations rejected by indigenous workers. In a situation of full employment, the nationals of the countries concerned have taken advantage of opportunities for moving into better-paying, more pleasant jobs, usually in the white collar or skilled sectors. The immigrants have been left with the jobs deserted by the others. (Castles and Kosack 1985, 112)

Although they did not explicitly address the issue of spatial or social mixing across ethnic boundaries, such descriptions did feed the idea of a high degree of segregation between immigrant and local workers.

More recently, a new group of scholars have come to take an interest in the issue of postwar labour migration to Europe. Migration historians have retraced the history of this migration to its initial years, approaching the subject from different angles – including bottom-up and micro-scale perspectives – and thereby uncovering a more nuanced picture of this crucial period. Some studies have analysed the political and legislative frameworks encompassing this migration; others have looked at the reactions of receiving societies to the arrival of newcomers; and yet others have focused on the integration of the latter in their new environment (Oltmer, Krienbrink and Sanz Diaz 2012). Offering such a historical perspective on the integration processes of postwar labour migrants is exactly what this book will do. By going back to the beginning and following these processes over a period of twenty years, it aims to help us better understand the trajectory postwar immigrant populations have covered since their arrival and the position they find themselves in today. As such, the book hopes to provide a much needed historical background to present-day discussions on ‘parallel lives’.

The Subject of this Book

Broadly speaking, this book studies the spatial and social integration of immigrants in the receiving society. The notion of integration is stripped of its normative connotations: we do not judge integration processes in terms of success or failure, nor do we speak of ‘more’ or ‘less’ integrated immigrants. Following Lucassen (2005), we use an open and functionalist definition of integration, conceived as ‘the general sociological mechanism that describes the way in which all people find their place in society’. Further, we focus on the structural and social aspects of integration, rather than on what has

been called ‘identificational integration’, referring to issues of ascribed and self-ascribed identity (Lucassen 2005, 18–20). Some very good historical work on this subject has been done. For example, in her excellent book on the identificational integration patterns of Moroccan immigrants in the Netherlands, based on a detailed study of changing dress codes, Dutch historian Aniek Smit has shown how such integration cannot be seen as a one-way road to either more or less separateness. Whereas certain aspects of difference have faded over time and generations, others have regained importance, and all of these changes have had a different meaning to different individuals and groups (Smit 2011). Studying the identificational integration processes of Polish and Italian immigrants and their Belgian colleagues and neighbours in a miners’ town, her Belgian colleague Leen Beyers has shown how, for newcomers, the boundaries between ‘natives’ and ‘foreigners’ continuously remained strong. It was only over the course of the following generation(s) that these ‘outsiders’ could become real ‘insiders’, and this only because conditions were right (Beyers 2008). Clearly, a thorough understanding of such identificational integration processes requires a study over many decades and across generations. This does not fall within the scope of this book, which only looks at the settlement processes of first generation immigrants during the first twenty years in their new ‘home lands’.

Because of this, the book does not discuss the extent to which immigrants applied for and acquired the nationality of the receiving society. In part, this is also because in the period under study naturalization rates of first generation immigrants were very low, not least because of restrictive legislation and complex, expensive procedures. Only when this was changed, from the early 1990s onwards, did naturalization become an attainable option for many and do naturalization rates tell us more about immigrants’ (identificational) integration processes (Caestecker et al. 2016). For the same reason, the book does not address the issue of interethnic family formation, even though it is at the heart of the debate on segregation and parallel lives (Caestecker 2005). We argue that at least for first generation immigrants, patterns of partner-choice have been heavily related to the independent variables of sex-ratio of the immigrant group at the time of arrival, and of age and marital status at migration. However, we do recognize the impact of partner-choice on the further development of immigrants’ social and human capital in the receiving society, showing how mixed marriages endowed immigrants with a wider social network and more bridging social capital – the other side of a causal relationship between upward social mobility and a higher degree of mixed marriages as described in the literature (Lucassen and Laarman 2009, 55). Therefore, throughout the analysis, being married across or within ethnic boundaries is brought to the fore as an important explanatory variable. In the conclusion to the book, where we briefly discuss the integration processes of

immigrants and especially of their descendants from the 1980s onwards, we will pay more attention to the issue of partner-choice.

