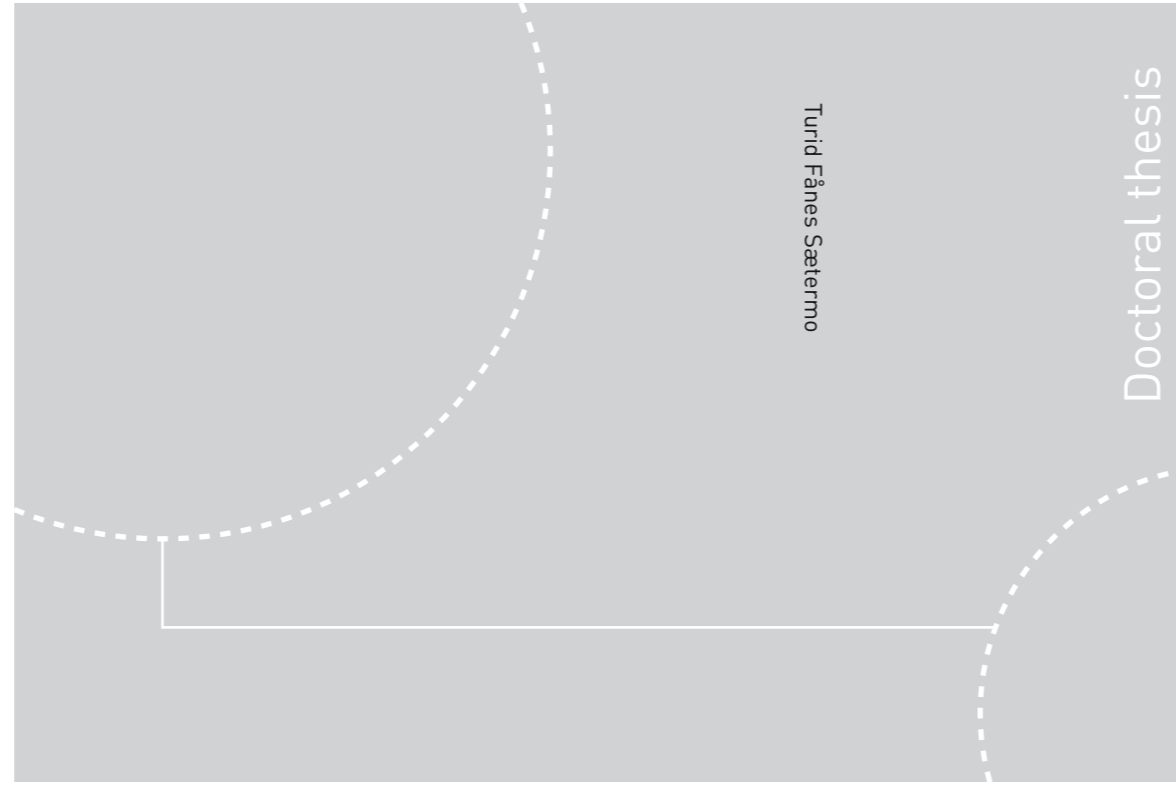


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Turid Fånes Sætermo

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An Ethnographic Study of Skilled
Migration from Venezuela to Canada

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores skilled migrants' negotiations of belonging, home and identity at the interface between personal life projects and the structural conditions of migration. Its overall aim is to extend our understanding of how migrants' subjective interpretations and strategies shape various kinds of attachments. In so doing, the work also seeks to illuminate the complexity of drivers behind migration trajectories.

The empirical case of the dissertation is Venezuelan skilled migrants in Montreal, Canada. Their migration unfolds in a context of Canadian immigration policies aiming to attract 'ideal immigrants' with regards to labor market needs and demographic concerns. The dissertation's focus on migrants' subjective experiences therefore intersects with a focus on policies representing opportunity, prescription and expectations with regards to migration trajectories. More specifically, the study examines the skilled worker program, in which migrants are selected on the basis of skills, work experience, age, health and presumed adaptability; factors that are expected to yield successful, immediate and self-reliant integration. The skilled worker program, then, could be described as designed to single out the 'grains of gold' from the 'grains of sand'.

The dissertation empirically and theoretically explores questions such as: What are the aspirations and claims of home, belonging and identity that underpin migration trajectories and strategies? How are destinations imagined, and life after migration anticipated and planned for? How is belonging negotiated and given meaning in the new context? How are experiences and strategies influenced by broader expectations of successful economic and social integration?

The ethnography that forms the basis of the study is the product of an in-depth, qualitative research involving fieldwork, interviews and open-ended conversations. The study's narrative approach implies that the notions of identity, home and belonging will be analyzed by looking at how they are constructed, redefined and represented in migrants' narratives.

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I did not learn all of the skills that were crucial for the completion of this thesis from books or university teachers. Curiosity, a fondness for social interaction, and a strong will are necessary ingredients in the making of a good social researcher and a good anthropologist. My grandmother Dagny Fånes provided a living example of these qualities. When I first told her that I had obtained a PhD grant, she instructed me strictly to do it 'properly'. I hope I have lived up to this call. This work is dedicated to her memory.

- - -

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PART I

1. Introduction

Points of departure

In an anonymous-looking commercial building some ten metro stations east of downtown Montreal, a small immigration consultancy company occupies a modest office space on the second floor. It is fall 2008. I have asked for a meeting because I am planning to write a thesis about migration in Canada, and the migration consultancy companies that seem to be mushrooming in the city have attracted my attention. I am welcomed into the neat and tidy, beige and brown office and invited to sit down in the faux leather chair facing Gustavo's desk. Gustavo is a certified immigration consultant¹ and one of the company's two employees; the other being an immigration lawyer.

- *So, our job is to offer an integral service to immigrants*, he begins, and then goes on to explain in detail what that entails. In the course of our meeting it becomes clear that in Gustavo's office immigration programs, policy modifications, and bureaucratic assiduity meet personal life projects, aspirations, dreams, and life-changing decision-making moments. Most of the company's clients wish to immigrate to Canada as skilled workers² which is a possibility only for those who have a certain level of education and professional experience, language skills, the right age, good health and otherwise fill current criteria of the skilled worker program. The skilled worker programme embodies Canada's ambition of selecting immigrants who are 'right' for the country; the programme's criteria reflect ideas of which qualities these migrants should possess.

¹ Which means having completed the immigration consultant diploma and be registered with the Immigration Consultants Canada Regulatory Council.

² Citizenship and Immigration Canada defines skilled workers as people selected on the basis of their education, work experience, knowledge of English and/or French, and other criteria that have been shown to help them become economically established in Canada (<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/helpcentre/answer.asp?q=106&t=6>)

Gustavo explains the workings of the point matrix that defines the skilled migration stream; against what criteria candidates are measured and the weight of each in terms of points. He also tells me how the rules and policies seem to be always changing and that candidates who qualified yesterday often do not qualify today. Lamenting the unscrupulous practices of many other migration consultancy companies, he underlines that he would never consider submitting anything less than a perfect file, meaning an application that is flawless with regards to formalities and bureaucratic exigencies, and where it is clear beyond doubt that the candidate will qualify. - *We try to make them qualify*, he explains. - *Some, when we have analyzed their situation, we see that they are a couple of points short. Then we have to go and find those points. We do that by knowing everything about the system.*

Gustavo knows that the advices he gives can influence life-trajectories. A client may decide to make the big jump or conversely accept the impossibility of migration, or he or she may decide to postpone the application for another year in order to improve chances. The conversations he has with clients sometimes involve personal dramas such as serious health issues, a divorce, or financial difficulties. At times, he says, it is difficult to reconcile being a consultant and being just an empathetic person.

Gustavo's detailed account of the intricate workings of the immigration system and of the work involved in finding ways to traverse the selection grid, made me interested in investigating policies, practices and discourses related to the authorities' goal of sifting wanted from unwanted migrants. I wanted to explore how shifting ideas of migrants as 'grains of gold' and 'grains of sand' have shaped Canadian immigration, and how such ideas play out today. Above all I was interested in the individual stories, migrations trajectories and life projects that are the real matter in all this. This thesis therefore sets out to study skilled migrants in Montreal, their migration stories and negotiations of identity and belonging. Many of the issues I explore with regards to this were present in this initial encounter; the skilled migration regime's attempt at selecting the 'right kind of migrants', the creativity and pragmatism of the individual migrants, and the diverse life projects that drive decisions to migrate and decisions to stay in the new society. These strands and the various ways they are interwoven are the locus of the study.

My interest in migration to Canada was also shaped by my personal experience of having immigrated two years earlier. Through this experience I had become aware of the economic pragmatism that dominates political discourses of immigration in Canada, and the underlying premise that high levels of immigration is natural, and not least, beneficial for the country. The Federal Skilled Worker Program (FSWP) is important here, both in terms of number of immigrants and in terms of centrality in the political rhetoric. Ideal migrants in this perspective are individuals presumed to become productive workers and integrated citizens fast and without representing a social or economic burden to the society in the process³. The ability to attract and retain these migrants is understood as crucial for Canada's economic prosperity (Gera and Songsakul 2007). In the period of this research, Canada admitted around 100.000 skilled migrants per year⁴. In the same period several policy adjustments were made in order to not fall behind in what is often referred to as the 'global race for talent' (Abella, in Kuptsch and Pang 2006, p. 14). Also, adjustments explicitly aimed to better single out the most independent, goal-oriented and self-sufficient ones; described by the minister as '*immigrants who will hit the ground running*'⁵.

As immigrant, I attended the Quebec Immigration Ministry's *francisation* classes⁶, which were largely made up of such presumably high-yield, low cost migrants. Far from conforming to any clear-cut, narrow mould, we represented a broad diversity of self-understandings, experiences, dreams, orientations and ambitions, ways of living and ways of relating and adapting to people and places. The time I shared with these individuals represented for me a first deep dive into questions of migration as produced and practiced, and the relationship between political discourses and the diversity of individual lives, that have been underlying drivers in the study.

The thesis' focus

This thesis seeks to contribute to our understanding of contemporary relationships between migration, belonging, home and identity. It explores, empirically and theoretically, questions

³ See f.ex.: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/rpp/2015-2016/index.asp> (especially section II, strategic outcome 1)

⁴ <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2013/permanent/02.asp>. Note that the numbers include spouses and dependants.

⁵ Speaking notes for Jason Kenney, Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism. March 28, 2012. See: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/media/speeches/2012/2012-03-28.asp>

⁶ French language and culture classes for immigrants.

such as: What are the aspirations and claims of identity and belonging that underpin migration trajectories and strategies? How are destinations imagined, and life after migration anticipated and planned for? How is belonging conceptualized, realized and negotiated in the new context? How are the experiences and strategies influenced by broader expectations of skilled migrants' successful economic and social integration?

The thesis seeks to extend our understanding of the complexity of drivers behind skilled migration by approaching migration as located in broader life projects and related to ideas of self and belonging. The study is thus located at the nexus of several fields of research. The perception of today's world as characterized by increased movement of people has inspired many researchers to investigate the nature and consequences of various forms of *mobility*. Anthropologists have focused on its particular and local expressions, underlining the complex and shifting nature of processes. Concepts such as creolization, deterritorialization, and interconnectedness have been recurrent in analysis of what processes of movement entail (Inda and Rosaldo 2002, Gupta and Ferguson 1997, Hannerz 1996, Robertson 1992) and migration has been a favoured field in which to observe their unfolding (Brettell 2003, Kearney 1995, Glick Schiller 2003).

Along with other scholars of migration, anthropologists have been particularly concerned with *transnational* practices and relationships, emphasizing the significance of migrants' continued, transborder connections, and thus adding new dimensions to ideas of migrants' incorporation in the societies where they settle (Basch et al 1994, Kearney 1995, Vertovec and Cohen 1999, Faist 2013)⁷. Transnational research has also sought to embed people and localities within global structures such as labour markets (Amit-Talai 1998, Barber 1995). Insights from this scholarship has inspired this study in various ways, in particular with regards to the notions of home and belonging.

A field of research on migrants' *identities* has expanded in the intersection between the transnational scholarship's interest in identities and identity theorists' interest in movement. The

⁷ Other themes that have been central in migration research over the last decades are for example diasporas (Cohen 1997, Clifford 1994, Fuglerud 1999), national identity and citizenship (Soysal 1994, Feldblum 1998, Rauböck and Rundell 2000), pull factors such as the quality of specific places (Florida 2002, Glick Schiller 2011, Brettell 2008) and factors that play in on processes of integration (Favell 1998, Frideres et al 2008, Alba and Foner 2015)

former has been concerned with migrants' cross-border, multiple and simultaneous attachments, drawing attention to for example different ways of conceptualizing home and belonging (Levitt 2004, Glick Schiller, Basch and Szanton Blanc 1995, Faist 2010). Similar themes have been central for scholars interested in identity formation in general, where identity is understood as a search involving both cognitive and physical movement, and where identity and movement is linked through the concept of home (Rapport and Dawson 1998). In today's world, it is argued, we can increasingly be seen as moving from old to new or between multiple homes or even as being at home in continuous movement. In this perspective, we are all *migrants of identity* (ibid: 26).

Identity, home and belonging are also central notions in studies of so-called lifestyle migration where migration is studied in relation to broader identity projects. Migration here is approached as a choice related to the imagination of a more personally fulfilling life elsewhere (Benson and O'Reilly 2009, Oliver 2010, Hoey 2014)⁸. Lifestyle migration studies emphasize the relationship between individual self-understandings and ways that places are imagined. These insights have also inspired this study. Although the migration trajectories explored here cannot be described as mere lifestyle choices, I argue that the migrants' personal values, attitudes, preferences and self-understandings played a significant role in the choice of migrating as well as in the choice of destination. The study thus also inscribes itself into a direction recently proposed by Olwig (Olwig and Valentin 2015), who suggests that we should seek to better incorporate migrants' pragmatism and aspirations beyond socio-economic improvement. By looking at migration trajectories through the lens of belonging, I believe we can add significant nuances to our understanding of the drivers, experiences and trajectories of migration, not least by sharpening our attention to the migrant as agentic and as holders of individual life projects.

Parallel to the theoretical interest in mobility and celebration of 'flows', a number of scholars have focused on the continuing importance of *borders* (cf. Alvarez 1995, Wilson and Donnan 1998, Guiraudon and Joppke 2001, Kearney 2004, Cunningham 2004, Chavez 2007, Rumford

⁸ Life style preferences as 'push factor' of migration was first posited by Zelinsky (1971). Zelinsky commented on the importance of non-economic factors and the 'increasingly free exercise of individual preferences as to values, pleasures, self-improvement, social and physical habitat and general life style (...) in migration to the USA (1974: 144)

2008, Fassin 2011, Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013). There has also been a growing interest in different migration policies, discourses and practices (cf Cohen 2006, Haines 2013, Castles, De Haas and Miller 2014⁹). Scholars have been concerned with exploring mobility and stasis with regards to disparity and inequality. For example, Glick Schiller and Salazar (2013: [183]) propose *regimes of mobility* as a framework within which to study the relationship between *'mobility and immobility, localisation and transnational connection, experiences and imaginaries of migration, and rootedness and cosmopolitan openness'*. Lately, the influence of neoliberalism on migration policies and discourses has also become a central theme (cf Geiger and Pecoud 2010). In the Canadian context these issues have been studied by for example Root et al (2014), Abu Laban (2013), Kymlicka (2013), Joshee (2009), and Brodie (2002). Finally, the ways that policies and discourses construct categories of ideal and unwanted migrants have emerged in migration research (Barber 2008, Dobrowolsky 2012, Simmons 2010); and these have been influential in my own research.

The thesis also aims to contribute to the field of research on skilled migration. Skilled migration have received relatively little attention by qualitatively oriented researchers, Favell et al (2006) argue. Moreover, the scope of themes that have generated most of the existing research has been narrow, with scholars focusing mainly on barriers and facilitators of labour market integration and migrants' transnational practices. There are many blind spots, for example with regards to the internal diversity within the category of skilled migrants, and with regards to aspects of their migration and integration processes beyond those related to the labour market. The thesis seeks to address some of these by investigating the subjective experiences and trajectories of skilled migrants, focusing on how identity and belonging are negotiated and given meaning in the decision-making process and in the new context.

