

SUPERDIVERSITY IN THE HEART OF EUROPE

HOW MIGRATION CHANGES OUR SOCIETY

Superdiversity in the heart of Europe

How migration changes our society

Dirk Geldof

Acco Leuven / Den Haag

First print: 2016

Published by

Uitgeverij Acco, Blijde Inkomststraat 22, 3000 Leuven, België
E-mail: uitgeverij@acco.be – Website: www.uitgeverijacco.be

For The Netherlands:

Acco Nederland, Westvlietweg 67 F, 2495 AA De Haag, Nederland
E-mail: info@uitgeverijacco.nl – Website: www.uitgeverijacco.nl

Cover design: www.frisco-ontwerpbureau.be

Translated by Ian Connerty

© 2016 by Acco (Academische Coöperatieve Vennootschap cvba), Leuven (België)

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form, by mimeograph, film or any other means without permission in writing from the publisher.

D/2016/0543/47

NUR 740

ISBN 978-94-6292-428-4



Contents

On superdiversity	9
<i>Preface by Jenny Phillimore</i>	
Introduction	15
Chapter 1 From migrant labour to superdiversity	21
A short history of migration in Belgium	22
Actively searching for migrant workers	23
The crisis years of the 1970s and the illusion of a migration stop	26
The 1990s: political asylum and the expansion of the EU	27
Migration in the 21 st century	28
How Belgium became a migration country	30
Chapter 2 The superdiversity of the 21st century	33
The transition to superdiversity	34
Majority-minority cities	35
Diversity within diversity	38
Superdiversity as a process of differentiation	44
Reality is changing more quickly than our language	46
New words for a new reality	53
Chapter 3 Migration from top to bottom	55
Growing poverty among ethnic minorities	56
Urban poverty	58
Superdiversity in social assistance	59

Put poverty on the agenda	61
A growing middle class	65
Towards a more dynamic vision	69
Cities as emancipation machines	71
Chapter 4 The need for a more cosmopolitan vision	77
Old ways of looking at new realities	78
Beyond methodological nationalism	79
Beck's cosmopolitan vision	81
From 'either...or' to 'and...and'	82
Transnationality and ambivalence	84
A new modernity	86
Our cities are becoming more cosmopolitan	87
The children colour our cities	91
Cosmopolitan apartheid?	93
Chapter 5 Transnational lives and families	95
Living across borders	95
Transnational networks and worlds	97
'Having your cake and eating it, too'	100
Many different types of transnationality	100
Different forms of transnationality	101
Transnational spaces	104
Transmigration or multiple migrations	106
Transnational relationships and families	109
Relationships and migration	112
Maternal love from afar?	116
Towards a multiplicity of different family models?	118
Challenges for family policy	121
Chapter 6 The hidden city	125
The official city versus the real city	125
The importance of regularization campaigns	128

Undocumented migrants in Antwerp	130
Without papers, but not without a job?	133
Hidden in plain sight	134
Arrival districts	137
Chapter 7 They should just learn how to integrate...	141
What exactly do we mean?	141
Integration: a term with many meanings	146
Integration as a controversial concept	149
Does integration actually exclude people?	149
Is integration policy becoming irrelevant?	152
Can integration work across borders?	155
Social cohesion in superdiversity	156
Integration in an age of multilingualism	158
From integration to emancipation and participation	165
Chapter 8 Multiculturalism 2.0	171
The multicultural drama?	173
The arguments of new realism	176
Which multiculturalism is bankrupt?	178
Multiculturalism 2.0	183
In search of a shared citizenship	187
Towards a scenario of hope and empowerment	189
Chapter 9 Dancing around culture	191
Between redistribution and recognition	192
Between structure and culture	197
The advancing tide of culturalization	199
Not culture but structure?	201
Dancing around culture	204
Dealing vigorously and effectively with culture	206
Structure and culture	208
Active pluralism as the basic approach	210

Chapter 10	How to deal with superdiversity?	215
	Living at a turning point	217
	From division and polarization...	219
	... towards hope and solidarity	220
Coda		225
Notes		231
References		245

On superdiversity

Preface by Jenny Phillimore

Director of the Institute for Research into Superdiversity (IRiS, University of Birmingham)¹