Even though the book does not focus on the identificational aspects of integration, it does make use of the concept of ethnicity. However, rather than making this concept the subject of study, looking at its changing meaning to different individuals and groups of people, this book uses it in a more descriptive way, as a proxy for what could also be labelled national, regional, linguistic, etc. identity. Ethnicity is understood as a social variable referring to shared origin and culture, that is self-ascribed and/or ascribed by others and can be activated in order to mobilize social capital, to discriminate, to obtain economic gain, etc. Throughout the book, it comes to the fore as only one of many different social variables that have impacted upon the positions and trajectories of Mediterranean immigrants in the receiving society. Its precise meaning is analysed more thoroughly when specific phenomena, coined in terms of 'ethnicity' – such as 'ethnic workplaces' or 'ethnic neighbourhoods' – are discussed. In this book, it makes sense to use 'ethnicity' in such a descriptive way, even though this does imply that we lose track of the constant negotiations of ethnic boundaries between and within groups that are at the heart of this concept.

The structural and social aspects of immigrants' integration processes are studied through the lens of two spheres of integration: work and housing. Even though in practice, these spheres are strongly interconnected and overlapping, here they are separated for the sake of the analysis. Work and housing of course are not the only domains where immigrants found their place in the receiving society. Lucassen's definition of integration covers almost every aspect of human life. The choice for work and housing relates to the fact that they are seen as particularly useful indicators of integration, as they span a large part of the daily lives of postwar labour migrants and their families. The importance of work in the integration processes of these immigrants can hardly be overstated, even if it is often treated as secondary in the public debate. As work was at the very core of their migration project, its nature and context need to be more closely examined in order to allow us to fully understand their trajectories in the receiving societies (Sontz 1987). Housing on the other hand is at the centre of attention in the public debate, as it is the socio-spatial concentration of immigrants in so-called 'ethnic neighbourhoods' that most clearly seems to prove their segregation and the development of 'parallel societies'. Apart from this, residential location is pivotal to the integration processes of immigrants, as it is 'a factor which not only reflects social distance and acts as a symbol of status, but which also determines, to a large extent, access to services and therefore to life chances' (Robinson 1999, 415). Finally, these two spheres were chosen for their high degree of comparability, allowing us to confront the roles of immigrants as

‘replacement workers’ and ‘replacement dwellers’ in the secondary segments of both the labour and housing markets.

Clearly, this book sets out to answer many of the same questions asked by others who tackle the issues of integration, segregation and parallel lives. Where do immigrants work and live? What kind of jobs do they do? What do the houses and neighbourhoods they live in look like? What are their opportunities for social contact across ethnic boundaries? To what extent are these opportunities translated into actual contacts? And what kind of relationships come out of these contacts?

It differs however from most of the literature by combining two subjects that are often developed separately: the structural positioning of immigrants, and the social relations they develop. The focus on the latter has recently gained a much stronger foothold in the social sciences due to the popularity of the paradigm of ‘everyday multiculturalism’ (Wise and Velayutham 2009); however, it is still underdeveloped in comparison to the former. Combining the structural with the social seems crucial for an understanding of the whole picture of the integration process, as ‘the behaviour of individuals and the interactions between groups cannot be simply clarified by differences in position or orientations’ and vice versa (Reinsch 2001, 21). By looking at immigrants’ positions in the labour and housing markets on the one hand and their actual social behaviour in the workplace and the neighbourhood on the other hand, this book aims to provide a more thorough understanding of both.

As already indicated above, this book tackles a period that has only recently become the subject of research: the 1960s and 1970s, when the bulk of postwar labour migrants and their families arrived in the receiving societies. Understanding the historical circumstances of their arrival as well as the initial position allocated to them is necessary to fully comprehend their subsequent trajectories and those of their offspring. As this book will show, it is not only the amount of time immigrants have spent in the receiving society but also the exact moment at which they arrived that are important factors influencing the positions they occupy and the kinds of social relations they engage in. Therefore, we cannot understand the current position of immigrants if we do not look back at the moment in which they first arrived. This has also been shown for more recent newcomers in Europe today (Pratsinakis et al. 2017, 112–113).