This objective is twofold. On the one hand I want look at how this plays out in the context of the skilled migration regimes' expectations of immediate and self-reliant integration. On the other hand I want to explore migration with regards to the migrants' strive to realize meaningful lives. Like Leung (2004), I suggest that migrants' ideas of home and belonging are important keys to

⁹ Scholars who have written about this in the Canadian context include Triadafilopoulos (2013), Simmons (2010), Reitz (2005, 2013), Li (2003), Green and Green (1999, 2004), Abu Laban 2013, Knowles (2000) and Kelley and Trebilcock (2010).

understand migration decisions and adaptation strategies. In my informants' narratives, the decision to migrate typically emerged as forming a part of a quest related to ideas of self, personal values and quality of life. Rather than seeing identity and belonging primarily as produced, reshaped or disrupted by migration, I have therefore chosen to focus on the act of migration as constituting a part of already ongoing processes of constructing identity and belonging. I will argue that ideas of self and belonging shaped the decision to migrate, and that they also informed the choice of destination. I suggest, for example, that it is possible to discern certain ideas and imaginations of Canada in the narratives of my informants, and that these were appealing in the sense that they reflected my informants' ideas of self, - or their 'personality' or 'mindset', to use emic¹⁰ concepts from the interviews. For example, Canada was associated with a certain 'mentality' that was often contrasted with a 'Venezuelan mentality', and that served to locate the narrator as better 'at home' in Canada. I will explore this at length in chapter 8.

Migration, of course, does not take place in contexts free of conventions and constraints. The focus on migrants' subjective experiences therefore intersects with a focus on the Canadian skilled migration regime, representing opportunity, prescription and expectations with regards to migration trajectories. Discourses and practices of filtering migrants based on ideas of desirability have deep historic roots in Canada. The thesis therefore attempts to situate narratives as well as the formal requirements with regards to the historical development of immigration policies. According to Freda Hawkins (1972), selection practices have traditionally gravitated between two main concerns: admitting 'right future citizens', based on candidates' moral, character, health, religion, race and so on, and admitting the 'right kind of workers', with respect to labour market demands. Ideas of who can belong and in what ways are closely linked to ideas of national identity, which Canada over the last four decades has sought to articulate through the concept of multiculturalism. The thesis therefore also discusses multiculturalism as discourse of national identity; its development, implications and premises.

The ethnography that forms the basis of the study is the product of an in-depth, qualitative research involving fieldwork, interviews and open-ended conversations with skilled migrants

¹⁰ Emic refers to the perspective of the insider, here the migrant, in contrast to *etic* which refers to the perspective of the analyst.

from Venezuela. The main part of the ethnography consists of narratives in which the informants relate their decision to migrate, the process of leaving and resettling, and their negotiations of various kinds of attachments in Montreal. The study's narrative approach implies that the notions of identity, home and belonging will be analyzed by looking at how they are constructed, redefined and represented in migrants' narratives.

The research design was particularly influenced by two issues that emerged early in the fieldwork. First, after the meeting with Gustavo described above, I decided to also focus on the part of the migration process that precedes the actual relocation, which I refer to as the pre-migration period. Here I follow Benson's suggestion that *'the decision to migrate and the experiences of life [...] should be understood within the context of the imaginings that drive migration and influence expectations for post-migration life'* (2011: 13). Benson therefore proposes to shift the focus from the initial act of migration towards the values and orientations that were inherent in the decision to migrate. Focusing on pre-migration imaginings, plans and preparations can contribute to illuminate aspects that are ignored in much of the existing migration research, in particular with regards to situating migration in migrants' larger life projects.

Second, the importance of approaching migration trajectories in relation with processes of identity formation emerged as evident as I began to conduct interviews. In the narratives, decisions to migrate were typically posited as related to one's personality; to ideas of who they were and 'always had been', and of where they (could) belong. It was often narrated as a matter of having a mindset or values that set them apart from other Venezuelans. The theme of not (or no longer) feeling at home in their society of origin was also recurrent. Thus, migration became narratively located in the larger stories of themselves, which led me to look at their trajectories and strategies as expressions of more encompassing projects of self-actualization. Moreover, migration was generally perceived as a one-way movement and settlement perceived as permanent. The relationship between ideas of self-fulfilment and imaginations of place has therefore also been central in the study. The destination was imagined as a place where they would spend at least the rest of their productive life, and also - for most - where they would raise their children. Thus, migrating to Canada was conceived of as a long-term commitment, which

means that the aim of making a home and establishing belonging was very much there from the outset. Their ideas of self-realization must therefore be explored with regards to this specific spatial location.

I suggest that the consideration of Canada as destination with regards to the migration-as-identity projects is relevant when analysing the ways that identity and belonging are narrated, in several ways. For example, as the narratives will show, migrants typically presented themselves in ways that reflected the ideal migrant wanted by the Canadian migration regime. I suggest that the outline of the desired migrants articulated in the skilled migration scheme mirrored certain aspects of my informants' self-understanding, and that being accepted as conforming to the desired migrant design was therefore in some ways experienced as a 'ratification' of ones' identity claims. Moreover, the migration regime's invitation to skilled migrants seemed to offer recognition of world-views and values, in ways that they felt denied in their home country.

Yet, the narratives also convey the effort put into conforming to the regime's expectations and become 'good migrants'. In this context, belonging was also linked to the ability to live up to expectations, including one's own. As I will explain in chapter 5, the notion of the ideal migrant is central and has deep roots in Canada's immigration policies. Examining the historical development of immigration policies thus contributes to shed useful light both on my informants' narratives and on the formal requirements in force.

The fieldwork's duration also shaped the ethnography that the thesis draws upon. To begin with, I conducted a first round of interviews with migrants who had been relatively short time in Montreal. Their narratives were mainly retrospective accounts of their decisions to migrate, and their experiences of preparing for migration and arriving in Montreal to resettle. Over the next years I had the possibility of re-encountering informants, both to conduct follow-up interviews and in more informal settings. Thus, I had the chance to follow their trajectories and see how their strategies and aspirations shifted over time. This, in turn, yielded ethnographic insights concerning the negotiations of belonging as ongoing and dynamic processes.

In the remaining part of this chapter I will situate the study in the field of research on skilled migration and point out some central themes pertaining to this field. I will also present the empirical case of the study, namely skilled migrants from Venezuela. I will briefly relate the developments that set off the present wave of emigration and point out some central characteristics of this wave. I will return to some of these themes when discussing my informants' narratives in later chapters.

A global mobile elite?

Flow has long been a favoured metaphor in globalization theory, Leach (2012) notes, and migrants have been the prototypical example of such flows. The archetypes, O'Reilly (2007: 279) writes, have been the *transnational elites*, a term for skilled professionals representing the *'nomadic worker, the embodiment of flows of knowledge, skills and intelligence (..)'*, travellers who 'melt through borders' (Favell et al 2006, see also Castells 2000). Yet, processes of globalization are also concerned with the prevention of movement and the blocking of access, Shamir (2005) points out. In fact, the development of increasingly free cross-border circulation of goods, services, ideas, finance, and information is to a large extent contradicted when it comes to migration (cf Sassen 2013). According to King (2012), national restrictions have in fact made it more difficult for the majority of people to migrate than before. Amit (2012) notes the same tendency of increased restrictions on human movement, stating that the world is far from a 'global, porous field of mobility'. Restrictions on human mobility create an increasingly 'gated globe', Cunningham (2004) writes. In spite of the image of the world as a space of flows, it has not become free of borders, she suggests, but rather one that is bordered in new ways. Border studies have come to serve as a counterweight to the perception of borders as fluid and permeable (Horevitz 2009), demonstrating rather that borders proliferate and now 'are everywhere' (Lyon 2006).

Thus, many scholars are critical of the flow metaphor. Tsing (2000: 330), for example, notes that 'flow is valorised but not the carving of the channel', arguing that material and institutional dimensions are often overlooked. According to Leach (2012: 90), the metaphor of flow tends to liken movement to water running freely, and not to *'managed and manipulated water-courses, where flows are actively channelled, dammed and sluiced, through the combined actions of those*

in power and of the relatively powerless'. Skilled migration can be seen as one such 'actively channelled flow'. Some countries, including Canada, have been particularly concerned with filtering migration streams through mechanisms such as for example the point system¹¹.

Such systems reflect specific priorities of migration regimes and imply that the doors are not necessarily open to everyone with higher education. Skilled migration, when studied over time, can therefore be seen as representing the shifting border between exclusion and enclosure. Favell, Feldblum and Smith (2006) suggest that skilled migrants make particularly good test cases when it comes to studying the supposed liberalization of mobility, given that they are the ones who face *'the least barriers linked to exclusion, domination or economic exploitation. Their experience would reveal not just how far liberalization might go under ideal conditions, but also reveal (...) what persisting limitations there might still be to a completely unfettered global economy of mobility'* (ibid: 4). This also makes them especially interesting for scholars who aspire to study broader processes as they are experienced, negotiated and interpreted by human beings¹².

The designation of the migrants in this study as *skilled* should be commented on for several reasons. First, underlining the skilled status serves to locate them within this larger picture of the developments in contemporary global migration streams. More specifically, the distinction between skilled and low-skilled/unskilled migration points to a polarization that characterizes contemporary migration streams on a global level. Zygmund Bauman (1998) described this polarization process in his *Liquid Modernity*, where he argued that human beings have become divided into one mobile, privileged and global group, and one immobile, underprivileged; forced to live local lives. Mobility - while always a privilege - has now more than ever become a way of telling itinerant winners from the 'grounded' losers, Bauman (1998) holds. Similarly, Ulrich Beck (2008: 21) has argued that *'the most important factor determining the position in the hierarchies of inequality of the global age (...) is opportunities for cross-border interaction and mobility'*.

The tendency, especially in Western states, has been that migration policies are being adjusted in order to attract the 'right kind of immigrants' with regards to labour market needs and

¹¹ This system will be explained in detail in chapter 6.

¹² In Canada, the group that has been studied as more typically representing local, real-life articulations of broader migration trends, are the Philippines, who to a large extent immigrate as life-in caregivers (Kelly 2007, Barber 2008)

demographic concerns. Many migration regimes operate with dual track practices that encourage and streamline migration for certain - usually skilled - individuals, and build new and higher fences for unwanted others (Docquier and Marfouk 2006). Thus, borders, Andreas (2000) suggests, should not be perceived as doors that are open or closed, but rather as *filters*. In recent years, migration researchers have become more attentive to these aspects of national borders and have studied how borders control and impede the movement of people, for example by functioning as '*asymmetric membranes*', as Hedetoft (2003: 152) calls them. These membranes, he writes, '*allows both freedom of movement and protection for those who construct it, while forming a barrier to those whose presence is undesirable*'. They let in the desired migrants and keep out the undesired, those who are deemed potential social or economic burdens, or a threat to security, order or public health. With regards to the unequal access to mobility, Carling (2002) has suggested that rather than living in the 'age of migration' (Castles and Miller 1993), ours is in reality the 'age of involuntary immobility'.

One's degree of mobility, Bauman (1998: 86) argues, depends both on structural context, individual capability and allocation of resources. In particular, access to mobility pertains to individuals with a particular human capital¹³, that is, individuals who are expected to become economically productive easily. However, individuals' possibilities to obtain visas or permanent residency are also shaped by cultural, social and symbolic capital, according to Benson (2011). For example, applicants must be capable of navigating more or less complex migration schemes, and be able to convince and perform according to expectations during immigration interviews. Access to mobility, then, is related to individual qualities beyond scholarly or professional competences although these have typically been in focus in studies of skilled migration.

Secondly, the status as *skilled* signals that the migrant is 'wanted and welcome'¹⁴. Skilled migrants are selected, sometime even recruited, for permanent immigration, a situation that contrasts strongly to that of low-skilled/unskilled migrants. Skilled immigration is politicized as a positive development and the conventional political stance increasingly holds that countries' future prosperity depends on its capability to attract 'global talent'. Faraday (2012) has noted that

¹³ For example language competency or Western education credentials, which according to certain scholars could be referred to as 'cosmopolitan capital' (Weenink 2008) or 'global cultural capital' (Kim 2011)

¹⁴ To borrow Triadafilopoulos' (2013) words.

while skilled workers have several pathways to residency, policy regimes tend to construct low-skilled workers as temporary residents, in spite of chronic labor shortages in a broad range of occupations requiring little skills. Contemporary notions of ideal migrants are perceptible through these contrasting developments between skilled migration understood as a path to settlement, and low-skilled/unskilled migrants (e.g. agricultural workers or domestic care workers) as admitted on temporary basis (see f.ex. Leach 2013, McLaughlin 2010)¹⁵.

Specific expectations are associated with the category of 'ideal migrants' related to their ability to contribute as productive (and reproductive) citizens. Roots et al (2014: 5) argue that *'there is an active construction of an 'ideal/model immigrant' based on certain personality, cultural, and skill-based characteristics'*. Policies, practices and discourses construct 'ideal migrants' as independent, entrepreneurial, responsible and flexible (Barber 2008, 2013, Creese et al 2008, Duncan 2012). In general, this discursive trend is seen as having its home in neoliberal policies that rely on and promote *neoliberal selves that 'consciously and reflexively see themselves as balancing alliances, responsibility, and risk through a means-ends calculus'* (Gershon and Alexy 2011). Moreover, several works show that the notion of ideal migrants is also often connected to ideas of ethnic or national origin that makes individual 'more ideal' with regards to certain types of work (Barber 2008, 2012, McLaughlin 2010, Dyrliid *forthcoming*).

Stråth (2008: 22) refers to the neoliberal subject as the (neoliberal) *New Flexible Man*: highly adaptable to new challenges, creative and innovative. Harvey (2005) argued that the conception of the individual as responsible for her or his own fate is a necessary accompaniment to the shift to policies of deregulation, privatization, and the withdrawal of the state from areas of social provision. Considering this development in Canada, Shapaizman (2010: 20, cited in Roots et al 2014) writes that *'[T]he neo-liberal concepts of self-sufficiency and personal responsibility have had the most influential impact on the immigrant privatization policy. The privatized Canadian immigrant policy was designed for the self-reliant immigrant'*. I suggest that the experiences, interpretations and efforts of the migrants in this study must be seen as unfolding against this context.

¹⁵ These dimensions of the Canadian skilled migration regime will be discussed in detail in chapter 6.

The development in migration policies has gone in the direction of introducing more diversified and flexible entry doors for immigrants (Dobrowolsky 2012) and by cutting funding to settlement agencies¹⁶. This becomes an important backdrop against which migration strategies and experiences must be analysed: Processes of creating belonging must be seen in relation to such constructed categories and policy orientations that signal who can belong and in what ways. At the same time it is important here not to conflate form and substance; for example, candidates who are understood 'independent' in the eyes of migration authorities, might not conceive of themselves as such (Dobrowolsky 2012: 209). Even if migrants fill the 'ideal immigrant' design, the elements in this design may or may not reflect their subjective identity claims and self-understandings.

Thirdly, approaching my informants as *skilled* served to link their migration experiences to the historic development of selection practices in Canadian immigration policies. As mentioned earlier, Canada has a long-standing tradition of singling out desired from non-desired migrants, which should be seen in the light of the perception of immigration as a constitutive element in the project of nation building. This will be discussed in length in chapter 5.

Finally, focusing on 'skilled workers' as a category of migrants also represents a way to anchor the study within broader research on labour migration and opens for a critical exploration of some common presumptions. For example, the study has sought to be conscious of the call from Favell et al (2006) that we should aim to overcome the common tendency of opposing forms of migration and constructing an analytical divide between privileged (skilled) and unprivileged (low/unskilled) migrants. In the study this has involved for example letting narratives guide the analysis towards themes that were experiences as important, and being open-minded so as to not to miss out on aspects less commonly associated with skilled migration.

In much of the existing migration research, skilled migrants are represented as free-moving,

¹⁶ See for example: http://www.ufcw.ca/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2202:tens-of-thousands-of-immigrants-victims-of-harper-cuts&Itemid=6&lang=en

Another example is the new requirement with regards to language skills introduced in 2012, which meant that language learning for skilled migrants should now take place before applying for migration. Courses are taken in the migrants' home countries or while temporary visiting Canada, which according to my informants has become an increasingly common part of the preparation. The trend also seems to have led to a growth in private language schools, in Canada but also in Venezuela.

networked elites, and counter-posed with labour migrants and asylum seekers (ibid). However, Favell et al remind us, the category also includes many occupations that we would not usually think of as 'elite', such as for example nurses and mid-level technical employees¹⁷. One consequence of researchers' binary approach to migration is that experiences such as discrimination and social isolation might escape researchers' attention¹⁸. Favell et al (2006: 15) argue that skilled migration is not '*a frictionless mobility but rather a differently tracked mobility with its own costs and constraints*'. The differences should, however, be explored and not presumed. With regards to this, Fog Olwig (2007: 89) notes that '*while there clearly are significant differences in the migration experiences of people of different class background, one should be careful not to exaggerate these differences and give the impression that there are two entirely different types of migrants*'.