Steven Vertovec's introduction of the term "super-diversity" appeared first in relation to London with an accompanied suggestion that the phenomenon might be observed elsewhere in the UK. Subsequently it might be argued that the concept has been widely adopted in Europe, often quite uncritically, and frequently used to describe the arrival of more migrants from more places to more places. Vertovec considers such approach as a '*one-dimensional appreciation of contemporary diversity*'. Rather he suggests we focus on the '*transformative diversification of diversity*' connecting ideas about the origin of people with other variables (reason for migration, age, occupation, generation. ...) which shape their lives and opportunities.²

Since its original invocation understandings of superdiversity have moved on and certainly the focus has evolved from describing the complexification of populations following wide-spread new migration to the proposition that superdiversity offers a new way of looking at society. Further it has been suggested that superdiversity does not mean that all the contexts that preceded it are erased, but that new migration adds an additional layer of complexity as it interacts with existing and ongoing multicultural populations: those who arrived in large numbers and who have subsequently become an integral part of our societies, and existing populations who might be described as native or autochtoon (in Flemish) and who originate in the country. There is much evidence enabling us to argue that superdiversity represents the emergence of a *new* demographic reality. Although some argue that it harks back to earlier times of movement and mixing

such as the Edwardian era in Great Britain when lack of legal restrictions on movement meant that travel was easy,³ innovations enabled trans-Atlantic exploration,⁴ and cities such as Guanzhou and Dhaka were the loci of business and trade housing people of many different nationalities⁵, the scale, speed and spread of superdiversification exceeds anything previously experienced and is in evidence across much of the developed world.

In OECD countries net migration has become the main driver of population growth in the 21st Century. In Europe an acceleration in change is evident. The contribution of net migration to populations has shifted from around 100,000 persons per year pre 1985 to 600,000 between 1985 and 2000 and in the past decade around 1,000,000 per annum. The advent of the so-called migration crisis, wherein one million individuals are expected to arrive in Europe from the Levant region alone in 2015, indicates just how quickly superdiversification can occur. The scale of change varies by country. For example Korea experienced a quadrupling of population born overseas between 2007 and 2013 yet the scale of diversification remains low with migrants making up less than 2% of the population (350,200 permanent arrivals) whereas in the same period immigration to Germany increased by 2,045,000 permanent arrivals.⁶

While some cities have, as Ndhlovu points out⁷, always been diverse, and high levels of mobility are not new, what is notable is the spread of diversity from urban arrival neighbourhoods to suburbs and rural areas as well as to countries like Korea with little previous immigration experience. The 2011 census in the UK showed that rural counties such as Herefordshire in the Midlands region received unprecedented numbers of arrivals with a 213% rise since 2001. In Australia and Europe Government policy of dispersing asylum seekers and refugees to rural areas and small towns has led to totally new encounters with diversity, while in Canada and Australia the secondary movement of migrants and minorities from arrival zones to suburbs has become the norm.⁸

Yet the arrival of more people to more places is, as Vertovec argues, just part of the dynamic of superdiversity. It contributes to increasing demographic complexity but there are other factors shaping the diversification of diversity that are harder to trace in national data sets. Fran Meissner & Steven Vertovec illustrate that the diversification of migrants' origins is augmented by changing migration channels.⁹ In just ten years from 2001 to 2010 migration channels vary enormously between temporary migrants, labour migrants, family migrants, humanitarian migrants, students, seasonal workers and others. For example Sweden experienced a shift from 55% work-related migrants in 2001 to just 5% in 2010 while the category of humanitarian migrants increases from around 25% to 39%. Such shifts are observed in many EU countries which are clearly experiencing major demographic changes and associated increase in complexity. Some diversification is driven by Government immigration and integration policy. Increasingly individuals' rights and entitlements to welfare and citizenship are conditional on their immigration status or length of residence rather than ethnicity or country of origin and these conditions shape the ways that individuals are able to live, their opportunities for inclusion and social mobility and their sense of belonging. Onward and return migration add further complications around for example the portability of welfare which influence individuals' decisions about if, when and where to migrate, at least for those who are not forced migrants.¹⁰ Within Europe free movement and differential rights and entitlements accelerate mobility as individuals gain citizenship in one country and then move to another to benefit from more relaxed rules around enterprise or family reunion. Superdiversity then is without doubt a new demographic phenomenon which extends way beyond London. Yet it is argued that the term offers great potential beyond describing a demographic state. Fran Meissner and Steven Vertovec¹¹ highlight the original intention to '*recognise the multi-dimensional shifts in migration patterns*' in three ways: descriptive to encapsulate changing demographic configura-

tions (with the emphasis on change), as methodological bringing a new lens moving theory and method away from the ethno-nationalist approaches much critiqued by Wimmer and Glick Schiller¹² and as a focus of policy again moving beyond the ethno-focal to include/exclude other characteristics such as legal status and length of residence. Vertovec outlines some of the many ways in which superdiversity is being used by academics in their work which include moving beyond ethnicity as the sole focus of research, to argue for a methodological reassessment of different fields of enquiry, and to focus upon increasingly blurred distinctions around social trajectories.¹³