Finally, the book stands out from the current literature in that it goes beyond a snapshot in time and instead follows the integration processes of these immigrants, their degree of concentration and the extent to which they were segregated from others over a period of twenty years. As befits a historical study, the book analyses and explains these historical developments within an ever changing context, paying attention to both changes

in individual and group behaviour and in the political, social and economic opportunity structures surrounding it. As such, the book aims to offer a more nuanced understanding of the mechanisms underlying immigrants' integration processes in the past as well as today.

Methodology

Understanding immigrants' integration processes and their changes over time asks for a balanced perspective on the interplay of many different factors. It means understanding the complex relations between causes and consequences, and between choice and constraint. Such complexity is absent from much of the discourse on 'parallel lives' and 'parallel societies', where the blame for the perceived division in society is squarely put with the immigrants and their descendants – especially if they are Muslim – whereas the impact of the attitudes and behaviour of members of the majority is not taken into account (Phillips 2006).

In the realm of the social sciences, the matter of choice vs. constraint translates into the ever present question of agency vs. structure. Even though never as black-and-white as in the public debate, scholarly analyses of the patterns of concentration/segregation of immigrant populations tend to position themselves towards one end of the spectrum between structural determination and individual agency. When it comes to the study of postwar labour migrants, structural explanations have long prevailed, presenting them as victims of the economic and political powers that structured their migration to and integration in Western European societies. More recently, there has been an increase in studies that pay closer attention to the agency of these immigrants, portraying them not as victims but as active agents, adventurers even, carving out their own trajectories and shaping their own lives (von Oswald, Schönwälder and Sonnenberger 2003, 31). At times however, these studies seem to go too far, presenting individual immigrants' trajectories as unique experiences and neglecting the structural contexts that frame them and the collective stories in which they are embedded (Fernandez Asperilla 2004, 195). In order to combine the insights of both stances, this book takes what Nancy Green has called a poststructural structuralist approach (Green 1997b, 71–72), examining the history of immigrant integration as an interplay between the agency of individuals and groups on the one hand, and the structures surrounding their settlement and integration processes on the other hand.

Within this poststructural structuralist framework, the book adopts a multidimensional perspective on the integration processes it studies, as opposed to the ethno-focal perspective that prevails not only in the public debate

but also in a lot of research. Indeed, many integration studies are marked by what we could call (paraphrasing Rogers Brubaker) ‘ethnic groupism’: the tendency to see ‘ethnic groups’ as ‘fundamental units of analysis and basic constituents of the social world’ (Brubaker 2004, 2). From this perspective, the position and behaviour of immigrants are often interpreted as and even reduced to a consequence of their ‘ethnic identity’ (Baumann 1996, 1–6). As early as the 1990s, Nancy Green pointed out the ‘risk in “ethnicizing” relations beyond what the historical record can bear’ (Green 1997a, 209), and one decade later, Lucassen et al. claimed that the ‘uncritical assumption that immigrants comprised homogeneous national or ethnic groups often stands in the way of a nuanced understanding of the integration process’ (Lucassen, Feldman and Oltmer 2006, 15). Despite these and other critiques, many studies continue to be framed by an ethnic lens that obscures the diversity of immigrants’ experiences and trajectories (Glick Schiller, Çağlar and Gulbrandsen 2006, 613). Many others, including the advocates of the relatively recent ‘super-diversity’-paradigm,² have called for a multidimensional perspective to replace the ethno-focal one. Such a perspective allows for a clearer delineation of the differences and similarities within immigrant populations that cross ethnic boundaries, and for a clearer understanding of how these affect the ways in which immigrants construct their lives in the receiving societies.³ This book applies such a multidimensional perspective, looking at a wide range of social variables beyond ethnicity. These include not only socio-demographic characteristics such as age, gender and marital status, but also migration-related factors such as moment of arrival, period of residence and administrative status, as well as socio-cultural attributes such as language proficiency and education.