These insights have been relevant in my work in several ways. The narratives in the study convey experiences, situations, aspirations, strategies and challenges that these individuals most probably share with many other migrants across categorizations. It is useful to keep in mind that skilled migration programs such as the Canadian typically target young professionals in countries where expectedly they do not want to remain. In many cases, skilled migrants originate in countries that are politically unstable and where personal security is a constant concern. Although skilled migrants like the ones in this study are highly educated and often issued from relatively privileged socio-economic classes, the 'luggage' they carry with them may include personal experiences of violence, or other traumatic experiences¹⁹. These kinds of experiences, which one can assume resemble those of many 'less privileged' migrants, are examples of dimensions of skilled migration that have largely failed to attract researchers' attention. As Olwig (2007) does, I underline that the intention is not to downplay differences with regards to migration possibilities, as there is no doubt that skilled individuals has a better 'vantage point from which to engage in

¹⁷ Oliver and O'Reilly (2010) and Janoschka and Haas (2014) also discuss privilege with regards to migration, but through the lens of social class.

¹⁸ There have been exceptions to the trend that Favell et al (2006) described. For example, the anthropological studies of privileged movement collected in *Going First Class?* (2007, edited by Vered Amit) critically assess the 'elite-ness' of the travellers in questions. One example is Angela Torresan who poses the question: '*Taking into account the interface between structural forces of capitalist expansion with people's agency and representations, what do we mean when we call someone a privileged migrant?*' (2007: 106).

¹⁹ For example, among my informants several had witnessed murder or seen victims of murder, several had been threatened with a gun, some had experienced cases of kidnappings within their circle of friends, and almost all had experienced being robbed.

migratory movements', as Foner (2000) puts it. However, I will strive to bring forward the internal stratification of the category and illustrate their different situations, before and also after migration.

The empirical case: Venezuelan migration

The informants in this study are skilled migrants from Venezuela, who arrived in Montreal in the first decade of the 2000s. They were mostly highly educated and issued from the middle-class in Venezuela. They were also part of a growing number of Venezuelans who emigrate, and also a growing number who choose Canada as destination²⁰. In a generalized account employing Everett Lee's (1966) theory of push and pull factors, the push factors would include insecurity, political instability, corruption and poverty in Venezuela (Ibarra Lampe and Rodriguez 2011), while the pull factors would be Canada's receptive immigration policy, the country's relative closeness with regards to geography (including time zone-wise), and its reputation as an immigrant-welcoming country. In the following I will contextualize their decisions to leave Venezuela within the broader political, social and economical developments in the country²¹.

The Venezuela my informants left was strongly politically polarized. Politics was therefore an inevitable, though not favoured, theme in our conversations. I quickly learnt that 'middle-class views' on then president Hugo Chavez' were much less homogenous than popular media tend to suggest. For example, although none of my informants were adherents of Chavez' politics and strategies, they were often sympathetic to ideas of a more equal distribution among economic winners and losers in Venezuela, which are ideas that the *chavista* movement strongly promotes. Similarly, several of my informants mentioned Canada's universal public services and 'collectivist thinking' as important reasons for the choice of destination²². Comments on Hugo Chavez typically concerned his political and economic strategies, which were mostly seen as unviable, and also his public appearance, which was typically labeled ridiculous or

²⁰ Citizenship and Immigration Canada's statistics:

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2013/permanent/10.asp>

²¹ I will mainly concentrate on the periods that my informants have experienced and that formed the context of their decision to migrate, which also means that Hugo Chavez' death and the period after this event is largely left out, since this happened after their migration. General characteristics of my informants (such as age, profession, gender, and family situation), as well as the way my informants were selected and the unfolding of the fieldwork with them will be discussed in chapter 4.

²² I will discuss this further in chapter 8.

unprofessional. Nevertheless, Hugo Chavez was never a central topic in conversations about the situation in Venezuela. In fact, many of my informants saw him merely as a 'symptom' of a greater, underlying problem in society, as I will discuss further in chapter 8.

In the migration narratives of my informants, accounts of Venezuela 'before' often surfaced as a contrast to the current situation and as a central element in the decision to leave. Most of my informants were born in the 70s, a period in which Venezuela benefitted economically from an oil boom (Tavern and Frederick 2005). Many of my informants narrated the Venezuela of their childhood as representing a good period, especially when it came to social peace. However, this 'good period' was followed by an economic depression and growing political instability. The neoliberal reform measures announced by the government of Carlos Andrés Pérez in 1989²³ provoked massive social unrest and many took to the streets in protests known as the *Caracazo*, which ended with almost 400 individuals killed (Coronil 2011). These events initiated a period of political instability, described by Mainwaring (2006) as a turning point in Venezuelas history, since it set an end to a long period during which the political system had been dominated by two political parties²⁴ (Hawkins 2003). The period also included a *coup d'état* against President Pérez, led by the young Lieutenant Colonel Hugo Chavez Frias (Tarver and Frederick 2005). Chavez served two years of prison before being pardoned²⁵. Few years later, ex-President Pérez was the one imprisoned after having been found guilty of corruption. The problem of corruption and embezzlement, often mentioned by my informants, infested politics and public administration during the oil boom years (Hellinger 2012). The two political parties that had dominated Venezuelan politics since the 50s, the *Acción Democrática* and the *COPEI*, both appeared to stand passive in the face of problems of mismanagement and misdeeds that were eroding public finances (Tarver and Frederick 2005). This political inability to act created a climate of accumulated tensions and growing democratic unraveling in which '*the most effective form of political discourse [was] that of anti-politics*', (ibid). In this climate, Hugo Chavez - having become a symbol of opposition - was elected president in 1998.

²³ Which included privatizing social security and deregulating the banking sector (Ellner 2008)

²⁴ The *Acción Democrática* and the Christian democratic *COPEI* (Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente)

²⁵ A curious likeness of destiny with Cuba's Fidel Castro, with whom Chavez developed strong ties.

The turn of the millenium thus represented the dawn of Chavez' era as president of Venezuela, and also the begining of a wave of Venezuelan immigrants to Montreal. Chavez' *Bolivarian revolution* had high ambitions when it came to improving living conditions for the poor and also sought to make the political system more participatory and democratic (López-Maya and Lander 2011). But Chavez' rise to power also came to divide Venezuelans into *chavistas* and *non-chavistas*; a cleavage that has not ceased to persist. In Fernando Coronil's (2011: 42) words, '*[I]n a country accustomed to celebrating our social harmony, however illusory, people split furiously into two factions (...)*'. Indeed, several scholars point to the 'aversion of conflict' that they claim had previously characterized Venezuelans (Ellner 2008: 7). Ellner writes that a common claim is that '*Venezuelan history is devoid of the acute social confrontations, deep-seated political animosity, and xenophobic attitudes that have characterized other Latin American countries*' (ibid). This, Naïm and Pinango (1984) argue, should be seen as related to the abundant income generated by oil, which gave Venezuelans faith that their needs would eventually be met. Ellner (2008: 8) also mentions another explanation for the alleged social harmony, namely the class mobility made possible by the armed forces, described as 'exceptional' in the Latin American context. Class structures, then, were less rigid than in many other countries.

Chavez' government was leftist with a strong anti-globalization flavour (Hawkins 2003). Signalling the radical change he sought to represent, Chavez commenced his presidency by drafting a new constitution (Coronil 2011). Socialism was not yet part of the political program, but the new constitution gave the state increased power over certain sectors, such as oil, gas, and agriculture (ibid). In early 2002, attempting to secure control over *Petròleos de Venezuela* (PDVSA), Chavez appointed a new board of directors, a move that provoked a general strike and a rally with over 500.000 people participating. In the chaotic situation that followed, where more than 15 people were killed, army leaders took control over the country and announced that they were holding Chavez in custody. However, the coup lasted only 2 days and Chavez regained power over a country more divided than ever. The unrest continued and led to another general strike, joined by the petroleum sector in December the same year. Chavez responded to this attempt at economic ousting by firing 18.000 PDVSA employees²⁶, some of whom were among my informants. In 2005, Chavez proclaimed that Venezuela would be a socialist country. In spite

²⁶ Who learnt about their destiny through Chavez' television programme *Alo Presidente*.

of the success of many of the Bolivarian *misiones* aiming to improve the health and education situation for the countries poorest, Venezuela remained characterized by societal and political polarization, with serious problems of crime and insecurity, corruption, shortages of basic goods and high inflation.

This, then, was the social, political and economic backdrop of the decision to leave for the migrants in this study. When it comes to migration, Venezuela distinguishes itself from many Latin-American countries in that it does not have a history of *emigration* (Pellegrino 2001). Rather, the country has experienced several waves of *immigration*, especially after the 1940s when it became the world's biggest oil exporter (Sassen-Koob 1979). For example, in 1973, Venezuela established programs to attract foreign workers to counter a shortage of labour, especially in the oil sector²⁷. In the 60s, one million of the country's 7 million inhabitants were immigrants²⁸. Immigration streams included migrants from Europe, especially from Spain, Italy and Portugal. Thus, Venezuela was traditionally a *destination* country for immigration, as several of my informants underlined, hence locating their own migration as 'untypical' in Venezuela's history²⁹.

At present, Venezuela is experiencing what some scholars refer to as an exodus of skilled professionals (Ibarra and Rodriguez 2011, Freitez 2011), sometimes referred to as the *Bolivarian diaspora* (Paez 2015). 1,5 million Venezuelans have emigrated over the last two decades, according to Ibarra and Rodriguez (2011). There were more than 100.000 skilled Venezuelans emigrating from the country in 2007³⁰, that is, around the time that this study was initiated. According to Paez (2015), 90% of those who have left over the last 15 years are holders of university degrees. The brain drain, described as 'brain theft' by Vice President Arreaza³¹, creates

²⁷ In fact, Venezuela had introduced a selective immigration program under the control of the Department of Labour in 1966, which echoes the simultaneous development in Canada. Immigration, Sassen Koob (1979) writes, was seen as an issue of manpower.

²⁸ Tomas Paez 2015

²⁹ It should be noted that the problem of brain drain was discussed also in the 1990s, though at a smaller scale: <http://www.poline.org/node/322929>. (See also Valecillos, H. (1993). *Factores determinantes y tendencias principales de la fuga de cerebros en Venezuela*. OIM. Caracas, Venezuela.)

³⁰ Although the authors remark the difficulty of obtaining exact information about these numbers

³¹ <http://www.thedailybell.com/editorials/35963/Wendy-McElroy-The-Brain-Drain-Gain-and-Retain/>

serious problems such as shortage of skilled workers and disruptions in industrial production³². The sector hardest hit by the emigration of professionals is the oil sector, upon which Venezuela is heavily dependent.

When out-migration from Venezuela became significant after the turn of the millenium, 'inherited' European citizenships gave a number of Venezuelans the opportunity to move in the opposite direction of their grandparents. None of the migrants in this study had had this possibility and Europe had therefore not figured on their list of possible destinations. Canada and Australia had, and some of my informants had also considered the less realistic possibility of the United States, or more sure options, such as Panama, Columbia³³, Argentina or Brazil.

Hoey (2005) points out that through the decision to migrate, the migrants make conscious choices not only with regards to how to live but also *where* to live. One's environment thus becomes something of a personal choice or a reflection of one's self. In this perspective, the ways that places are imagined become significant³⁴. As the thesis' empirical chapters will illustrate, the place 'Canada' was given particular meanings by my informants. These included qualities such as order and organisation (through for example predictability and adherence to rules), 'good' norms of social interaction (for example respect and reliability), collective mindset (exemplified by the public health and education system, valorization and preservation of nature, environment, and historical sites), openness (for example multiculturalism and acceptance for homosexuality). These images of Canada and their place in the narratives of migration will be explored further in the discussion of my empirical material in chapters 8 -10.

Ibarra Lampe and Rodriguez (2011) found in a study of Venezuelan middle-class future migrants to Australia that 'not seeing opportunities for personal development' was among the main reasons for migration. Their findings might be seen as pointing to a common weakness in much of skilled migration research, namely the tendency to emphasize career and material living standards and

³² The discussions of the effects of skilled emigration on source countries have gone on since the 60s and are vast (cf. Beine, Docquier and Rapoport 2001, 2008, Stark 2005 and Skeldon 2009). Recently the questions have been coupled with questions related to skilled migrants' economic contribution in terms of remittances (Adams 2003, Faini 2007)

³³ Illustrating the shifting nature of migrations streams, since Columbians used to be among the most important group of immigrants to Venezuela (Sassen-Koob 1979)

³⁴ The role of imagination in the instigating of migration trajectories was noted by Appaduraj (1996) and has become a central theme in studies of mobilities (Salazar 2011)

overlook other dimensions in decisions to migrate. Researchers often focus on the desire to improve quality of life, but reflect little around exactly what quality of life entails. Material living standards are often taken to represent the 'better lives', but the notion of a good life can also mean for example possibilities for personal fulfillment, professional development, place attributes (nature, tranquility, family friendliness), social networks, and social norms³⁵. The 'good life' was articulated in many different ways in the narratives of my informants. Drawing on Benson (2011) and Hoey (2014), it could be argued that the migrants had sought to resettle in a place that would resonate better with their understanding of self. The disaccord between personal values and the surroundings often came up; for example the view that Venezuela is experiencing a crisis of values was widely-held. As I will return to in chapter 8, the situation was sometimes referred as Venezuela's 'cultural problem'. Crucial in these accounts was for example the idea that Venezuelans no longer respect each other and that work has lost its moral value, which for my informants stood as signifiers of a place where they had become estranged. As noted earlier, the notions of home, belonging and identity will be employed to shed light on these dimensions.

Outline of thesis

The thesis is divided in three parts. The first chapter of part 1 (this chapter) presents the thesis' focus and ethnographic case. It also situates the topic of the study with regards to developments of migration streams and migration schemes on a global level, particularly discussing some of the research concerns that have motivated the scholarship on skilled migration.

Chapter 2 reviews central anthropological perspectives of migration and anchors these in broader theoretical and historical developments. A central point in the chapter is to show how the figure of the migrant has shifted in theory, reflecting changing perceptions among scholars of the nature, role and effect of migration. In the last part of the chapter I point out some of the contemporary debates and ongoing research with which the thesis seeks to engage.

³⁵ For example, in a survey realized by Richardson et al (2002) of skilled workers wanting to migrate to Australia, two out three placed '*Australian lifestyle, climate, political stability, etc*' higher as reason for migrating, than for example '*better employment opportunities*' (Khoo 2014). I have not found comparable statistics for Canada but one might expect the results to resemble.

As an introduction to chapter 3 I present a longer excerpt of one of my research interviews in order to illustrate how the ethnography informed the choice of theoretical concepts and perspectives. Drawing on this narrative, I suggest that by bringing together the notions of identity, home and belonging, we can gain fruitful insights about the aspirations and claims that underpin migration trajectories. Chapter 3 thus traces and discusses contemporary perspectives of home, belonging and identity and explain how they have influenced the analysis. The analysis seeks to explore these issues from several angles and has been inspired by different theorists. The chapter also links the three key analytical concepts to related concepts such as class, agency and place.

Chapter 4 explains and considers my methodological choices and challenges, focusing particularly on interviews and narrative method. I also introduce my informants on a more general level and account for how they were selected, and how our contact developed. In this regard I also reflect upon some dimensions of our interrelations that may have influenced the interviews. The final part of the chapter presents the research setting, Montreal, particularly focusing on the city's history as immigrant destination. Montreal's diversity represents a significant context with respect to my informants' experiences and negotiation of belonging. This in turn is also related to the role of place in migration imaginations and decisions.

Part 2 of the thesis explores the construction of the ideal migrant through policy designs, practices and discourses. I approach this issue from three angles. First, in chapter 5, I locate the practice as rooted in a long history of immigrant selection in Canada. This chapter discusses the historical underpinnings of today's policies of migration selection based on desired qualities. The aim is to situate contemporary policies with regards to historically shifting ideas of Canada's national identity and desired citizens, highlighting concerns that animated public debates in different periods. The chapter discusses for example how policy shifts can be seen as reflecting ambivalences with respect to the notion of wanted migrants as based on the idea of good citizens or good workers. I approach policy development as conversations, suggesting with Harney and Baldassar (2007: 196) that we should approach states not as entities but as processes with *'different interests, gaps and inconsistencies'*.

Thereafter, in chapter 6, I explain more precisely the functioning of the Canadian point system of selection that was in place when my informants migrated, clarifying the steps in the application process and the logic of the respective point categories. I also consider policy adjustments that were implemented during my fieldwork period, and discuss developments and present goals with regards to broader tendencies regarding migration management, as well as with regards to the more general economical-political development often referred to as neo-liberalisation.

In chapter 7 I build further on the notion of a national Canadian identity and examine its articulation through the official multiculturalism policy. I discuss the multiculturalism policy's background, agendas and influence on dominant ideas related to integration and social equity. The chapter critically assess multiculturalism as a discourse through which a 'common sense' is sought established about how we understand and define notions such as 'Canadians', 'national identity', 'national belonging', and 'integration'. This is an important backdrop for my informants' experiences and negotiations of belonging.