Perhaps the most attention focused on superdiversity has been upon the idea that superdiversity offers a new way of interacting with much attention placed on observing mixing in superdiverse micro-space. Scholars such as Susanne Wessendorf, Eric Laurier and Chris Philo and Sarah Neal and colleagues have observed interactions in parks, book clubs, coffee shops and fast food restaurants.¹⁴ Suzie Hall looks at street level exploring how superdiversity emerges along Rye Street in London both spatially and over time.¹⁵ In some respects her work focus echoes that of Jan Blommaert who uses linguistic landscaping to understand the ever changing nature of diversity in his home street in Antwerp-Berchem.¹⁶

Little attention has been paid to private and institutional spaces (workplaces, schools, hospitals) yet these are where people live, work and access resources interacting for specific purposes rather than simply because of co-presence. Wessendorf highlights the need to bring power relations, structural hierarchies and prejudices into analyses of interactions which to date have offered little insight into the ways that “everyday cosmopolitanism” shape attitudes to the solidarity that is needed to ensure social cohesion and acceptance of deservingness.¹⁷

Indeed superdiversity has been much criticised for romanticising difference and creating an illusion that difference has been de-politicised.¹⁸ Some have observed that the term is conceptually vague

offering little insight to the ways in which a superdiverse social context might be defined.¹⁹ Others argue that incorporation of the term diversity brings with it a set of concerns around the downplaying of processes that underpin inequality,²⁰ failing to engage with processes of exclusion²¹ and eschewing the structural by over-emphasising cultural or local differences.²² These failings can be overcome. In recent papers I use a superdiversity approach to over-turn long held assumptions that culture was responsible for migrants' poor access to ante-natal care and associated above average mortality rates and argue that superdiversity provides us with a new way of looking at such inequalities that can disrupt the status quo.²³

This book clearly demonstrates superdiversity as a demographic condition is evident in Belgium and the Netherlands providing the first detailed account of superdiversity as a national context which will aid our understanding of how superdiversity is developing and the nature of associated challenges and opportunities. The book moves beyond a simple focus on ethnicity or country of origin to identify multiple differences including migration status, class, language and transnational networks. *Superdiversity* tries to understand the transition from multiculturalism to superdiversity in Belgium using Steven Vertovec's superdiversity as an emerging theory, in combination with the work of Ulrich Beck and a variety of scholars.

The book begins to address some of the criticisms set out above with its focus upon poverty and inequality and their structural underpinnings providing an exemplar of how future analyses of superdiversity might proceed in other countries and opening up opportunities for comparative analysis. As such the book is of value to those researching superdiversity elsewhere in Europe and in those countries, which I demonstrate above, that are beginning to experience the arrival of more people from more places and complexification of their populations. Ultimately the book helps us to formulate some of the questions we need to ask, as superdiversification proceeds across the industrialised world, such as how can we take account of structure

and de-essentialise our focus on culture? How can we think about living together without romanticising and over-simplifying interactions? How can integration proceed when individuals have multiple transnational connections? What policies do we need to develop to support the development of a new solidarity and increase the chances of inclusion and equality for all?

Introduction

'Diversity is not in the first instance a normative ideal, but rather an existing condition of the inhabitants of cities and the places where they live.'

Ruth Soenen, 2006. *Het kleine ontmoeten. Over het sociale karakter van de stad* (Brief encounters: the social character of the city), p. 45.

If the 20th century was the age of migration, the 21st century will be the age of superdiversity. The research projects, publications and debates of recent years show that superdiversity is growing faster than ever before. Flanders, Belgium, the Netherlands and other neighbouring countries are searching for new ways to respond to the reality, complexity and diversity of contemporary society. *Superdiversity. How migration changes our society* shifts the debate away from grid-locked ideological discussion about the desirability or otherwise of a multicultural society. In the 21st century, it is no longer a question of whether or not we want such a society, but rather a question of how we can best deal with the superdiversity that already undoubtedly exists. How can we avoid further polarization and how can we make it possible for the social capital of all the inhabitants of our cities to blossom and flourish? The book provides a synthesis of contemporary research into diversity, but is also an eye-opener and (hopefully) a step in the right direction towards the normalization of superdiversity and interculturality, a normalization that we so desperately need.