In order to analyse the interplay between structure and agency whilst paying attention to all of these different variables, three specific methodological choices were made. One, the focus of the research was not on one ‘ethnic group’, but on a broader category of immigrants not defined by their ethnicity. The subjects of this book therefore are not ‘Turkish’ or ‘Italian’ immigrants, but what I have called ‘Mediterranean immigrants’, postwar labour migrants and their families, coming from the Mediterranean periphery to the European core during the period of economic boom. Two, the research methodology combined quantitative and qualitative methods, providing both a numerical analysis of the research population and its behaviour as a group as well as a more narrative analysis of the opportunity structures as well as the choices and motivations of individual immigrants. Three, the research was carried out by means of a local case study. The immigrant population that was to be the subject of study was delineated based on their move to a particular locality, and the integration processes that would be studied were constricted to those that occurred within the context of this locality. This

focus at the local level allows the book to fully grasp the complex interplay between the behaviour and experiences of immigrants in their everyday lives and the highly specific and ever changing opportunity structures in which these occurred (Ruble, Hanley and Garland 2008, 8).

Finally, for the analysis of social relations both at the workplace and in the neighbourhood, we have made use of a classification system developed by urban sociologist Talja Blokland (2003a). Even though Blokland elaborated this system specifically for neighbour relations, it can easily be applied to workplace-based relations as well. According to Blokland, this kind of social relations are at the very least ‘interdependencies’, abstract connections that become clear when, for example, the behaviour of one individual becomes a nuisance to the others. When people start doing each other small favours that benefit both parties, Blokland speaks of ‘transactional relations’. Neighbours and colleagues who value good social relations and are willing to put in more effort can develop ‘attachments’ – they greet each other and regularly chat, and are willing to help when they are needed, without however really getting to know the other as a specific individual. When the uniqueness of individuals does matter and social relations develop into friendships, or when neighbours or colleagues are also relatives, their relations are described by Blokland as ‘bonds’ (Blokland 2003a, 78–85). These concepts will come back in chapters 3 and 5 of this book.

Case Study and Research Population

The case study upon which this book is based focuses on the integration processes of labour migrants and their families coming from six countries on both sides of the Mediterranean (Spain, Italy, Turkey, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco) who settled in the Belgian city of Ghent over the course of the 1960s and 1970s.

The choice of immigrants from these six countries was based on their numerical importance. Each country was represented in the city by at least 450 citizens during the period under study. Other nationalities who could also fall under the category of Mediterranean immigrants, such as Portuguese, Yugoslavs or Greeks, were left out as their numbers never reached more than a couple of dozens.⁴

The period 1960–1980 was chosen because those twenty years witnessed major changes in the (local) opportunity structures as well as the immigrant population itself. Whereas up until the late 1950s, the city had been almost exclusively dependent on its textile industry, the following decades were characterized by a process of large-scale economic diversification. At the same time, the size of the non-Belgian population in the city skyrocketed, and its

origin changed from mostly neighbouring countries to the Mediterranean. In addition, against a wider backdrop of international developments, studying these two decades allows for an interesting comparison between a period of economic growth, coinciding with a relatively open-door policy towards labour migrants, and a period of economic crisis, marked by a more restrictive immigration policy.

Finally, the city of Ghent was chosen as the focus of this book as a historical context that differed from the one that is more common in this kind of studies: a metropolis such as Paris, London or Berlin; a smaller city with long-term established immigrant communities, like Birmingham, Antwerp or Lyon; or a (semi-)rural town around a site of industrial activity, such as the mining towns in the north of France, the south of Belgium or the German Ruhr. Such a different context leads to different outcomes in the integration process. As a middle-sized provincial capital with a diversifying economy, Ghent offered a setting that allowed for a relatively large degree of agency in the choice of a job and house, but not quite the unlimited opportunities of the metropolis. It provided a context big enough to sustain the development of ‘ethnic economies’ and ‘ethnic neighbourhoods’, but too small to contain a fully developed ‘ethnic infrastructure’. Finally, in this city, postwar ‘guest workers’ and their families were the first immigrants to arrive and settle in large numbers. The city had hardly seen any international migration in the Interbellum or the immediate postwar period. Ghent was not alone in this. At precisely this moment, all over northwestern Europe, middle-sized urban communities such as Ghent were confronted for the first time with a massive influx of immigrants coming from afar. As Sarah Hackett, who studied the immigrant populations in two such communities, Newcastle and Bremen, declared: ‘further research on [their] numerically smaller and often neglected ethnic minority populations ... would offer a new sphere to the study of integration’ (Hackett 2013, 225). This book therefore holds value beyond its case study, and thus we contend that its main findings can be extrapolated to other, similar cities, which up until now have remained largely understudied.