Part 3 presents and discusses my ethnography. The three empirical chapters are organized chronologically with regards to the migration process. Chapter 8 discusses the experiences, sentiments and circumstances that my informants included in the narratives of why and how they came to make the decision to migrate. The discussion is organized around some narrative themes that were recurrent and that I approach as integral to narrative constructions of self, belonging and place.

Chapter 9 focuses on the period between making the decision and actually leaving and resettling. It presents narratives of the various ways that everyday life was influenced by and dealt with in the light of the upcoming departure. It also explores the pre-migration period as one in which future lives in Montreal were imagined, researched, and planned. Finally, it discusses narratives of the ways that the formal process of migration was managed, linking them to the narrators' self-understandings and identity claims. These, the chapter suggests, should be seen in relation to the expectations of the skilled migration regime and also with regards to ideas concerning class.

In chapter 10, I explore the migrants' interpretations, experiences and trajectories of integration in Montreal. I analyse and discuss narratives that convey various dimensions of home-making and ways of constructing and negotiating belonging, including the contexts and circumstances that emerged as relevant in these processes. The interplay between anticipations and lived life, mobility and stasis, planned and unexpected homes are central themes. The narratives represent encounters over several years and as such draw attention to the importance of long-term studies of integration processes.

Chapter 11 seeks to connect the threads of the preceding discussions and point out some of the insights that I believe that the research and analysis have yielded. Returning to the overarching themes, it reflects upon what the informant's narratives might tell us about home-making processes and negotiations of belonging. It also considers these insights in the light of ideas of the desired qualities of ideal migrants as outlined by the migration authorities.

2. Perspectives on Migration

Introduction

The present study belongs in the field of migration research, and more specifically within anthropological studies of migration. In this chapter I will situate the study with regards to theoretical developments, ongoing discussions and research within these fields. I will do this by reviewing perspectives of migration that have inspired anthropological studies as well as the theoretical and empirical contributions of anthropology to migration as field of study. In reviewing these, I will point out some of the insights and perspectives that the dissertation draws on, and the contemporary discussions it seeks to address.

The anthropology of migration has been a field in expansion over the last decades not only with respect to the body of literature and the number of researchers, but also with respect to geographical coverage and questions explored (Foner 2000, Brettell 2000). Migration has proved to be a rich landscape for exploring some of the questions at heart in the discipline, concerning for example the relationships of humans with their social and physical environments, adaptation and cultural change, questions of power, structure and agency, and construction of different kinds of identities, including ethnic.

In a world where 'movement is the new constant', the experience of migration has become more and more common, Castles and Miller (1993) suggest³⁶. Movement has also emerged as an important metaphor for the post-modern human condition and for conceptualization of identity (Rapport and Dawson 1998), and processes of identity formation are understood as linked to various forms of movement, including migration.

³⁶ It should be noted that the view that migration has actually increased is disputed by many scholars (King 2015, Zlotnik 1999)

The invisible migrant

It could be argued that the growing body of migration research reflect developments in the social sciences more than they reflect historical developments. In fact, the movement of people represents a significant constituent in the history of human beings, as people have always moved and settled in new places in search of better opportunities. Russell King (2012) notes that the roving instinct, '*the need to search for food, pasture and resources; the desire to travel and explore; but also to conquer and possess*', is intrinsic to human nature. Similarly, mobility, Maryanski and Turner (1992) suggest, is in fact the norm of our species, and it is the opposite - stasis - that should be regarded as something to be examined.

In the social sciences, however, migration did not develop into a specific field of research until after World War II (King 2012). As several authors have pointed out, the most surprising thing about the figure of the migrant in earlier social theory is her and his apparent absence (e.g. King 2012, Malkki 1995). Studies in anthropology followed this same tendency, which could be explained by the disciplines' ambition of grasping the *wholeness* of cultures; to understand how different aspects of societies are integrated in a larger whole called culture. Brettell (2003) has argued that much of the early research carried out paid little attention to migration because ethnographers were working with a bounded concept of culture and a static structural-functional theoretical paradigm.

King (2012) suggests that this is best understood by looking at how the social sciences emerged as a discipline alongside (and - according to Levitt and Jaworski (2007) - in the service of) the creation of the nation-state model of societies. Key to this process was the construction of the myth that each nation-state contains one people, sharing one culture and holding an undivided loyalty to a common government (Glick-Schiller, Basch and Szanton-Blanc 1995: 51). Social researchers, Vertovec (2007) has argued, were therefore predominantly interested in processes that keep societies together and less inclined to focus on migrants, with their potentially ambiguous or double allegiances. The theories and methods that developed were aimed at studying stable and bounded units of individuals such as populations, societies and states. Skeldon (1997) has argued that the notion that people normally live settled lives lacks empirical basis; that it represents a romanticized, elitist view of peasant life; '*the myth of the immobile*

peasant' (p. 32). Lisa Malkki (1992) also points to the metaphor of rootedness and to 'sedentary presuppositions' that, she argues, assume that there is a natural link between populations and spaces. Seen from this perspective, migrants, entering and exiting communities, become exceptions and anomalies; migration becomes 'uprootedness' and 'displacement' (ibid: 33, see also Appaduraj (1988).

Causes and consequences

The figure of the migrant did not really enter social theory until after the turn of the century, when anthropologists and other social scientists turned their regard towards urban, occidental contexts. The Chicago school was pivotal in this development, and in particular, sociologist Thomas' and his Polish associate Znaniecki's monumental work *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, which was published in 5 volumes between 1918 and 1920. The study analysed the transformations taking place in Polish society and among Polish emigrants in the USA, keeping in line with the Chicago School's interest in ethnic relations, adaptation and functionality in urban areas. Immigrant assimilation was a central theme for Chicago School researchers, who focused on how migrants, especially European migrants to north America, were incorporated into society and how this incorporation might reshape patterns of racial and ethnic inequality. Assimilation was seen as both inevitable and as having a positive consequence for successful incorporation.

In the post-war years migration emerged as a separate field of study. Analyses were influenced by neo-classical approaches that were part of the larger functionalist paradigm in the social sciences (de Haas 2010). In the neo-classical model, migration is seen as driven by push-factors operating in his (and sometimes, but less often, her) community of origin and pull factors operating in the destination. Push factors can be for example poverty, population pressure or repression, and pull factors can be for example higher salaries, access to land, and political and religious freedom (King 2012). The push-pull-model was proposed by Everett S. Lee who understood migration as first and foremost a rational choice based upon all these factors. The migration process is therefore also selective, since factors such as gender, age and education will influence the ability to overcome intervening obstacles. Migrants, in this sense, are rarely representative of their community of origin. Lipton (1980), for example, pointed out that contrary

to conventional understandings, it is seldom the poorest that migrate, and that migrate successfully (ibid: 7). Since migration involves a certain cost and risk that the poorest are often less willing or less capable to assume, it is usually the better off who tend to migrate.

The model was predominantly economic and migration was understood as a 'cost-benefit decision' resulting primarily from geographical differences in wages. The working hypothesis was that labour tends to move towards places where labour is scarce (thus wages higher), whereas capital will move in the opposite direction. Importantly, as a consequence of this process the differences will eventually be levelled, and thus the incentives for migration removed. Therefore, because of its inherently self-correcting nature, migration was seen as a positive force in the process of spreading modernity, in particular with regards to returning migrants, who would expectedly bring back money, modern ideas, knowledge and entrepreneurial attitudes from urban centres (representing modernity) to the rural, 'traditional' periphery (de Haas 2008, Kearney 1986, 1994).

Modernization, then, was conceived of as a linear, universal, and desired process and this master narrative of progress yielded a new term, 'developing countries', which served to define (in most cases) ex-colonies. The neo-classical model was also believed to work on the micro-level, where migration was understood as an individual rational choice, based on the principles of utility maximizing and self-interest that were so central in the neo-classical equilibrium perspective. One example is Chicago School anthropologist Robert Redfield's (1941) study from Yucatan, where he opposes city and countryside, and modern and traditional life, and looks at migrants' individual and rational motivations for choosing between them. Migrants were perceived as progressive agents of change and innovation (de Haas 2008). In line with this reigning perception of history as development, researchers studied how migrants 'adapted', 'adjusted' and 'assimilated' in urban settings (Kearney 2004).

In this same period anthropologists began to take more serious note of the importance of migratory circuits for the communities they studied, and migration became a distinct anthropological field of analysis, outside the larger domains of sociological and demographic knowledge (Brettell 2003). A significant contribution in this respect came from researchers

associated with the so-called Manchester School, who conducted a number of fieldworks in south central Africa (British Central Africa) in the 50s and 60s, attempting to understand the great socio-economic transformation the region was going through (see for example Epstein 1992, Mayer 1962). According to Vertovec (2010), the first serious ethnographic accounts and theoretical insights related to migration stem from this period, although few of these researchers were explicitly studying migration. Rather, the Manchester school researchers were primarily interested in social processes such as for example conflict and conflict resolution, the role of external forces on local communities and the universality of for example class relations (Burawoy 2000) and it was through this optic that migration was analyzed. Through their fieldworks they became aware of the importance of the migratory circuits that brought individuals to and from work in the mineral mines, sometimes across state borders, and their ambition was to understand the social relations and networks implicated in these migration processes (cf. Mitchell 1969, Mayer 1961). By using the extended case method³⁷ the Manchester researchers produced detailed observations of cultural transformations occurring for migrants (Harney and Baldassar 2007). They observed for example how the rural, tribal sphere and the urban, industrial sphere co-existed and seemed to form one social field (Gluckman 1943), which in some ways foreshadowed the later transnational perspectives. Researchers found that through labour migration, the two spheres could maintain a functionally coordinated relationship, resisting the pressures from the colonial situation.

Equilibrium and conflict

The Manchester School's approaches to migration were positioned within a theoretical framework that saw society as working towards maintaining social order (Werbner 1984, Kapferer 1987). Although considered unique, the school represented an adaptation, not a break, with structural-functionalist ideas (see for example Kuper 1983: 148)³⁸. Migrants were still perceived as individual and strategic actors whose behaviour and choices represented context-contingent negotiations, including those related to ethnic boundaries (see for example Barth

³⁷ This is a method where the researchers use detailed studies of concrete empirical cases and try to “extract” general principles from these.

³⁸ The Manchester school was later criticized on an ideological basis for having played a role in upholding the colonial order and supporting imperial domination (Burawoy 2000), which was a critique that would eventually hit a lot of research conducted in previously colonized countries (see for example Comaroff and Comaroff 1992).

1969). Although the emphasis on actors' behaviour as calculated and strategic has fallen out of fashion, the view of boundaries as negotiable represented a new theoretical premise that underlies contemporary views of identity as constructed, as will be discussed in the following chapter.

In the course of the 60s, a paradigm shift happened across the social sciences. The functionalist and neo-classical perspectives were criticized for failing to acknowledge socio-cultural factors, for disregarding countries' diverse colonial history, and for not considering the role of the world economy in structuring underdevelopment and dependency (King 2012). In the subsequent decades, migration research was strongly influenced by Marxist-oriented theories that stressed the exploitative nature of global capitalism and the subordinate incorporation of the previously colonized countries into it. A growing number of empirical studies demonstrated the fallacies of modernization theory, pointing to the failure of migration in bringing development and improvement to so-called underdeveloped communities. Instead, migration was viewed as a mechanism of exploitation and de-development (de Haas 2010). The so-called *dependence theory* (Gunder Frank 1969) became very influential during the 70s, with its claim that rather than facilitating the spread of the benefits of modernity from core to periphery, migration represents yet another flow of economic resources from periphery to core³⁹. Immanuel Wallerstein's closely related *world system theory* (1974) also understood migration as a consequence of the continuation of colonialist systems of exploitation (Fuglerud 2001). According to Wallerstein (1974), a new international division of labour – a world system - had evolved, coupled with an asymmetry of power between capitalist core nations and dependent semi-peripheral and peripheral nations. Migration was seen as draining the periphery, depriving it of its fittest and most educated workers (a process often referred to as *brain drain* and the *lost labour effect*). Central in these approaches is the view that structural constraints are *forcing* people to migrate; hence migration is not a matter of free choice and cost-benefit calculations. For example, Eades (1987: 13) wrote that '*the anthropology of migration [...] has become the anthropology of a world social order within which people struggle to makes lives for themselves [...]*'.

In his influential *Birds of Passage*, Piore (1979) argued that migration is driven by pull - not push – factors. What 'pulls' migrants is the demand for cheap and flexible labour. A dual labour market

³⁹ Particularly so in studies focusing on Latin America (cf. Cardoso and Faletto 1979)

has developed in Western countries, Piore suggested, in which native workers hold secure and well-paid jobs, while low-wage, insecure and unpleasant positions are filled by immigrants with little bargaining power. The notion of segmented labour markets and the link to the dependency theory was developed further by Saskia Sassen (1988, 1991), who wrote about 'global cities' that develop in the context of present macro-economic conditions, and on the strategies of immigrants trying to survive in them. Sassen described how the post-Fordist organization of production⁴⁰ has created informal, 'secondary' sectors in the economy consisting of positions that will not be filled by the native-born labour force and that are often occupied by immigrants (Sassen 1990, see also Piore 1979, Portes and Bach 1985). Sassen's work also exemplifies another research trend in the 80s, namely the renewed interest in cities. Social scientists increasingly embraced the image of cities as 'decentered' and 'polynucleated', to borrow Gottdiener's (1985) terminology. The interest in the city as complex setting somehow anticipated the critique of conventional understandings of place (and hence movement) that would emerge a decade later. Typical themes that were explored in these settings were the construction and reproduction of ethnic identity and ethnic relations of immigrants.

Units and levels

Macro-orientation of the perspectives were in turn criticized for disregarding human dimensions such as pragmatism, resistance, and creativity (Cohen 1987, Zolberg 1981) and for their presumed historical determinism - the assumption that countries will universally follow the same 'grand script' (Arango 2004: 27). In an effort to render models more dynamic, new approaches such as the *articulation* theory evolved. This theory drew on dependence theory but sought to include the ways that economic processes actually unfold in particular local contexts (Kearney 1986)⁴¹. Many scholars began to take the view that migrants do not act as atomized individuals, rather, migration should be approached as a decisions made by *households* to diversify resources and minimize economic risk (Stark 1978, 1984, Stark and Levhari 1982). Privileging the household as the central unit of study led to the recognition of the importance of remittances for

⁴⁰ i.e. the vertically integrated global economic system that Harvey (1989) called *flexible accumulation*.

⁴¹ Instead of focusing on a single global capitalist system, such as the world system theory, articulation theorists focused on systemic regional interactions. Through this lens, they found for example that capitalist production modes do not always efface local, pre-capitalists systems; rather the situation will often be one of co-existence between two systems and the link becomes articulated largely through circular migration.

decisions to migrate and also triggered the growth of feminist studies of migration (Brettell 2000, Pessar 1999). Criticism soon grew with regards to the view that households take unanimous decisions that benefit all the members and it was argued instead that migrants should be viewed, not as atomistic individuals, nor as household representatives, but as members of social groups and networks. In Charles Tilly's words, *'the effective units of migration were (and are) neither individuals nor households, but sets of people linked by acquaintance, kinship, and work experience (...)'* (1990: 84, see also Grasmuck and Pessar 1991). Douglas Massey (1993, 1994, 1998) argued in favour of employing the concept of *networks* in studies of international migration in order to better analyze migrants' adaptation as well as to explain the emergence of specific migration treks (chain migrations). Massey et al (1993: 448) defined networks as *'sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants, and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through bonds of friendship, and shared community origin'* and analyzed these networks as a form of social capital that could be drawn on for example to gain access to foreign employment (ibid). Along the same lines, Böcker (1994) wrote that settled migrants often function as 'bridgeheads', facilitating the passage for others by providing information and assistance. Granovetter's notion of 'the strength of weak ties' (1973) also proved a useful tool for researchers of migrant networks, as it demonstrated how even fleeting friendships between migrants could generate trust and empathy (Tilly 2007). The network approach made it possible to explain otherwise inexplicable flows of migrants to certain destinations, and to understand the dynamics of differential migration (King 2012). In many ways this approach also foreshadowed the later transnational perspective in its focus on cross-border social relations, and attention to the role of networks that characterize much migration research today.