Society is changing more rapidly than our ways of thinking. This is particularly true for the way we react to increasing diversity. In Brussels, Amsterdam or Rotterdam the number of inhabitants with their roots in migration now form the majority of the population. Within the next decade this will also become the new reality in Antwerp and in many other European cities.

The 21st century will be the age of superdiversity. Ethnic-cultural diversity will unquestionably continue to grow within European society in the years ahead, even though almost every government will continue to cling to short-sighted attempts to limit further migration. The rapid pace of social change and growing diversity are sensitive issues for many people, issues that not only raise difficult questions, but also provoke insecurity and resistance. The more diversity becomes an inevitable part of all our lives, the more people in Europe seem to fall back on outdated nationalist frames of reference.

For anyone who takes the trouble to examine the demographic developments of recent decades in detail, the further growth of diversity will come as no surprise. The fact that it still surprises so many people, with our policy-makers leading the way, says much about our society and the way we have closed our eyes to the events that were taking place right in front of our very eyes. During the past half century most of the countries in Western Europe have evolved into immigration societies, yet we still find it hard to come to terms with the migration and the diversity inherent in this evolution. Our migration history is about a past whose passing we fail to accept and a present whose reality we refuse to recognize.

Is this perhaps the reason why researchers, officials and policy-makers in recent decades have so incorrectly assessed the speed of change and demographic transition?¹ During the final decade of the 20th century, most demographers were still predicting a relatively stable and slow rate of growth for the population in the Low Countries.

Occasionally, there were even warnings that too few children were being born to maintain the population at its existing levels, which would have negative consequences for the future funding of the care that would be necessary for the growing number of people who were living longer and longer. It was only after the turn of the century that there was a sudden awakening to the need to drastically revise the existing population prognoses. The number of inhabitants in Flanders is increasing quickly, certainly in our cities. And with this increase in numbers has come a corresponding further increase in ethnic diversity.

In this age of superdiversity, the debate often remains frozen in largely superfluous discussions about symbolic issues and rearguard actions. For example, in Flanders during the past ten years there has been an increasingly polarized debate about the wearing of headscarves by public officials and pupils at school. Debates of this kind serve only to conceal the realities of diversity and the inequality that exists in our cities. The difficulty that some people have in accepting the visible symbol of diversity in classrooms or behind the counter at local town halls is just one of the many processes of adjustment that society must undergo in its efforts to come to terms with a new and superdiverse context. In much the same way, the sporadic discussions about whether or not it is 'correct' to return well-integrated migrants whose requests for formal asylum have been turned down back to their country of origin also camouflages the reasons behind structural patterns of migration, which result, in part at least, from marked levels of inequality throughout the world.

Few subjects polarize society like the question of migration. This polarization confirms and strengthens the typical 'us-and-them' thinking of the past. Nevertheless, a new hybrid reality continues to develop, which now places many different people in our cities in a position somewhere between 'us' and 'them'. In this age of superdiversity, it will no longer be possible to use this artificial division. Who is 'us'

and what does it say about ‘us’ if we want to use this term to set ourselves apart from ‘them’?² The opposite also applies: how long will the people we label as ‘them’ remain set apart? At what point do ‘they’ become one of ‘us’? The more we continue to push each other into polarized ‘us-and-them’ positions, the more difficult it will become to construct the dialogue that is necessary to enhance the process of cultural integration and do full justice to the complexities of our modern society.

Does the subtitle of this book – *How migration changes our society* – reflect the position of the ‘host’ community within an ‘us-and-them’ perspective? Is the book about ‘autochtoon’ or ‘native’ Belgians who are seeing ‘their’ society change? The Belgian journalist Tom Naegels has correctly stated that part of the problem is that some people are still unable to accept that ‘allochtonen’ or Muslims can also belong to the ‘us’ group, just like people who have lived here for generations.³ This book looks at the problem from a different perspective. For me, ‘our’ society is the society of all the people who live here, whatever their origins. It is this society, our society, which is changing at lightning speed. I want to move beyond the stubborn but now largely superseded ‘us-and-them’ stalemate. I want to bring contemporary superdiversity into the daylight and examine it with an open mind. I want to describe this transition as it really is, with all the opportunities and conflicts that are always inherent in major social change. How can we develop a powerful response to this transition? How can we develop a language to conduct a meaningful dialogue about our common future? And what do these developments mean for those who work in the front-line of superdiversity; in childcare, education, social work, medical care or as policemen or officials in town halls?