Source Material

Paying attention to both structure and agency through a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods requires a combination of different kinds of sources. The bulk of the material for the quantitative research for this book was a sample of individual immigrant files, stored in the archives of the city’s registrar’s office. Most of the qualitative research was based on (the transcriptions of) oral history interviews.

The archive of the registrar's office of the city of Ghent contains a collection of individual files that were drawn up by the administration for all immigrants at their arrival in the city, and this from the mid nineteenth century until the end of the period under study (Caestecker, Strubbe and Tallier 2009). These files include the personal data of all members of the household: name, place and date of birth, family history, migration history, professional data, information about residence, labour and professional permits, list of addresses in the city, etc. Since no individual files were drawn up for immigrants who already had a permanent residence permit when they arrived in the city, these immigrants were traced by a search in the so-called 'registers of arrival' and in the population registers. A sample was taken from these archives, providing data on some 1,600 individuals. It is likely to approach 10 per cent of the total immigrant population, but since there are no data on the total number of arrivals, we cannot be more precise. More information on this sample and the way in which it was used can be found in the quantitative appendix at the end of the book. An additional source of quantitative data was the personnel register of the Union Cotonnière, later UCO Ltd, then the biggest employer of immigrant labour in the city. From this register, a sample of 570 immigrant employees was taken, selected in the same way as the sample described above. The quantitative processing of these data allowed for a better insight in the employment trajectories of the immigrants working in the city's textile industry.

Data for the qualitative part of the research came from a variety of sources, most importantly the yearly reports of the city of Ghent; a number of contemporary BA and MA theses; the minutes of the Ghent City Council; and different institutional and private archives, most importantly those of the local unions, the city's Consultative Commission for Guest Workers, and of Maurice Maréchal, the city's first integration officer. However, the most important sources for the qualitative analysis were interviews conducted with first generation immigrants and, to a lesser extent, with so-called 'privileged witnesses' (employers, integration workers, Belgian partners of immigrants, etc.). Some of these interviews were carried out specifically for this research, whereas others had been generated in the course of other projects, either by the author herself or by others.

The forty-nine interviews that were conducted specifically for this research were carried out over the period 2009–2011. The first contacts with interviewees were made by visiting key spaces such as mosques, shops and cafés; by contacting companies that had employed many immigrants; and through the author's personal network. From there, subsequent interviewees were found through the method of snowballing. Interviewing continued until a qualitatively representative sample was reached. Specifically, we ensured that the sample covered both men and women of different nationalities; recruited

and spontaneous, pioneer and chain migrants; independent labour migrants and family migrants; immigrants working in different economic sectors; those who were single at arrival and those who were married; etc. Interviews were conducted mostly at the homes of the people concerned, sometimes at the workplace or at one of the above-mentioned key spaces, and sometimes in a 'neutral' place like a coffee house, the public library, a park, etc. The method used was that of life story interviewing, opening up the interview to include all aspects of the interviewee's life, but centred around the topic of migration to and integration in Ghent. No questionnaires were used, but the interviewer did try to let the interviewee touch upon the themes that were specific to the research. The interviews lasted anywhere between one and three hours, and some respondents were interviewed more than once. Most of the interviews with first generation immigrants were conducted in what we could call an 'in-between language' (mostly French). In some cases, the interview was done in Dutch, often in the presence of a son or daughter of the interviewee, who functioned as an ad hoc-interpreter. Only the Italian respondents were interviewed in their native language.

In addition, the research made use of seventy-seven oral history interviews carried out in the framework of other projects that took place over the course of the 1990s and early 2000s, fourteen of which by the author herself, the others by students at the university of Ghent or by volunteers of local immigrant organizations. The sampling methods, circumstances of the interviews and languages used are widely divergent from one project to another, and, within the same project, from one interviewer to another. The specific issues some of these interviews suffer from will be brought up where they are quoted in the text. Suffice it to say here that – in the case of students – most of the interviews were carried out through the mediation of a (voluntary) interpreter, and some of the interviewers were clearly not properly prepared to do this kind of work, which negatively influenced the quality of the interviews.