Postmodern perspectives

Meanwhile, the emerging post-modern theory increasingly came to influence the social sciences, including anthropology. The postmodern critique of science was both epistemological and ideological, Spiro (1996) notes, challenging a number of fundamental themes, such as scientific positivism and the inevitability of human progress. Researchers of migration were criticized for having assumed an unexamined linear modernist narrative, presupposing a one-way development towards stabilization and assimilation (Ferguson 1999). In anthropology, the postmodernist debate centred especially on the discipline's taken-for-granted categories and conventional ways

of representing cultures as bounded, rooted, coherent and fixed (see f.x. Marcus and Fischer 1986, Rosaldo 1989, Gupta and Ferguson 1997, Hannerz 1998, Hastrup and Fog Olwig 1997). Anthropologists, Hastrup and Fog Olwig (1997: 7) note, had to accept the '*loss of place as a dominant metaphor for culture*'. A self-critical discussion rose as to how anthropologists had written about 'the Other', assuming objectivity and obscuring their own dispositions. Attention was drawn to the complexities related to the process of knowledge production and to the role of the researcher as participant in the construction of 'always partial and situated accounts' (Denzin and Lincoln 2000)⁴². The so-called *reflexive turn* represented an effort to critically assess the ways ethnographies were produced, including with regards to power, race and gender relations, and underscored the interpretative aspect (see for example Geertz 1973). For researchers of migration this implied new methodological as well as epistemological concerns, such as for example looking for the social relations and mechanisms that produce categories such as for example 'ethnic minority'. The rejection of rigid categories in social sciences also inspired a general interest in individual understandings of self and experiences of belonging, which I will go deeper into in the next chapter.

A globalized world

Towards the end of the millennium, globalization emerged as the dominant paradigm. The new concern, O'Reilly (2012) writes, was with flows, fluidity, transience and change, rather than structures, communities, cultures and peoples (see for example Bauman 2000, 2007, Urry 2000). Scholars such as Urry (2000, 2007) argued that sociology's focus on societies or territories was no longer relevant; instead, one should focus on mobility and flow. Migration scholars became particularly concerned with the ways that migrants construct their identities and imagine their communities across borders and boundaries. For example, *diaspora* became a favoured focus of study, although defined differently by different scholars (see for example Safran 1991, Clifford 1994, Brubaker 2005, Tölölyan 2007). For example, Clifford (1994) argued that diaspora should not be approached as an objective category, but in relation to how its members define the diaspora's boundaries. Diaspora, then, is first and foremost a matter of identification⁴³. Moreover,

⁴² One of the works this debate inspired was the influential *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, edited by Clifford and Marcus (1986).

⁴³ See for example Quayson and Daswani (2013) for a more elaborate discussion of these issues.

these studies also came to illustrate that the distinction between migration and other forms of movement is not always evident (O'Reilly 2003, King 2015)⁴⁴ and migration researchers came to focus on the plurality of ways that migration unfold.

Since the 1990s, *transnational* perspectives, focusing on border-spanning social relations and processes, have been dominant⁴⁵. The concept of transnationalism and diaspora are closely linked, and according to Quayson and Daswani (2013) have become key to our understanding of nation, identity and globalization. Broadly defined, transnationalism is a framework for approaching the multiple ties and interconnections (whether socio-cultural, political, economic, practical, or discursive) that transcend the territorially bounded jurisdiction of the nation-state (Guarnizo 1997: 5)⁴⁶. Scholars working within the transnational perspective have been particularly concerned with how migrants (or *transmigrants*) and their descendants participate in familial, social, economic, religious, political and cultural processes that extend across borders, while simultaneously becoming part of the places they settle (Basch et al 1994, Levitt and Jaworsky 2007). The relationship between migration and processes of settlement, integration, and transnationalism is thus understood as dynamic and simultaneous, not as contradictory currents. Glick Schiller, Basch and Szanton Blanc (1995) suggest that this approach enables us to see abstract cultural flows as they are located in real life experience, that is, to empirically ground the 'flows' of globalization, which overlaps with anthropological approaches to globalization⁴⁷. Scholars from different disciplines have been interested in transnational processes on different levels, including macro levels⁴⁸, which means that the range of studies under the transnational umbrella is very broad. Within this landscape, anthropologists have typically focused on the micro-level transnational practices and relationships of individual or groups of migrants.

⁴⁴ For example, Michaela Benson (2011) has pointed to the 'blurry lines' between tourism and migration in her study of what so-called 'lifestyle migration' (Benson and O'Reilly 2009)

⁴⁵ Works that trace this development are for example: Smith and Guarnizo (1998), Portes (2003), Vertovec (2001), Levitt et al (2003) and Duany (2011). The expression 'transnational' was coined by Randolph Bourne, an American journalist in 1916, in a plea for cultural pluralism rather than the anticipation that immigrants assimilate into Anglo-Saxon culture ('the myth of the melting pot'). In migration research the concept was introduced by Glick Schiller, Basch and Szanton-Blanc (1992)

⁴⁶ Key works are for example Grasmuck and Pessar (1991), Rouse (1992, 1995), Glick Schiller et al (1992, 1994, 1995), Basch et al (1994), Portes, 1996, Guarnizo 1997 and Kearney (1991, 1995). According to Crang et al (2003) transnationalism represents a 'new imaginary of migration studies'.

⁴⁷ See also Szanton Blanc et al 1995, Gardiner Barber 1995, Inda and Rosaldo 2002.

⁴⁸ Smith and Guarnizo (1998) define this 'transnationalism from above' as actions initiated by powerful actors and institutions, such as transnational corporations, military bodies, the mass media, supranational political movements, and interstate entities.

This thesis takes inspiration from many of the insights that transnational research have produced, in particular with regards to the focus on the multiple belongings and 'bifocality' of migrants. I have also drawn on transnational understandings of 'home', which I will go deeper into in the next chapter. Transnationalism has contributed to challenge conventional notions of home for example by providing empirical examples of homes that could be described as trans- or plurilocal (see for example Rouse 1991). Contemporary writings on notions of home also underline the dynamic nature of home-making processes, and the tension between home understood as physical place and as a symbolic space (Al-Ali and Koser 2002). A home is not just 'a shelter' but also a place where personal and social meaning are grounded, Papastergiadis (1998) writes. Thus, the notion of home brings together '*memory and longing, the ideational, the affective and the physical, the spatial and the temporal, the local and the global, the positively evaluated and the negatively*', in the words of Rapport and Dawson (1998: 8). Home is therefore complex and multidimensional. These perspectives have been central in this thesis' ethnographic analysis.

The transnational perspective challenges some of the founding assumptions about the world mentioned earlier, notably the view of the world as consisting of 'containers': states, societies, populations, and so on (Beck 2000)⁴⁹. Such theories of society are inadequate to grasp the 'increasing number of social processes that are indifferent to national boundaries', Beck argues (ibid: 80). A central ambition of the transnational framework, then, is to counter the *methodological nationalism* that has dominated understandings of society and that has served to naturalize the nation-state; that is, assuming the nation-state as a natural mode of organization (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002)⁵⁰. While I find this to be a useful and necessary critique, I agree with scholars such as Kearney (1995), Faist (2000), Al-Ali and Koser (2002) and O'Reilly (2007) who make note of the continued importance of the nation-state. Not least, nation-states continue to be gatekeepers with regards to migration. Also, as Al-Ali and Koser (2002: 13) write, both sending and receiving states continue to impinge on the everyday activities even of transnational migrants. Even after migration has taken place, many migrants continue to have

⁴⁹ See also Urry 2000, Faist 2000

⁵⁰ Glick Schiller and Salazar (2013: 185) describe methodological nationalism as an '*ideological orientation that approaches the study of social and historical processes as if they were contained within the borders of individual nation-states*'. Methodological nationalism should be seen as related to the origin of social sciences alongside the construction of nations, described earlier in the chapter.

various kinds of formal obligations (for example fiscal) towards their states of origin, or they continue to, for example, exercise their right to vote there.

Guarnizo and Smith (1998) have suggested that the interest in transnational identities and practices should be placed within the frame of the post-cold war political development, since the new international climate provided a context in which transnationalism could be tolerated, even celebrated. No longer perceived as a threat to national cohesion, migrants' transnational identity could come 'out of the closet', as Vertovec (2009) puts it, and even be legitimized, for example through arrangements such as dual citizenships and overseas parliamentary representation. However, not all states view their emigrants this way. For example, the migrants in this study were portrayed by their government as lacking solidarity with their co-patriots, as abandoning the country that had given them their privileges, or as having been misled by Western propaganda. Their emigration from Venezuela was interpreted in ideological terms and as a moral choice. The migrants, in turn, saw for example the Venezuelan government's restrictions on access to foreign currency as attempts to prevent emigration. In an interview I conducted with a Venezuelan government representative in Montreal, she expressed little wish to have contact with post-millennium⁵¹ migrants there and noted that unfortunately they had been led to believe that the grass was greener in Canada. To some extent these examples also illustrate the continued importance of nation-states, both in the structural-institutional sense and with regards to feelings of inclusion/exclusion.

Transnationalism, agency and class

Many of the migration scholars working within the transnational frame have focused on how practices of transnational networks are both the medium and the outcome of human agency (Smith 2005). Sometimes referred to as 'transnationalism from below', this approach has sought to focus on empowerment and on bringing migrants back in as important social agents (Rauböck and Faist 2010: 11). A similar view has been put forward by Bruff (2007), who argues that migrants seek opportunities for themselves over and above structural conditions, and that we should look closer at how agents interpret and act upon their circumstances. Transnational

⁵¹ Venezuelans who had emigrated after Chavez came to power, mainly after the year 2000.

theorists such as Smith and Guarnizo (1998) hold that the multiple attachments of migrants open up 'interstitial social spaces' that enable new forms of human agency. In the authors' view the transnational approach serves bring the individual experiences and subjectivities of those who migrate into focus, while also underscoring the importance of structural and global forces. I will elaborate on these issues in the following chapter.

Transnationalism has also been studied in relation to class (Rouse 1995, de Genova 2005, Barber 2004). The notion of class belonging was a recurrent theme in the narratives of my informants, and I will touch upon the relationship between class identity and migration in several of the following chapters. Transnational perspectives are useful in addressing the complexity of the concept of class because they draw attention to the fact that migrants can experience belonging in or be placed in different social classes in the society of origin and the society of destination. Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004: 1015) write that *'when society differs from polity and is made up of sets of social relationships in intersecting and overlapping national and transnational social fields, individuals occupy different gender, racial and class positions within different states at the same time'*. Along the same lines, Eades et al (2006) have criticized the state-centricism prevalent in many studies of migration and social class. Instead the authors propose a 'transnational construction of class' that de-localises class identity and allows for individuals to interpret their position with regards to multiple stratification systems. Dual or multiple frames of reference can support or relief migrants in daily struggles by imbuing them *'with the resources and power they needed to challenge the class, gender and racial hierarchies that had constrained them'* (Levitt et al 2003). However, the opposite can also be true, as was the case for some of the migrants interviewed here who experienced hardships and deceptions that they for various reasons would not or could not communicate to their family or others in Venezuela. Migration can sometimes represent upward mobility, but in can also represent an - at least temporary - loss of class status. Class position, then, should be read in a comparative or transnational frame, with regards to imaginations and aspirations, and with regards to temporality.

In ongoing debates, many scholars - including those writing within the transnational framework - express the need to better integrate power and unequal access to mobility in the analysis⁵². For example, Glick-Schiller and Salazar (2013) criticize the indiscriminate focus on mobility that they claim has characterized studies of all forms of migrancy (refugees, labour migrants, international consultants, etcetera) over the last years. Research trends have come to privilege mobility over stasis, the authors argue. This tendency, Faist (2013) writes, is deeply problematic because it overlooks *'underlying trends that aim to build a flexible, docile and politically abstinent labour force'*. Several scholars have called for research that accord more attention to people's differential ability to travel (Glick and Salazar 2013, see also Barber 2008). The present study picks up on this critique in part by exploring migration with regards to power structures that permit, restrict, and prescribe certain trajectories, but also by insisting on the internal stratification within categories of migrants. The thesis seeks to address the call for approaches that normalize neither mobility nor stasis, by providing empirical examples of how migrants experienced mobility and stasis as normal/abnormal at different stages of the migration process, and how these sentiments were not necessarily related to physical movement.

Continuity and rupture

Researchers of transnational identities' have mostly been interested in migrants' continuing connections, however, there are also scholars who have pointed out that some desired identities might best be achieved by breaking with certain elements of the past. Migration, Amit (2007, 2012) notes, is also motivated by the desire for a change or an escape from certain circumstances and relationships. The focus on continuity that has characterized transnational studies - informed by a wish to challenge previous linear, bipolar and assimilationist understandings of migration - therefore needs to be replaced by a more *'measured appreciation of the balance and dialectic between continuity and rupture'*, Amit (2012) writes. The thesis provides many empirical examples of the transnational social relations, orientations and practices of my informants, but it also shows that these activities vary over time and with regards to life course. It corresponds, for

⁵² Other critique that has frequently been raised is the underlying notion of transnationalism as something novel (see for example Kivisto 2001, Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004, Duany 2001). Several scholars argue that there have been the enduring transnational connections of migrants also in the past (see for example Morawska 2001, Levitt, DeWind and Vertovec 2003, Foner 2005), although these connections were often discounted and obscured by the master narrative of the nation (Glick Schiller et al 1995).

example, with Baldassar's (2007) observation that transnational family life cycles influence types and patterns of contact. Amit (2012) suggests that practices may be initiated, abandoned or resumed in relation to different periods of migrants' lives and it is therefore necessary to look at how transnational practices may change over time and according to situations.

The desire for a 'new start' as motivation for migration has mostly been explored by researchers of lifestyle migration. The migrants they have studied are typically affluent and 'privileged' (Oliver 2011). For example, Benson and O'Reilly (2009) found that in their (British, middle-class) informants' narratives, the decision to migrate was cast as a 'transformative action allowing for self realization'. In Hoey's (2014) words, their migration represent a search for a place that would resonate with an idealized, potential self⁵³. However, continuity and change are complementary rather than mutually exclusive, Amit (2012) suggests, and in many cases simultaneously present in migrants' narratives. For example, Oliver (2011) notes how the migrants she interviewed typically emphasized the transformative dimension of the experience, while at the same time continuing many of their former ways of life. These insights point to the importance of investigating the complexity beneath seemingly uncomplicated claims to identity. The themes explored in this thesis overlap with many of these issues, even though my informants' migrations cannot be characterized as merely lifestyle-led. However, the thesis seeks to interweave reasons to migrate related to self-realization and value-orientation with other reasons related to the political, social and economic instability in Venezuela, and show how they translate into for example choice of destination.

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This chapter has provided an overview of developing perspectives in the field of migration, focusing especially on those that have inspired anthropological studies. I have sought to situate my own work with respect to some of the current research concerns within these fields. Although I consider myself theoretically eclectic and open-minded, certain interests such as for example migrants' agency, transnational belongings, and identity has guided the analytical work with the thesis. Such interests were the basis for the choice to organize the analysis around concepts and

⁵³ The relationship between identity and place identity also been explored by Florida (2002)

perspectives related to belonging, home and identity. In the next chapter I will elaborate on these key concepts and perspectives and explain how they have been used in the thesis.

First Encounter (Daniel)

Before elaborating on the concepts and perspectives that shaped the thesis' ethnographic analysis, I want to illustrate how the ethnography informed the theoretical choices. The intention is to shed light on this crucial part of the analytical work. I will do this by presenting a longer excerpt of one of the interviews I conducted, which will allow me to pinpoint some of the themes that I found particularly interesting, while also showing how they were contextualized in the narratives. The pertinence of presenting a piece of unworked ethnography is also related to the way that narratives will be presented later in the thesis. Parts of the empirical discussions are organized around narrative themes that emerged as typical, or in other ways significant. This strategy, while bringing clarity and order to the analysis, entails that the narratives in these later parts are presented and dealt with in a more fragmented way. My intent in this section is to present an example of 'purer' ethnography; the data from which the analysis derived.

The excerpt is taken from an interview with an informant called Daniel, which was among the first I conducted. Daniel had answered to a call for participants that I had been allowed to post on the mailing list of the Association in 2009. In this Spanish text, I summed up my project as follows:

Para el proyecto me centro en personas que migran como trabajadores calificados y que dejan sus paises en busca de una mejor vida. Me interesan las experiencias individuales relativas a la vida en el nuevo pais, como la adaptacion, el trabajo, la integracion, y el contacto con sus pais de origen.

[The project focuses on persons who migrate as skilled workers and leave their countries in search of a better life. I am interested in individual experiences in the new country, related to for example adaptation, work, integration, and contact with country of origin.]

Daniel's mail was short and contained next to no information about him, apart from his willingness to be interviewed. He suggested we'd meet during his one-hour lunch break, in a shopping centre on the outskirts of Montreal. I brought my iPod, microphone, and the notebook

with my list of somewhere around 40 questions in Spanish⁵⁴, most of which I would end up never having to ask, and waited for him near the food court, as agreed. Daniel was punctual. He turned out to be a sporty-looking man in his thirties, wearing jeans and a checked shirt. His blonde hair indicated European ancestors (German, I later learnt). He told me that he had just begun working nearby; his first job in Montreal within his field of training, namely accountability and administration. Before he had worked as a shop assistant. He also mentioned that he had migrated together with his wife, who was also working now. Daniel immediately came across as a cheerful, humorous and relaxed person. He made jokes; was talkative and seemed confident. He rarely hesitated before answering questions and the recorder on the table apparently did not affect him at all.