In short, the book explores the transition to superdiversity in all its many aspects. It underlines the importance of a cosmopolitan vision. It questions the frames of reference we use to approach the subject

of change. Perhaps above all, it goes in search of ways to allow the potential inherent in our superdiversity to come to full fruition and it highlights the pitfalls that we may encounter along the way. During the endless debates about the desirability of increasing diversity we have often lost sight of the need to maximize the possibilities that it offers for us all. This is the only sensible option for responding to superdiversity in a sustainable and forward-looking manner. We need to conduct an open and active debate, with pluralism as our starting point. This will demand transparency and mutual respect from all concerned. It will also require mutual commitment to dialogue and the desire to find solutions acceptable to everyone. Only then will it be possible to make a new and better future, based on the strength of all those who live in our cities.

Dirk Geldof

Chapter 1

From migrant labour to superdiversity

'Could it be that if cosmopolitan societies hold together, they do so around plural publics and as a result of active work by collective institutions, integrating technologies, and constructed narratives and feelings of togetherness, rather than around givens of historic community?'

Ash Amin, 2012. *Land of strangers*, p. 1¹

The 21st century will be the age of superdiversity. Whoever is growing up today in cities like Brussels or Antwerp, Rotterdam or Amsterdam, Paris or Marseille, London or Berlin can scarcely imagine how little ethnic-cultural diversity there was just half a century ago. At the opposite end of the spectrum, many people still live in communities or districts where they hardly notice the rapid pace at which superdiversity is increasing in society as a whole.

Contemporary superdiversity may have developed relatively quickly, but it was not unexpected. The present-day population of Western Europe is the result of the migrations and migration policies of the last 50 years, in the period after the Second World War. To understand modern superdiversity, we need to understand the history of these migrations. It is also the history of the Belgian and Dutch people who saw their street, their estate or their district slowly change. At the same time, it is likewise the story of many families that migrated and whose migration story is now an integral part of our society.

A short history of migration in Belgium

In the debates about diversity, you often hear it said that it is a phenomenon of all times and all places. Migration was already known in the time of the Ancient Egyptians. It was also practiced by the Greeks and the Romans, sometimes voluntarily, sometimes with compulsion, if a region was conquered by force and its people turned into slaves. The current inhabitants of the United States and Australia are nearly all migrants, who pushed out the original Indian or Aboriginal populations. The entire history of European colonization is likewise a story of migration, with European settlers migrating to the countries of the South. This colonization was often characterized by huge differences in power, by exploitation and by the plundering of the natural riches of the colonized lands.

Of course, it is perfectly true that migration is indeed of all times and all places. But this historical qualification, which is sometimes used to put the superdiversity debate 'into its proper perspective', does little to help us comprehend the impact of the rapid social change being experienced by our societies today. To understand how countries like Belgium and the Netherlands have become immigration countries, we need to examine the migration history of the past half century.²

The impact of migration on Western society at the start of the 20th century was very limited. Before the First World War, only 3.5% of the inhabitants of Belgium had a different nationality, and the majority of these came from neighbouring European countries. During the inter-war period, Belgium began to attract first Italians, Poles and Czechs in relatively limited numbers to work in the coal mines of Limburg and Wallonia.

Our migration history was largely written in the second half of the 20th century.³ Immediately after the Second World War, Belgium needed labour for the reconstruction process. The Belgian Govern-

ment made arrangements with the Italian and Polish authorities to encourage organized migration. In this way, Belgium attracted some 77,000 South Italians and 20,000 Poles to come and work in the heavy mining and steel industries. As a result, the number of ‘non-Belgians’ living in the Belgium had risen slightly to 4.3 % by 1947.

After the post-war reconstruction had been successfully completed, Europe enjoyed a period of unparalleled economic prosperity. In France, they still speak of ‘*Les trente glorieuses*’: the thirty glorious years between 1945 and the first oil crisis in 1973. This boom in economic growth went hand in hand with an equally dramatic surge in technological development. There was a strong and optimistic belief in progress, tempered only by the threat of the Cold War. Both industry and the rapidly increasing service sector needed new labour, but the economic boom meant that this labour was no longer available on the domestic market. As a result, from 1950 onwards Belgium tried to attract workers from Southern Europe, so that further waves of Italian, Greek, Spanish and Portuguese migrants began to arrive.