A third set of nine interviews were not historical but contemporary, carried out over the years 1970–1971 by Robin Roeck, a student at the University of Ghent. These interviews are particularly interesting as they give additional information compared to the oral history interviews, showing, for example, the high degree of mobility and the importance of return in the earlier years of labour migration. Whereas our quantitative research clearly indicated a large percentage of immigrants leaving the city after a very short period of time (see chapter 1), the oral history interviews did not say much about this group of passers-by. Their social relations at the workplace and in the neighbourhood probably remained superficial, as was also the case for permanent immigrants in the beginning of their stay in Ghent. When reading the analysis in this book, it is important to keep in mind that many newcomers

never made it past the initial stage of settling in, and that the description of social relations as they developed over time was only valid for a small part of the total number of immigrants arriving in the city during the period under study.

By combining these interviews with different kinds of contemporary source materials, we have tried to make up for the biases that invariably enter all sources that were created *post factum*. It is not within the scope of this introduction to repeat the debate on these and other methodological issues that arise when using these sources. This has been done time and again, and the interested reader can consult a plethora of publications on the topic.⁵

The Scope of the Book

The book starts with an introductory chapter in which we briefly introduce the changes that took place in the labour and housing markets of the city of Ghent during the period under study.

In the second chapter, we explore the position taken by immigrants in the local labour market, looking at the different economic sectors in which they were concentrated and the kind of jobs they did. To get a better idea of the social contact these jobs allowed for, we briefly describe their spatial and temporal characteristics. We then focus on the mobility of immigrant workers in the labour market and look at the extent to which immigrants worked with Belgian colleagues and other immigrants across ethnic boundaries.

In the third chapter, we look at the actual development of social relations between immigrant workers, their colleagues and their employers in the micro-cosmos of the workplace. Distinguishing between different kinds of workplaces, we try to explain the nature of these relations and their changes over time.

The fourth chapter focuses on the position of immigrants in the local housing market and their spatial dispersion across the city. First, we analyse the kind of housing immigrants and their families came to occupy. Further, we sketch some of the characteristics of the neighbourhoods they ended up in. Finally, we take a look at their residential mobility and discuss the extent to which immigrants shared their streets and neighbourhoods with Belgians and other immigrants across ethnic boundaries, and how this changed throughout the period under study.

The fifth chapter of the book analyses the development of social relations in the neighbourhoods where immigrants and their families came to live. After a short description of the specific situation in temporary housing, we first take a look at the relations immigrant families developed with co-ethnic neighbours, then at those with neighbours across ethnic boundaries. In the

last part of this chapter, we discuss the ways in which these neighbourly relations changed over the course of the 1970s, in a climate marked by economic recession and heightened racism.

The book concludes with a summary of the mechanisms underlying the ways in which immigrants' structural positions and social relations at work and in the neighbourhood have changed over time. What happened in the 1960s and 1970s had a major impact on what was to follow. The second part of the conclusion touches upon the more recent past, providing a brief discussion of how the immigrants that are the subject of this book and their descendants have fared over time. On a final note, the conclusion revisits the notions of 'parallel lives' and 'hunkering down', looking at what this book has added to the ongoing debate.

Notes

1. E.g. the Algerian population in France which, at the time of the War of Independence, 1954–1962, came to be considered a threat to national security and thus worthy of surveillance (Blanc-Chaléard 2006, 52).
2. See Vertovec 2007 for a comprehensive overview of the meanings and development of the term.
3. For a discussion of the limitations of an 'ethnic lens' in migration research, see, amongst others, Kloosterman and Rath 2003, 6; Glick Schiller, Çağlar and Guldbrandsen 2006, 613; Ratcliffe 2009, 446–47; Vertovec 2007.
4. In 1980, the final year of the period under study here, only 51 Portuguese, 32 Yugoslavs and 66 Greeks were registered in Ghent. Yearly report of the city, 1980.
5. A thorough discussion of this and other issues that come to the fore in oral history practice can be found in, amongst others, Tonkin 1992; Perks and Thomson 1998; Charlton, Myers and Sharpless 2008.