The excerpt below is a translation of the transcription of the recording⁵⁵. As such, it also exemplifies the actual unfolding of an interview. In this regard, there are certain aspects I wish to comment upon. First, my informants were typically very articulate and talkative and the transcriptions therefore consist to a large part of longer monologues. Almost all of them had university education; several of them had completed PhD's, and could contextualize the interview in a research setting. Their narratives, then, can also be seen as responding to expectations they ascribed me as a researcher. For example, I would sometimes be asked about my hypotheses, sample, and so on, before interviews started. Secondly, I also suggest that the typical 'well-orderedness' of most of the narratives reflect the time that had passed between the decision and settlement. The migrants had had time to think and rethink their migration stories many times during this period, and the version I was offered represented rather worked-through retrospective accounts. Lastly, the narratives were those of narrators that had succeeded; that had been selected, and that supposedly possessed the skills and qualities it takes to integrate, and the accounts may also have been coloured by this.

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⁵⁴ I describe the interview guide in chapter 4

⁵⁵ Translated from Spanish

Turid: *Do you have friends who have also migrated?*

Daniel: Yes, a lot! Ouf, I must know of at least a hundred persons who have left Venezuela! To the U.S., to Europe, Canada, basically. I know people in all parts, France, Spain, Belgium, Germany. In the U.S. there are many, and there are quite a few in Canada too. In Alberta... My best friend from college lives in Toronto. It's that the situation in Venezuela is very complicated, so people leave. Because everybody wants a good life. And you cannot have that there now. You can live well if you are with the government. The government takes care of you. But if you are not with the government they make life impossible for you. You have to leave. That how it is.

Turid: *And you said it is the middle class...?*

Daniel: Basically it's the middle class, right, because those who have money and are company owners and everything cannot take the money out of the country. It's too much money to take out, impossible. The laws prohibit it. The middle class can travel, and actually, I have many Venezuelan friends whose parents come all the time. They travel, and come two, three times a year. The direct flight from Toronto, because from here there is no direct flight, from Toronto it's six hours.

Turid: *How do you keep in touch with your friends?*

Daniel: Facebook, e-mails, sometimes I call them. I have two three friends who are very close, one lives in Madrid. The other lives in Belgium. And another who lives in France. This summer when I went I stayed in their houses. Sometimes I call. I mean, the closest friends. I get news from others in mails, or on Facebook, they post photos. That's basically it.

Turid: *What about people here? The Latino community?*

[Daniel has referred to this community earlier in the conversation]

Daniel: Yes, we like Latin American things very much. We've been to a Colombian restaurant, we have friends from other Latin-American countries. We always used to identify with Venezuela first, then Latin America secondly. But we like all the cultures. We are not closed in on ourself. If we were, we would not have come here. I never understood that... why Latino neighbourhoods are formed. Or Chinese neighbourhoods. That seems to me like a demonstration of... like it makes a ghetto, no? I never understood why this happens, I suppose, they're

immigrants and come here but they isolate themselves. I don't agree with that, I don't like it. There are people who live in these neighbourhoods, have their business there, and don't go out of there, so, sometimes there are people who don't even speak the language of here. I imagine it is to conserve their culture. But at the same time, if you come to a foreign country, you have to adapt to the new culture, because if not, you are still in your country. But if you're open to adapt to the new culture...

Turid: *Those I have met have all been professionals...*

Daniel: - That is a very typical characteristic of immigration from Venezuela! In the majority of countries, especially in Latin America, those who migrate are from the lower classes, the poor, those who have nothing. In Venezuela, the middle class migrate, generally people who have studied at the university. I couldn't say, maybe it's related to the fact that people of the middle class, at least those of our age, we knew... our country was in a much better situation when we were growing up, when we were younger. We got used to a certain quality of life. And now when we see that the situation is low, it's like... we feel that something is missing. And we try to get back that life that we had. That must be why one thinks of migration. Like a solution to, let's say. Migration is a way for us to try to recuperate something that was lost in Venezuela. It is also facilitated by the fact that Canada is searching for qualified migrants. This complements it. When I did searches to find out where to go, the first thing that caught my attention in the Canada system was this, the focus on persons who have a university degree, and who look for work. Many other countries... like the Mexicans, who come to work the land, but then they return to their countries, they come here only for 6 months. But the Venezuelans who migrate are all middle class and have this characteristic. It's something curious, one could make hypotheses on the explanation of why, why not...

Turid: *Venezuelan migration is also something recent?*

Daniel: Well, it's linked to the president and the government that we have. That has been in power for ten years. And that has communist tendencies. Therefore, those of us who were accustomed to living in freedom decide to leave the country, because we have, at least I, have seen that this does not have a solution in the short term. I chose to move to another country because I wanted to live like I want and think I deserve. Simple as that.

Turid: *And what if it changes one day?*

Daniel: No, in any case I won't go back. No. I will never move back because in my opinion the deterioration that is going on there is not the fault of the government. What is happening is a deeper deterioration that I see as cultural. Even if the government would fall and someone with the best intentions would come to power, the situation in the country could never improve significantly in what is left of my life, as to make me decide to go back. Because the problems that are there are very grave. It is a cultural problem. There is no collective conscience, that you have to take care of things, that everything belongs to everyone, People behave egoistically; they do what serves themselves and don't care about the rest. A society cannot function like that. It is not Chavez. It is a cultural problem. There has been a total deterioration in, what, 40 years or so. My mother told me that when she was young, they would sleep with the entrance door unlocked. There is a huge difference between then and now! But that is what you have here, this collective conscience, that makes these countries... and in Norway I imagine it's even more? Order, also, and laws, that make these countries much better, and that make people respect property. There I would describe it as chaos. People do what they like and there is no one who upholds order. Maybe it's because when there are more poor people, and nobody has work and nobody has money for food... well, it has to get to the extreme. And the other problem is that the educated people leave, and those who stay are not trained to manage the situation and this contributes to things not improving. It's, what do you call it, a current. On the other hand, the people who have money also take advantage. There is a lot of corruption. Business owners take advantage too, doing business with the government and making money, as we say, under the table, no? I'd say the whole country is corrupt, or like 80%. Corruption is everywhere and the few honest people left do not have the power to do anything about the situation. They want to leave because there is no other way.

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Daniel's narrative points to some crucial dimensions of the present emigration of skilled professionals from Venezuela. First of all, that it is a new phenomenon, one that does not yet have settled forms, norms or traditions. Now, however, middle class individuals are leaving

Venezuela in large numbers to settle elsewhere. According to Daniel, life in Venezuela has become impossible unless you are with the government. The Chavez regime⁵⁶ is presented as seeking to exclude the middle class from the possibility of living good lives, turning privilege into disadvantage. Their migration, Daniel says, is related to a sentiment of having 'lost something' they previously had; a quality of life, freedom, order, security, and so on, and migration represents a way to try to recuperate this. Significantly, the unfairness of this situation is narratively located as rooted in a 'problem of culture', more than in politics. In this representation, an ongoing process of deterioration towards 'chaos' is understood as having created - not as having been created by - the political regime. Against this chaos, Daniel accentuates certain qualities that he frames as 'middle class', such as work ethics, pragmatism, capacity to adapt, law-abidingness and openness towards diversity. These qualities are described as having lost value in present-day Venezuela, and his identification and valuation of them thus serve to locate him as not belonging there. Yet, the emphasized qualities, I suggest, should also be seen in relation to the Canadian migration regime's invitation extended to educated, goal oriented, independent, adaptable individuals 'wanting to work'. In this sense, Daniel and the other informants represent 'ideal migrants', whose admittance to Canada was premised on the demonstration of such qualities. Daniel also links the decision to move to Canada with a certain openmindedness. '*If we were [closed], we would not have come here*', he says. Openness to diversity is a central element in master narratives of Canadian identity articulated through the multiculturalism policy. Daniel's self-presentation as open-minded thus also works to situate him as belonging in Canada.

Intrigued by these aspects of the migration experiences, I chose to explore skilled migration with regards to the ideas of belonging and home-making practices, as well as the ideas of self and of meaningful lives, that worked to locate informants as 'at home' in Montreal and Canada. The thesis approaches informants' narratives as expressions of ongoing negotiations of belonging that take place in relation to different contexts. The aim of the work is to contribute to extend and expand our understanding of different drivers, anticipations, strategies and interpretations that inform individual migration trajectories. The analytical framework presented in the following chapter was formed by these aspirations.

⁵⁶ Hugo Chavez was president when all of my informants migrated.

3. Belonging, Home and Identity

With every day that passes, I become more and more sure of the decision. Often I experience that... for example, sometimes when I am waiting for the bus I am thinking: I can't believe it, I am here, where I want to be, and I am happy!

Ana

"Last night my friend Mariela came over, she had just returned from her vacations in Venezuela. As she entered she gave me a white plastic bag containing Venezuelan chocolate, which I received with immense pleasure.

A moment ago I was reading in my sofa, alone in the house, when suddenly I noticed the plastic bag. There was something printed on it, in green, something familiar. I got up and approached it with a tickling sensation in my stomach. It said Automercados Plaza. The supermarket that was close to my daughters' school in Caracas, the one I never liked but that came in handy. A knot appeared in my throat, my eyes filled with tears and my mind began to pan the interior of the supermarket, row by row, like a film"

(From Michelle's blog)

Introduction

In the previous chapter I addressed the broader landscape of migration theory, pointing out research areas and theoretical concerns that have been important for anthropologists. In this chapter, I will present the theoretical concepts and perspectives that more specifically informed the thesis' analysis and discussions. As already stated, I have particularly engaged with the concepts of home, identity and belonging. I have been interested in exploring how they are

conceptualized, realized and negotiated through migration, and also what aspirations and claims that underpin migration trajectories and strategies. In this chapter I go deeper into various dimensions of the three concepts, and the different ways they are related. At the end of the chapter I also devote some pages to discussing class and agency, and the view of migration as a transformative action.

The chapter takes as its point of departure Maggi Leung's (2004) comment that while for most people migration is about mobility, the places where migrants make their homes are as important an identifier in their stories as their movements. As noted in chapter 1, the focus on mobility and flow has been particularly salient in studies of skilled migrants, who have been presented as emblematic examples of mobility; as the very '*embodiment of flows of knowledge, skills and intelligence*' (Favell et al 2006). They are Bauman's 'itinerant winners' (1998), free to settle where they please and move on when they desire. This study takes a somewhat different approach by exploring skilled migrants' sentiments of and desires for belonging, their practices of homemaking and ideas of long-term commitment to their new societies.

As the citations above convey, attachment can take many forms, it contains past, present and future, and different attachments or aspects of them can be brought in and out of focus. In order to explore and incorporate these multiple meanings, I analyse my informants' narratives through the lens of the notions of belonging, identity and home. This nexus, I argue, sheds light on important dimensions of migration experiences while also serving to anchor them in relevant contexts. It also enables us to situate migration in migrants' broader life projects, which, I believe, can yield more in-depth and precise insights concerning the complex dynamics that shape migration trajectories. Moreover, the concepts allow the analysis to move up and down scales, since they can be deployed both in the discussion of individual migration projects as well as to examine prevailing premises and logic of the migration management regime, that is, with regards to ideas of who 'can' and who 'cannot' belong.

Approaching migration as part of larger and ongoing quests for belonging and realization of desired lives also compels attention to the temporal dimension. In my informants' narratives the very beginning of the migration project was often located years back in time, as an idea that had

its roots not only in present daily-life hardship, but in reflections about the relationship between self and surroundings. I find that this part of migration stories is often overlooked by migration researchers who typically treat migration as more or less beginning with departure or resettlement. I therefore include in the analysis a focus on migrants' life stories prior to the spatial relocation, an approach I believe can contribute to the development of perspectives of migration that go beyond rupture/regrounding⁵⁷ and that diversify understandings of the experiences and aspirations of migration.

An central empirical observation that fed into the theoretical choices was that the migrants I interviewed conceptualized migration as a one-way movement towards a place where their future and futures selves could be realized. Migration represented a sort of quest for a 'new home', conceptualized as a place in which a meaningful life could be realized. Ideas of belonging, home and identity were thus important in the decision to migrate, but these ideas were also shaped by the possibility of migration, and possible destinations. The thesis' focus on migrants' self-understandings and sentiments of belonging therefore intersects with a focus on policy discourses concerning who can be 'admitted to belong' as residents or citizens, articulated in federal and provincial migration schemes. Moreover, I suggest that the outline of the desired migrants articulated in these schemes mirrored certain important aspects of my informants' self-understanding. Therefore, I believe that conforming to the desired migrant design was in some ways experienced as a 'ratification' of their identity claims. In this regard, it is not insignificant that they were admitted into Canada on the basis on qualities that they felt rendered them suspicious, unpatriotic, unsolidaric, even alien, in their country of origin. Further, I suggest that as my informants resettled, their ideas, sentiments and experiences of belonging were influenced by the Canadian immigration regime that had posited them as wanted future members based on explicit expectations of economic productivity.

Anthropologists, Brettell (2000:106) has noted, tend to locate issues of mobility '*within the lives of individuals and families*'. Anthropological migration studies typically approach their topics by means of exploring migrants' lived experiences and subjective understandings, and thus has

⁵⁷ As such it connects to transnational perspectives that underline the continuity of migrants' attachments, and also the associated 'changing face of home' (Levitt and Waters 2002). With regards to rupture/regrounding, it should also be noted that they are often simplistically translated into negative/positive, whereas it has been pointed out for example that rupture may be desired and may signify a new freedom, a wanted escape, a fresh start (cf. Amit 2012)

naturally been concerned with notions such as identity, home and belonging. Theoretical reflections around these notions link up to a wider concern in social theory concerning what is seen as the multiple and shifting basis for self-representation (Gupta and Ferguson 1997). Migration has often been seen as a particularly fertile field in which to anchor studies of such processes. '*One thinks of identity whenever one is not sure where one belongs*', Zygmunt Bauman (1996: 19) wrote. Although all individuals are now understood as engaging in such quests, they become particularly salient through experiences of spatial mobility. In the following I discuss some of the theoretical insights concerning the relationships between migration, identity, home and belonging that have informed the work on this thesis.

Identity as sameness with self; identity as ongoing projects.

I will begin by discussing the concept of identity and clarify how it has been employed to shed light on my informants' migration narratives. The scholarship on identity is vast and I have limited the scope here to include only themes and perspectives that were particularly useful for me. Indeed, over the last decades, few topics have received more attention in the social sciences, anthropology in particular, than various dimensions of personal and collective identities. Many have noted the paradox that in the very same period that scholars began debating whether identity is at all a useful concept given its ambiguity and complexity, its significance for people everywhere seemed to rise. From the early 1990s, the notion of identity gained prominence for example through an increased concern with individual lifestyle and consumption patterns as symbolic markers of difference, and in relation to the growth of particularistic attachments, such as ethnic. The context was globalization processes and increased interconnectedness, which on the one hand was understood as leading to homogenization and cultural hybridity, but that also involved processes of heterogenization and rising identity politics based on ethnicity, nationality and religion (Hylland Eriksen 2007)

The notion of identity has survived as analytic concept in the social sciences although debates about its meaning and constitution have been continuous and many scholars have questioned its utility (for example Brubaker and Cooper 2000). Theorists who hold that the concept is still viable have sought to render the meaning of the notion of identity more dynamic and pluralistic. In an article tracing the development of the identity concept in anthropology, Sökefeld (1999)

argues that traditionally, 'identity' was mostly used with reference to ethnic identity, thus pointing to the 'sameness of the self with others' (ibid: 417)⁵⁸. Identity was understood in terms of singularity, in the sense of being one with others, but also in the sense of a persistent sameness within oneself (Erikson 1980: 109, in Sökefeld 1999: 417). The idea of being the 'same with oneself' posited identity as a disposition of more or less fixed basic personality features, or as Hall (2000: 2) describes it, as '*integral, originary and unified*'.

The concept of identity has since been subject to searching critique and deconstruction and the outcome has been a shift in how most theorists understand identity, from emphasizing singularity and stability to emphasizing its plural and shifting nature. Some identity theorists have argued that this development is not just an analytical one, but one that reflects real socio-economic historical changes related to the transition to post-modernity (cf. Giddens 1991). According to Bauman (2001) the nature of identity changed with the transition to modernity, when it was freed from ascribed determination. Even if social positions were now understood as 'achieved', social life remained organized around social classes, Bauman argues. The focus of identity work, then, was to stay 'true to one's kind', by '*conforming to the established social types and models for conduct, of imitating, following the pattern, 'acculturating', not falling out of step, not deviating from the norm*' (Bauman 2001: 475).