Actively searching for migrant workers

The golden years of the 1960s, when the economy continued to thrive, stimulated a further increase in the pace of immigration. The demand for new labour remained high. The (re-)introduction of women into the labour market was a first solution to this problem. Economic need went hand in hand with the rise in feminism, which saw a growing number of women who wanted an income of their own and an equal place in the economic and social life of the nation. At the same time, the first appearance of what later became known as ‘the consumer society’ and the previously unseen increase in the purchase of consumable goods meant that for many families a

second income now became a matter of necessity, if they wanted to 'keep up with the Joneses'. This combination of factors set in motion an evolution that moved away from the traditional pattern of families with the man as the breadwinner and towards a new pattern of two-income families.

Yet notwithstanding these developments, the labour market remained tight throughout the 1960s. In particular, it was difficult to find people willing to do heavy or low-paid work. For this reason, the Belgian Government, at the request of the business community, once again went in active search of migrant labourers from abroad. This time, the lands of origin were different and the rate of the migrants' arrival in Belgium was much faster than in the 1950s. Turkey and Morocco were now the main 'targets' for this new recruitment drive. In 1964, Belgium signed agreements with both countries (Morocco on 17 February and Turkey on 16 July) for the more systematic organization of economic migration and the reuniting of families previously split by such migration. The majority of this new wave of migrants were poorly educated labourers from the countryside or the mountains. For many of them, this meant that they underwent what was effectively a double migration process: first from the countryside and the mountains to an urban environment, and then from their homeland to a strange new country in the West. This double migration continues to play a role in the follow-up or chain migration that we are experiencing today.

In addition to mining and heavy industry, many of the new migrant workers were employed in the building sector for the construction of major infrastructure projects, such as tunnels, underground railway stations, motorways or harbour extensions. This was 'desirable' migration, partially spontaneous, but also partly organized by the state, in response to the demands of the business world and with the agreement of the unions.

This was not a phenomenon peculiar to Belgium. Neighbouring countries experienced a similar shortage of labour and a comparable increase in immigration during the ‘glorious 30 years’ after 1945. However, there were considerable differences in the lands of origin from which the different European countries sought their migrant labour. In many cases, colonial history and the process of decolonization played an important role, resulting in a strong influx of new workers from former colonial possessions. In France, for example, many of the migrants were from Algeria; in the Netherlands they came from Surinam and the Antilles; in the United Kingdom, they came from the countries of what is now the Commonwealth. Belgium was forced to adopt a different policy. After the granting of independence to the Belgian colony of Congo in 1960, many of the Belgians who had lived and worked there returned to their homeland, but very few of the indigenous Congolese population followed them.

The active recruitment of migrant workers in the 1960s led to a doubling of the number of ‘foreigners’ living in Belgium, in comparison with the situation at the end of the Second World War. In 1970, the country hosted 696,300 non-Belgian residents, or some 7.2% of the population.

The government regarded these migrant workers as a kind of temporary workforce, who would return to their country of origin after a number of years. This is also how many of the migrant workers themselves saw the situation. The spirit of the time is captured in the Canvas TV-report *Triq Salama* (Travel in Peace). In this report, Mohamed Abdeslam testified how his personal journey took him from Morocco to Belgium via Germany, and how he has built a life here for himself and his family during the past half century. As with many others, his migration began as something he regarded as short-term: *‘We came here to work and to save, so that we could go back as quickly as possible. Some wanted to go home to get married, others to start a business... That was the idea.’*⁴

Today, we are paying the price for this idea of migration as something essentially transient: neither the government nor the migrant labourers themselves invested sufficient time, effort and money during these crucial early years in integration and the teaching of language skills. As time passed, the temporary migrant labourers gradually became permanent immigrants, especially if their families came from their homeland to join them. Unfortunately, it took many years for all involved to recognize the realities of this new situation.

The crisis years of the 1970s and the illusion of a migration stop

The truth finally began to dawn with the arrival of the first oil crisis in 1973. The explosive political situation in the Middle East led to dearer oil prices and a number of symbolic 'car-free' Sundays. This marked the end of the golden post-war period. Belief in progress gave way to economic pessimism in the face of a series of crises that have persisted (with brief intervals of respite) until the present day.