Berman (1982) described the transition as the 'melting into air' of things previously perceived as 'solid'⁵⁹, such as for example culture, class, gender, religion, community belonging and other fixed roles. On the one hand, this has had as consequence that individuals have become liberated from ascribed or inherited identities (Bauman, 2001, White and Wyn 2004). On the other hand, they are now faced with the burden and responsibility of constructing their identity as an individual project, without the templates of previous generations to lean on. Identity has become an individual quest; therefore our present time has been described as characterized by growing individualization and desire for self-realisation (see for example Baumann 2000, Beck 2006). Identity, in this context, is no longer about staying 'true to kind', but about being 'true to oneself'.

⁵⁸ The term's Latin root 'idem' means 'the same'.

⁵⁹ The wording is borrowed from Marx and Engel's Communist Manifesto.

Bauman (2001) argues that in the contemporary period, which he calls 'liquid modernity'⁶⁰, old strategies of identity construction, which sought to ground identity in established orders, have been replaced by new strategies in which identity is constantly transformed. Social relations have become disembedded from local contexts, and are remade across time and space (Giddens 1991). Identities, in this context, are increasingly diasporic, mobile and transient (Savage, Bagnall & Longhurst 2005: 1). In Bauman's (1996) words, the postmodern 'problem' of identity is how to avoid fixity and keep options open. Today's world is characterized by instability, flexibility and fragmentation, and consequently identity needs to be continuously articulated and asserted. Identity, Bauman suggests, has shifted from being a 'given' to being a 'task' or a 'project' (ibid). Indeed, for Bauman (2001) identity has become compulsive and obligatory. Moreover, since it is oriented towards a constant becoming, identity is never completed. Processes of identity are therefore about 'becoming' rather than 'being'; identity has become fluid and open, it embraces change (Bauman 1996)⁶¹.

Also arguing against identity as a fixed disposition, Giddens (1991: 53) suggested that self-identity is *'not a distinctive trait, or even a collection of traits, possessed by the individual. It is the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography'*. Reflexivity is a key concept in Giddens' thinking. Individual strategies of identity should be understood as ongoing reflexive projects, he suggests (1991). In what he calls post-traditional societies, social relations are 'lifted out' of local contexts and individuals are left to make their own biographies. Everything they do and say become part of the story they tell themselves (and others) of who they are. Echoing Bauman, Giddens hold that it is not that individuals can chose to create themselves, rather, the self *has* to be routinely created and sustained (ibid: 52). However, in the contemporary information society individuals are overwhelmed with information and faced with a vast range of choices related to who they want to be, concerning lifestyle, relationships, life destinations and so on. In order to make decisions, they must try to make sense of different ways of being and through these processes of revising, considering, comparing choices they become

⁶⁰ As opposed to 'solid modernity', as described by Berman

⁶¹ Bauman further argued that consumption and lifestyles are important components in identity formation, and that the modern individual is above all as a consumer. I will return to this dimension further in the chapter, with regards to recent perspectives that link migration, lifestyle and identity projects.

increasingly self-aware (Giddens 1991). Identity, for these theorists, is no longer perceived as a stable point in peoples' lives, but as dynamic, fluid, constructed and achieved.

Another, however related, dimension in new approaches to identity that sets new understandings aside from previous ones (as described by Sökefeld above) is that the notion of identity has come to underline difference instead of sameness; identity, then, is ordering and bordering at the same time. For example, Jenkins (2014) argues that identification is as much about external categorization as it is about internal self-identification. Identity in this perspective is of a fundamentally relational nature, and, moreover, it is constructed in relation to what it is *not*. In Hall's words, identity '*only achieves its positive through the narrow eye of the positive*' (1991: 21).

Identities are therefore linked to systems of classification. This is the basis for Hall's theorization where identity is conceptualized as strategic, relational and positional (Hall 1996). Writing within a post-colonial perspective, he argues that classification works together with power in that it establishes ideas of difference that serve as basis for hierarchies and the construction of otherness. Identities, then, are the products of the marking of difference and exclusion. They are constructed in the encounter between the individual and social categories, '*across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices, and positions*' (Hall 1996: 4). Drawing on Foucault's concept of discourse and Butler's theory of performativity, Hall is concerned with representational or discursive practices such as stereotyping as part of how processes of power operate. Discursive practices construct 'subject positions' that inform the subject how it should be and how it should act. Identities, Hall suggests, should be understood as temporary attachments to subject positions (1996: 2). When subjects take up these positions, they subject themselves to the 'meanings, power and regulation' of the discourse (Hall 1997: 56). Since identities are never fixed, the individual must continuously come to terms with these attachments. Identity emerges as an 'unresolved question' between a number of intersecting discourses (1996). This leads Hall to argue that it is more useful to speak of identification, rather than identity.

Though I agree with Hall when it comes to underlining the dynamic and open-ended nature of identity, I find, however, that his strong emphasis on selves and identities as externally moulded

and defined, insufficiently grasp certain dimensions I see as significant in my informants' stories. This in turn is related to a central question in identity theory: If identity is constantly becoming, which forces are at play in these processes? I find that Hall's answer to this question fails to capture my informants' conscious, creative and unique experiences and interpretations. For Hall human beings have no identity prior to encounters with social categorization. Since selves and identities are constructed '*within, not outside discourse*', there cannot be a 'true self' hiding behind the surface (1996). Hall takes inspiration from Foucault's ideas of the subject as a product or effect of power and discourse⁶². Like theorists mentioned earlier, Foucault also linked the formation and transformation of particular forms of subjectivity to historical developments, but for him the significant change was a shift in how power is exercised, from sovereign power to 'governmentality', where power is de-centered and individuals are encouraged to regulate themselves (Buckingham 2008). Disciplinary practices of the body are central, as well as technologies of surveillance, measurement, assessment and classifications of the body. These regimes of power are what bring the self into existence. The modern self, Foucault suggests, is above all self-regulating and self-monitoring, and not, Elliot (2001) notes, agentic and knowledgeable⁶³. Callero (2003: 118), himself critical of Foucault's perspective, suggests that for Foucault 'the self is *'coerced into existence, not to become an agent but as a mechanism of control where systems of discourse work from the inside out by creating a self-regulating subject'*. While I agree that we do not live lives without constraints, that we act in fields of power, and that we are subject to 'the continuous 'play' of history, culture, and power' (Hall 1990: 225), I find Ortnier's critical comments useful. Ortnier, while seeking to develop rather than dismiss the theories she criticises, writes that they become 'theories of constraint' (2006: 1). She therefore calls for better attention to human agency as well as to the social processes that produce and reproduce constraints. This is also the direction that I will take this further, by presenting theories that underline human beings as conscious and agentic rather than swayed.

However, because it draws on perspectives described above, I shall first briefly turn to a different approach to contemporary selves, which is relevant in the discussion of the migration regime's

⁶² Although Hall's perspective on power is also inspired by Marxist and post-colonial thinking, with power understood as an ideological struggle for hegemony.

⁶³ According to Callero (2003), one problem with the view is that if individuals are subjects of discourse rather than free and active agents, then it is difficult to imagine for example the possibility of political resistance or social change.

design of ideal migrants. This perspective addresses what is referred to as the 'neoliberal self'. While I do not see the neoliberal self as an ontological category, I find that the notion captures significant dimensions of the environment in which identity construction presently takes place.

Self-management

Ideas of the disciplined and self-regulated individual remain highly influential, and have for example inspired the growing scholarship on what is referred to as *neoliberal selves*. The notion of the neoliberal self refers to a certain kind of subjectivity which is seen as both a condition for and a consequence of the unstable, fragmentary social conditions of contemporary capitalism (Sennett 2006). That is, it is understood as having evolved and risen to hegemony along with with the growing dominance of neoliberal economic and political ideologies. In order to prosper in the conditions of the new capitalism, individuals must be flexible and capable of improvising life narratives, always ready to develop new skills and let go of the past. Harvey (2005) argued that the conception of the individual as in control of itself and responsible for its own fate is a necessary accompaniment to the shift to policies of deregulation, privatization, and the withdrawal of the state from areas of social provision⁶⁴. The neoliberal individual is therefore often characterized as responsabilized and self-managed, or referred to as the 'enterprising self' (Sennett 1998). Thus, under neoliberalism the subject is constituted as active (Ulleberg 2007: 127), but within narrow frames.

The enterprise of managing the self involves understanding oneself as a collection of skills or traits, that can be managed, negotiated, trained, improved, even optimized. The notions of self-transformation and self-improvement are central. In order to demonstrate skills or traits, individuals craft their identities around consumption experiences that serve as a kind of self-production, rather than around for example work, since work is no longer stable (Sennett 2006). That implies, as Grey (1994) notes, that the quest of 'self-management' goes beyond the individual-as-worker, and can encompass all domains of life. For example, Greco (1993, Bührmann 2005) points out that the demands on the enterprising self involves that the individual must also, for example, look healthy and exude energy to demonstrate a commitment to

⁶⁴ I will explore the influence of neoliberalism on Canadian politics and migration management in chapters 6 and 7.

entrepreneurial success. Similarly, the discourses of neoliberal hyper-individualism define health and wellness as a personal and moral achievement.

As I will return to in chapter 6, I suggest that qualities associated with the neoliberal self, such as flexibility, responsibility, goal-orientation, self-reliance and discipline, are echoed in the notion of the ideal and wanted migrant in the skilled migrant category. However, I share the view that the pressures exerted on individuals to conform to such expectations do not mean that the entrepreneurial self 'actually exists'. Several writers point out that the notion of the enterprising self should be seen as representing 'appellative, not prescriptive' characteristics (Bröckling 2002, in Bührmann 2005). Rather than understanding it as an empirically existing entity, we should see it as an instructive call; a 'direction in which individuals is changed and should change' (op.cit.). I thus take the 'neoliberal self' to be an ideologically propelled and increasingly hegemonic prescriptive - not descriptive - self.

Conscious selves

As noted earlier, a common denominator of many views of identity is that they see identity as constructed first and foremost by forces beyond and outside the individual. In the empirical analysis I found that such theories helpful in sharpening my attention to discourses and various kinds of constraints that influenced my informants' experiences and trajectories. However, I felt that with regards to the critical awareness, pragmatism and idiosyncrasy conveyed in my informants' narratives, something significant was lost. Ortner (2006: 111) has noted the tendency in much of the above-mentioned theories to '*slight the question of subjectivity, that is, the view of the subject as existentially complex, a being who feels and thinks and reflects, who makes and seeks meaning*'. With a similar feeling, I turned to theories that seek to approach individuals as creative, conscious, interpreting and agentic beings, - rather than '*products and pawns of social structures or social relations, systems of signification, habituated practices and unconscious urges*' passive victims of historical, social and cultural vicissitudes' (Rapport 1997: [1],7). Jackson (1996: 22), for example, argues that theorists have gone too far in reducing individuals to effects of impersonal forces, and that therefore we need to reinstate the subject as the central site where '*life is lived, meanings are made, will exercised, reflection takes place, consciousness finds expression, determinations take effect, and habits are formed or broken*'. These perspectives draw

on existential phenomenology in that they emphasize human beings as singularly embodied beings, who engage with the world in conscious, active ways and whose experiences (cognition, perceptions, thoughts, feelings, imaginings) are unique.

In reaction to what he saw as a tendency among anthropologists to disregard informants' self-consciousness and presume their identities to be merely shared and social, Anthony Cohen (1994) proposed an alternative anthropology of identity which would emphasize the consciousness of individual selves and explore, rather than presume, the relationship between individuals and groups. Together with Nigel Rapport he proposed that instead of subsuming individuals to the group to which they belonged, anthropologists should recognize individuals as *'intentional, interpreting, imaginative, conscious agents'* (Cohen and Rapport 1995: 4). We should not seek to explain individuals based on the categories to which they belong, but emphasize their active, critical and creative engagement with socio-cultural milieux. This is not, the authors claim, to say that social scientists should privilege the individual over society. Paying attention to individual consciousness and its expression through narratives will rather serve to 'illuminate society' (Cohen 1994). It should be regarded as a necessary condition for the *'sensitive understanding of social relations and of society as composed of, and constituted by, subjective individuals in interaction'* (Cohen and Rapport 1995: 10-11). The method best suited to this orientation, is through narratives and life-stories (Rapport 2003: 73).

Cohen and Rapport (1995) - drawing on Bateson (1958, 1972) - emphasize that individuals *'create order and impose it on the universe by purposively relating ourselves to the world and its objects through our powers of discrimination'* (Cohen and Rapport 1995: 6). Rapport has taken the proposition further by arguing that the collective representations social scientists tend to privilege - culture, community, society - should not be made the fundament of social sciences since they have no ontological existence. Similarly, Jackson argues that these representations are idioms of intersubjective life, but not its "foundation or final cause". Rapport (1997) argues that there are no social structures or systems of significations without conscious individuals; that beyond the actions of individuals, there is no social mover. And yet, anthropology, Rapport argues, has neglected the significance of these acting selves.

Counter to Hall's view, Rapport argues that human uniqueness comes before categorization and classification: We begin our unique being-in-the-world, we begin to be singular, even at birth. However, the idea of the singularity of human beings ought not to be based on the idea of a 'substance' of human nature, Rapport underlines. Rather, we should understand it as *capacities*, that we share as species⁶⁵: capacities to become, to act and imagine, capacities that can be uniquely fulfilled but also thwarted. For example, home-making, which I will explore further below, could be seen a 'species-wide capacity'.

Individual uniqueness is not necessarily expressed on the surface of social life, Rapport (2003) notes, but we should not 'mistake the roleplayer for the individual within' (2011). Ortner (2006: 115) has also pointed out that social beings are *'always more than the occupants of particular positions and the holders of particular identities'*. She acknowledges the usefulness of considering how some identities (such as 'woman') are constructed as subordinate, but holds that this is different from questions of subjectivity, of the *'modes of perception, affect, thought, desire, and fear that animate acting subjects'* (p. 107). Josephides (2008: 23), in her critique against anthropologists' tendency to disregard informants' selfhood, reflects over the distinction between the individual and the roleplayer in terms of 'person', as externally denominated entity, and 'self', as what each of us on the 'inside' think of as our self. Since our experiences are uniquely ours, they can never fully translate into the social, Rapport (1993) suggests. To illustrate this point, he cites psychoanalyst and ethnologist George Devereux (1978) who wrote that *'[I]f two people do the same thing, it is not the same thing'* (1993: [159]). And yet, we do live by a number of common forms, for example, in order to be intelligible, private thought is confined to be expressed through public language, through learned conventions (ibid). The relationship between common forms and subjective meanings is key to understanding the meaning of individuality, Rapport (2003) writes. For example, Cohen and Rapport (1995) describe what they call the 'semantic similarity' of their informants' discourses, showing how public commonality may stand in striking contrast to the diversity of private meanings underneath (see also Rapport 2003). These fieldwork insights pointed them towards the *'inescapable distinction between public language and private thought, between communication (...) and interpretation (...)'* (Cohen and Rapport 1995: 11).

⁶⁵ The notion of capacities thus serves to bridges the simultaneous uniqueness and universality of human nature.

These thoughts have represented a memorandum and a useful critical lens in the analytical work of this thesis. The landscape of migration is densely populated by categories, classification, structures and regulations, but the narratives of my informants called for ways to come to terms with their agency, their interpretations of circumstances and situations, their actions and choices among differently working pressures. In the analysis of these narratives I therefore sought to keep in mind Rapport's (2015) urge that we should look for the private diversity of meanings which lies beneath common forms, semantic similarities, conventional idioms.

Beyond theories of the nature of identity, the analysis has been informed by perspectives on the relationship between identity and movement, and identity and place. In the following I will expand on this.

Identity and movement

I felt that this is not my culture, I cannot live in it. It's no longer mine. I am sad to see the culture changing. People throwing garbage in the street; they don't care about anything. Here people recycle, here people have respect. I was Canadian before I even came here.

Ana

The analysis also draws on theory that connects identity and movement. Over the last two decades identity theorists have renounced fixity, not only with regards to identity as something given and stable, but also with regards to emplacement. Identity is approached as formed by the lived experience of moving in space (e.g. Urry 2000, Cohen 2002). Clifford (1997) suggested that routes, not roots, have become a key framework in studies of identity. He argued that in today's world of mobility and migration, travelling has become normative and that one can even speak of 'dwelling-in-travel' (1997: 2). Movement, Rapport (1997: 69) similarly holds, is the *'quintessence of how we - migrants and autochtones, tourists and locals, refugees and citizens, urbanites and ruralites - construct contemporary social experience and have it constructed for us'*. Individuals understand their identities and the world around them through movement, thus movement have become not just the definitive feature of migrant subjectivities but also the analytic key to understand the modern world (Rapport and Dawson 1998). For example, Hornberger (2007)

suggest with regards to transnationalism that it can be approached not only as physical movements across borders, but also the discursive construction of self as mobile, whether or not migration actually takes place. Processes of movement and identity, then, are intertwined for all of us. As Caroline Knowles (2010) phrases it, '*peoples' lives and subjectivities are about where they go and why, how they go, and who they encounter on the way*', people are the '*sum of their journeys*'. However, mobility and place attachment are not opposite and exclusive phenomena, Åkerlund (2013) notes. Rather, the two are linked together, so that identity is '*developed and sustained by the lived experience of belonging in place and of moving through and connecting to new places, people, events and things*' (ibid: 16).