The oil crisis changed the situation on the labour market. As economic production fell, the demand for labour declined and unemployment slowly began to increase. In 1974, the Belgian Government decided to end its programme of organized labour migration, with what became known as 'the migration stop'. This resulted in the strict limitation of the number of new foreign workers entering the country. The term 'migration stop' created in the minds of many people (and still does) the illusion that the government had stopped or wanted to stop all migration into Belgium. But this was far from the truth. The migration stop did not mean that it was no longer possible for people from abroad to come to Belgium. Immigration certainly fell, but there was no question of stopping it. The limitations imposed on labour migration simply forced people to look for alternative migration channels, such as family reunion and political asylum.

Most of the migrant labourers had initially left their wives and children at home in their land of origin – primarily because this is where the majority of them intended to return. However, as the length of time the men spent in Belgium gradually increased, so their desire to have their families join them also increased. Family reunion logically ensured a secondary wave of chain migration. In addition, unmarried migrant labourers nearly always married partners from their land of origin, so that these partners also had right of abode in Belgium.

Alongside family reunification, requests for political asylum and the free migration of labour within the European Union were the most common legal channels of migration that brought people to Belgium during the late 1970s and 1980s. As the years passed, the gradual expansion of the EU and the principle of a free and common labour market made further migration possible within mainland Europe. This all resulted in a further increase in the number and share of non-Belgian residents living in the country. In 1991, there were 904,500 non-Belgians, or 9% of the population.

The 1990s: political asylum and the expansion of the EU

The 1990s mark an important turning point in the process that led to superdiversity. The migration of the 1980s continued, with the further reunification of families from countries such as Morocco and Turkey, but was now supplemented by three new developments of crucial importance. These developments not only led to a new increase in immigration in Belgium, but also led to a much wider diversity in the countries of origin.

The first of these factors was globalization. Migration inevitably followed in the wake of growing international trade, including an increase in the number of economic refugees seeking asylum. The

second factor was the increasing number of regional wars that forced people to flee their own countries. These included the Gulf War of 1990-91, when Iraq invaded Kuwait but was later invaded itself by a United States-led international coalition, and also the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the Bosnian civil war of 1992-95, which resulted in a significant increase in the flow of asylum-seekers throughout Europe.

But the biggest impact resulted from the third factor: the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the subsequent expansion of the European Union. In the post-war period, the so-called Iron Curtain between East and West had prevented migration from Eastern Europe for more than four decades. The fall of the wall, the reunification of Germany and the systematic admission of countries from the former Communist Bloc to the European Union opened the doors to a new wave of migration from Central and Eastern Europe during the 1990s and beyond.

The combination of these factors meant that a new immigration peak was reached in the years 1998-2001, underlining the importance of the 1990s as the turning-point decade that forced the breakthrough leading to the superdiversity of today (see chapter 2).

Migration in the 21st century

During the early years of the 21st century, the trends of the 1990s were continued and intensified, with a further increase in migration. The number of people with a migration background increased in most Western societies, including Belgium, as did the number and diversity of their countries of origin.⁵

On the basis of migration figures from 2012, we can see that two-thirds of all migrants in Belgium come from other European Union countries, making use of the fundamental European principle of the

free movement of labour. The largest group amongst these EU migrants comes from neighbouring countries or from other member states of the EU15. But the most important new stream of migrants comes from Eastern Europe. The expansion of the Union in 2004 saw the accession of countries like Poland, and many Polish citizens took the opportunity to seek a better standard of living in the richer West. The entry of Romania and Bulgaria in 2007 was similarly followed by a rapid rise in immigration from both countries. Nearly all these cases are characterized by both a high outflow from and high inflow back to the countries in question, which is a typical feature of the pattern of 21st century labour migration, which is sometimes known as circular migration. Even so, there is still a positive overall migration balance from East to West.⁶

After Europe, Africa is the second most important continent from which new migrants originate. Roughly half of these come from Sub-Saharan Africa, with the other half coming from North African countries, with Morocco still as the largest contributor as far as Belgium is concerned. Each year migrants from Morocco account for 7-8% of the annual total of all immigrants in Belgium, which is equivalent to one in five of the immigrants from non-European lands. This means that roughly 8,000-10,000 Moroccans arrive in Belgium each year, continuing the trend of the past 40 years, which has consistently seen Morocco as the origin of the most important migration stream. Family reunification is still one of the key motives for this migration, in part because many Belgians of Moroccan origin remain attached to the marriage tradition that encourages them to seek marital partners back in Morocco.

As far as migration from Sub-Saharan Africa is concerned, the Democratic Republic of Congo is the most important land of origin for migrants arriving in Belgium, followed by Cameroon and Guinea. Another recent development has seen increasing numbers of migrants making their way to Europe from Asian countries, such as India,

China and Japan, but also from the more politically troubled regions of Iraq, Afghanistan and Armenia. Last but not least, the civil war in Syria had also increased the flow of migrants across the Mediterranean Sea, which has tragically become the most deadly of all the migration routes to Europe.

How Belgium became a migration country

Since 2000, the level of migration into Belgium has increased strongly. Today, Belgium has become an immigration country. Even so, the year 2012 also saw the first significant drop in the levels of immigration since the start of the 21st century, largely as a result of the legislation passed in 2011 to impose stricter conditions for family reunification. Nevertheless, this same year – 2012 – saw a total of 124,717 new migrants arrive in the country legally. At the same time, it should be remembered that the emigration flow has also increased by comparable proportions. In 2012, some 69,346 foreign residents left the country. This increase in (r)emigration points to a new trend in modern migration: more and more migrants are only staying temporarily in their host country, usually within the framework of the free movement of labour within the European Union. This is the phenomenon of transmigration (see chapter 5).

In other words, there is an increase in the totals for both immigration to and emigration from Belgium by citizens of foreign origin. Nevertheless, there is still a positive immigration balance, since the level of increase for immigrants continues to be greater than the level of increase for emigrants.⁷ If the number of emigrating foreign nationals is deducted from the number of incomers, the result shows that there was still a net-inflow of migrants into Belgium of 55,371 in 2012. This inflow is equivalent to the population of cities like Ostend, Hasselt, Sint-Niklaas or Genk in Flanders, or Doornik or Seraing in Wallonia.

In this way, countries such as Belgium and the Netherlands have developed during the past half century from relatively homogenous societies containing a small number of people of foreign nationality into societies where people with a migration background form an increasingly large proportion of the population. Today, Belgium and the Netherlands – like most other West European nations – have become de facto immigration countries.

The combination of the demographic impact of the migration flows of the past 50 years and the likely further migration of the years ahead means that we must all prepare ourselves for a continuing growth in the cultural and ethnic diversity of our local communities. While it is possible to control (in part, at least) migration flows through adjustments in migration policy, it is far harder, if not impossible, to control demographic evolutions. While we have spent the past three decades discussing the desirability or otherwise of a multicultural society, a radical demographic transition has been taking place right in front of our very eyes. The result of a succession of migration waves has been a clear increase in the number of residents in Belgium with their roots in the migratory process.

According to the official population statistics, in Belgium there are now 1.2 million ‘foreigners’ – the official term for residents without a Belgian passport. This represents 11 % of the total population. However, the figures based on nationalities alone tell us increasingly less and less about the ethnic and cultural diversity of this population. According to the UCL, at least one in five of Belgium’s 11 million inhabitants in 2013 were born as a foreigner. The official figures for 2013 show that 1,195,122 people were registered as foreign nationals (the 11 % referred to above), but 918,503 people – a further 8 % of the population – are recorded as naturalized Belgians.⁸ Yet even this still underestimates the level of ethnic and cultural diversity within the country, since many third generation children of migrant families were born as Belgian citizens.

Moreover, the figures for the country as a whole tell us little about the regional spread and the unequal distribution of residents with a migration background. In some communities there is little or no evidence of migration. For example, in the rural province of West-Flanders there are several municipalities where less than 1% of the population do not have a Belgian passport. In contrast, other regions have a much longer tradition of migration, such as the old coal mining districts of the Limburg or the steel-making areas of Wallonia.

In recent decades, it was above all the cities that became poles of attraction for migrant populations. As globalization increases, so the major cities are becoming more than ever the centres of important international networks. Brussels and Antwerp, but also Ghent and the Walloon cities of Charleroi and Liege, are now the main points of entry for migrant arrivals in Belgium.⁹ The level of diversity in these cities is much greater than the national average. In Brussels, almost two out of every three residents have their roots in migration, while the figure for Antwerp is 46%. This trend is reflected in the Netherlands, where the largest concentrations of migrants are also to be found in the big cities. In this sense, living with diversity is likely to be one of the defining characteristics of urban life in Western Europe during the 21st century.