Ingold (2011) also privileges movement as the key to understanding⁶⁶. Movement, he suggests, is the primary condition of being: Being-in-the-world is to move along paths. We are constantly moving from place to place, intertwining our paths of life with those of others in a 'meshwork', lines that moves in a non-linear fashion; in a perambulatory and unending movement. Ingold calls this movement *wayfaring* (2011). Ingold's writing illustrate that even though we no longer understand identity as prescribed by place, we still need to rethink and come to terms with the relationship between identity and place. In recent years, researchers have increasingly begun to underline the significance of place (or imaginations of place) and on assumed correspondences between certain lifestyles and particular places that inform migration trajectories. (for example Bönisch-Brednich and Trundle 2010). I will elaborate on this further below.

Along with the rise of identity as a central topic, there has been an increasing interest in narratives as a way to access the contextual discursive construction of self (Farrell 2008). Mishler (1999) suggests that we view identities as 'narrative constructions'. For Giddens (1991: 5), identity, understood as individual and continuously ongoing projects, consists in the 'sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives (...)'. With regards to the context of migration, where 'understandings of self are destabilized and questioned', Farrell (2008: 45) suggests that narrative is a central resource in creating self-coherence. Since this thesis considers how migrants narrate their migration experiences - how their migration is *narratively constructed*

⁶⁶ Unlike his inspiration Heidegger (1971), who imagined human life as unfolding *in a place* (a 'clearing').

- and how this can fruitfully be regarded as expressions of the narrator's ideas of self and of broader life projects, it is necessary to clarify the relationship between identity and narratives.

Narrated selves

Identities, as urged above, are the stories people tell about themselves and others; in other words, narratives are integral to processes of identity construction. Indeed, narratives have come to be seen as a fundamental site for self-construction, as well as for the relationship between self and society (Gergen 2001). Farrell (2008: 235) notes that *'in telling stories of personal experience, participants perform and construct their identities, making elements of the process more salient and silencing others'*. Through narratives, our lives attain meaning (Kerby 1991, in Rapport and Overing 2000). Narratives, Ochs and Capps (2001: 18) suggest, are *'imbued with a moral and aesthetic evaluation of actions, emotions, thoughts, and worldly conditions'*. Narratives should therefore be seen as one of the fundamental ways in which humans organize their understanding of the world (cf. Cohen and Rapport 1995, Cortazzi, in Atkinson et al. 2007). A narrative, Kerby (1991: 39) writes, is *'the telling (...) of a series of temporal events so that a meaningful sequence is portrayed - the story or plot of the narrative'*. The plot orders events causally as well as temporally (Forster 1927, in Cortazzi 2014: 86), it can be seen as the logic or syntax of a narrative (Somers 1994). According to Riessman (2005: 1), all narratives have two main things in common, namely sequence and consequence, in the sense that in narratives *'events are selected, organised, connected, and evaluated as meaningful for a particular audience'*. A narrative thus has a configurational dimension; it *'construes significant wholes out of scattered events'* (Ricoeur 1981). Narratives, Ochs and Capps (1996) write, impose order on otherwise disconnected events. This ordering is a way to create meaning in what might otherwise be discordant and chaotic experiences, Bruner (1990) writes.

In a world where solid reference points no longer provide the basis for stable self-identities, identities are based on accounts of the persons' lives, actions and influences; accounts that makes sense to the persons themselves and which can be explained to others, Giddens (1991) suggested. Identity narratives bridge the inward and the outward, the personal and the public, representing the *'means by which self-identity is reflexively understood both by the individual concerned and by others'* (Giddens 1991: 243). In the wake of such propositions, scholars have come to argue

that it is not only fragmented events that are given a sense of coherence and continuity through narratives; it is also one's identity (Wetherell 2006). As Fog Olwig's (2001: 14) suggests, the narrative *'portrays a sense of coherence reflective of the narrator's sense of self'*. Life stories become not just a collection of events of an individual's life course, but a matter of 'structured self images' (Kohli 1981: 65, in Thomsen 2006). With regards to this, Hall (in McGrew, Hall and Held 1992: 598) suggests that *'if we feel we have a unified identity from birth to death, it is only because we construct a comforting story or "narrative of the self" about ourselves. The fully unified, completed, secure, and coherent identity is a fantasy'*. However, by constructing 'structured self-images' over time, identity narratives provide people with a sense of 'personal order' (Kohli 1981, Ochs and Capps 1996). This points us back to the theories of identity as constantly in the process of change, as discussed in the previous chapter (Hall 1996: 4, Giddens 1991, Bauman 2001). As narratives *'reach out to tap a pre-existing identity, they construct a fluid, evolving identity-in-the-making'*, Ochs and Capps (1996: 22) write. Or, in novelist Toni Morrison's (1994: 22, cited in Andrews 2004: 77) words: *'Narrative is radical, creating us at the very moment it is being created'*.

Narratives are also concerned with expressing coherence over time (Rapport and Overing 2000). They record and recount, define, frame, structure, shape, schematize and connect events (ibid: 284). They simultaneously explain the past and are oriented towards the future; and as such give an impression of coherence and stability. According to Ochs and Capps' (2001: 2) narratives *'imbue life events with a temporal and logical order'*, and establish a coherence across past, present and yet unrealized events. They are constructions of the way individuals represent aspects from her or his past relevant to the present, and in terms of intentions for the future by which he or she guides present actions (Thomsen 2005: 73). Narratives, then, can be regarded as our ongoing stories of ourselves, a primary embodiment of our understanding of the world, in which we embed our perceptions, understandings and identities (Rapport and Overing 2000). Or, as Crites (1971: 297) suggested: Narrative is the form of consciousness in which we continue to experience and organize experience.

Jackson (2002), inspired by Arendt (1958), explores what he calls the *politics* of storytelling, drawing attention to the ways that both private and public interests are always 'problematically at play'. Storytelling unfolds within power relations which makes certain stories acceptable in the

public realm, he notes. Narratives of individual experiences are thus selectively refashioned in order to be recognizable in the eyes of others, and consequently, other narratives remain untold, censored and suppressed (2002: 11).

In the case of migration, analysing for example how connections between places, people, actions and emotions are constructed in narratives is particularly useful, Gilmartin and Migge (2015: 92) hold. Narratives shed light on the tellers' situated conceptualization of such abstract concepts as place, identity, home and belonging and bring forth the fuzziness, ambivalence and mutability of individual perceptions (ibid). Further, the authors argue that narratives point to those processes of inclusion and exclusion that really matter for migrant's integration (ibid: 99), and thus shed useful light on the role of discourses and classification from an empirical point of view. The narrative methodology that informed the empirical investigation will be discussed more in-depth in the next chapter. In the following will elaborate on identity as linked with the notions of home and belonging.

New conceptions of home

The theoretical development that predicated identity's detachment from 'solid things', also inspired new reflections around the concepts of home and belonging, yielding more dynamic, pluralistic, and open-ended understandings. For some, the modern individual should be understood as uprooted from original social milieux and unable to find a home again (P. Berger 1973, in Rapport and Dawson 1998). Modernity has caused the loss of traditional, absolute and unified realities and hence a 'spreading condition of homelessness' (ibid: 31). In an article contemplating exile, Eva Hoffman (2009) asked the question whether anything could be rescued from the notion of home, or 'at-homeness', that is '*sufficient in our condition*'. With the embrace of 'nomadism', the notion of 'home' becomes less powerful and discloses that it '*never was what it cracked up to be, the haven of safety and affection we dream of and imagine*' (ibid: 13). 'Our condition', as Hoffman sees it, is to live in a world of '*easy come, easy go, of travelling light and sliding among places and meanings without alighting on any of them for long*' (ibid: 12). However, most migration scholars seem to subscribe to the view that the notion of home remains useful. It could be argued that in a context of expanded mobility and shifting boundaries, homes become even more important, and that we should rather explore whether or how its meaning has

changed and evolved. For Rapport and Dawson (1998) home remains a useful analytical construct because it constitutes an important basis for developing and maintaining personal identities. In the work with this thesis I have found such dynamic and open-ended understandings of 'home' useful. Instead of employing home as a predefined notion, I have been concerned with exploring its different and pluralistic meanings.

In recent decades, the concepts of home and belonging have drawn the attention of many scholars trying to come to terms with the relationships between for example identity and roots, home and homeland, people and territory (Ilcan 2002). A central question here is whether home is related to a specific site and if so in what ways. Researchers have been concerned with exploring peoples' referents of home, whether they are one or multiple, in what kind of places they are located, what it is that makes people feel at home, and how this changes (Gilmartin and Migge 2015).

Anthropologists have conventionally understood home as '*tantamount to being environmentally fixed, or at least as an unmoving centre*', Rapport (1997: 66) writes. However, home, Ilcan (2002) writes, with its connotations of stability and constancy has now become a contested and, for some, mobile terrain.

Research focusing on the transnational practices of migrants has in particular inspired new meanings and ways of conceptualizing home by showing that multiple locations of home may exist (e.g. Al-Ali and Koser 2002). Migrants' continued home-ties and simultaneous new attachments are at heart of transnational approaches. Attachments to places has been empirically and broadly studied and the insights these studies have produced challenge ideas of *one* home, *one* belonging (Leung 2004). For example, Roger Rouse (1991: 14) introduced the notion of *pluri-local* homes in his studies of Mexican migrants working across the border. Home, for Rouse, is no longer a fixed structure or a physical place, but best understood as the '*social and psychological spaces we create for ourselves*' (Rouse 1991).

Transnational studies cover a range of ways to conceptualize and uphold ideas of home, from transnational communities efforts at effecting political or social changes in the 'home land', to the complexity and ambiguity of individual migrants' notions of home (see Al-Ali and Koser 2002, edited volume). These studies are indicative of much contemporary research, in that home is no

longer conceptualized in terms of place but rather in terms of space, thus underlining the social and interrelated dimensions (Åkerlund 2013). Home - like identity - is open and fluid; it is not bounded by space or territorially stable. Home, then, does not only have a material form. Indeed, as Rapport and Dawson (1998) have argued, home need not be a site at all but for example sets of practices and habitual actions: *'one is at home when one inhabits a cognitive environment in which one can undertake the routines of everyday life and through which one finds one's identity best mediated'* (Rapport and Dawson 1998). Homes can also be maintained through activities that uphold a belonging, exemplified by Minh-ha's (1994: 16) observations that for many writers in exile 'true home is to be found not in houses but in writing'. Home, more than a dwelling, is *embodied*, it carries lived experiences and histories, Minh-ha (2010) contends. Similarly, Wolf (2002) suggests that the locations of home are not related to geography, but to for example to ideology or emotions. Home, then, has many dimensions. For example, Leung (2004: 9) suggest we approach 'home' as both a place, a social unit, and a perception. In her work she sees home as a *'multi-dimensional and dynamic place whose foundations are laid both into the ground and into one's heart'* (1997: 9).

The notion of home entails 'background' and 'future', or as Armbruster (in Al-Ali and Koser 2002) suggests: Home is both an actual place of lived experience and a metaphorical space of personal attachment and identification. It can contain both a sense of where one comes from and where one travels to, even a tension between the two. Home, then, is associated with ideas about origin, often linked to for example family relations and redolent with nostalgia. Anything associated with home, everything and everyone that we left, become more apparent through absence, Case (1996: 1) notes. Our 'early places' have the greatest potential to become homes, Hannerz (2002) writes. For many migrants, narratives of the future involve ideas of a future homecoming⁶⁷. Home, then, can also be conceived as a destination; to find a (true) home can be a project and a goal.

Home, Al-Ali and Koser (2002: 7) write, can be recognized in a *'longing for a nostalgic past or a utopian future'*. Approaching home as both origin and destination, Fortier (2001) explores 'homing desires' (Brah 1996) that she claims is constituted through both movement and

⁶⁷ A theme that has been particularly central in studies of diasporas (eg. Tölölyan 1996)

attachment. Migration, in this sense, can be regarded as a sort of home-coming, where leaving equals becoming, which resonates with many narratives this thesis. Home-making is increasingly viewed as a process or a project at the heart of the migration experience. Al-Ali and Koser (2002: 1, 6) describe the changing relationships between migrants and their homes as involving *'acts of imagining, creating, unmaking, changing, losing and moving 'homes'*, and suggest that this is a quintessential characteristic of transnational migration. Home, in Hage's (1997: 103) words, is *'an ongoing project entailing a sense of hope for the future'*. Along similar lines, Leung suggests (2004) that migration is all but homelessness, indeed, *'never are ideas about home more present than in migration'*. Migration, then, can be understood as being fundamentally about home making, as constituting a part of a quest for home (ibid, see also Benson 2011, Fortier 2001). As noted introductorily, this has also been central in the work with this thesis in that my informants' migrations are analysed in terms of a larger quest for a home and self-realization, and ideas regarding self and belonging are understood as having oriented both the decision to migrate and the strategies of integration in the new place.

Home is increasingly seen understood as an individual and private achievement, in the sense that we choose our own homes (cf Rapport 1995). Home-making, Amit (in Williksen and Rapport 2010: 214) writes, can be seen as *'located first and foremost in the life-course of its creators'*. However, Olwig (in Rapport and Dawson 1998: 230-231) comments that individuals are not free to conceptualize home sites according to individualized needs because although getting to know oneself is a deeply personal process it also engages one in dialogue with significant others. The variety of meanings attached to the notion of home share a common denominator, she argues, and this is that it is a *'contested domain'*, and not the *'place of harmony'* we have often conceive it. Home is a contested space, she writes, where *'different interests struggle to define their own spaces within which to localize and cultivate their identity'* (p. 226). Jackson (2002: 12), drawing on Arendt (1958,) is concerned with the relationship between public and private realm, where the private realm can connote the domestic space but also the hidden field of the personal *'in which certain thoughts, intentions and desires are masked'*. Feeling at home, he suggests, is a matter of *'working out some kind of balance between active and passive, autonomous and anonymous modes of being'* (1995: 123). Hessel (2010, in Yuval Davis 2011) notes that feeling at home is not necessarily only about warm feelings, it also allows for the emotional engagement of sometimes

being angry, ashamed or resentful. Home, in these perspectives, is closely associated with the notion of belonging.

Perspectives on belonging

While the concept of belonging has a long history in political and social theory, it only recently resurfaced in migration research, Reed-Danahay and Brettell (2008) note. In the context of increased migration, transnationalism and globalisation, understandings of belonging, social affiliation as well as the meaning of place has changed (Farrell 2008, Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst 2005). In migration research, belonging has often been explored with regards to struggles between minority and majority groups over issues related to citizenship, multicultural education and political representation (Vasta 2013). Recent research has sought to situate belonging within power structures in society that define people as belonging or not belonging (Yuval Davis et al. 2006). For example, belonging has been problematized with respect to integration. One crucial issue here has been how racism and other forms of exclusion may prevent people from developing a sense of belonging (Vasta 2013). Other works have focused on ongoing public debates around integration and the expectations directed at migrants that they develop a certain sense of belonging to the societies and polities where they settle. As I will come back to in chapters 5-7, in these debates belonging is sometimes rendered contingent on contributions to the common good, in particular to the national economy. Moreover, belonging is frequently cast as a matter of mutual exclusion, a zero sum game, where belonging to one society excludes belonging to another. In this discourse, migrants who maintain close ties to their communities of origin become suspicious and potentially disloyal. Such themes have been central for researchers of transnationalism, who have argued that continued transnational ties does not exclude the development of attachments to the destination societies.

Focusing on different dimensions and levels, on individual meanings and socio-cultural perspectives, researchers have employed different understandings of belonging. Belonging, according to Vasta (2013: 198) can be defined as a *'social relationship in which a person's membership in a group is based on the person's identification with the group or society, and acceptance or recognition by the group or society'*. In this sense, belonging is constructed around identity, yet it is not only a subjective matter, but formed in the interplay with other individuals

and with structures. It is 'multifaceted' in the sense that people can have a sense of belonging as individuals as well as a sense of collective belonging. When people identify themselves as belonging to a place, Anthony Cohen (1982: 22) writes, they merge history with present, and different sectors of community with the community as whole. In this way, change as well as conflicting internal demands are toned down. Migrants - as the transnational scholarship has shown - often have multiple, translocal belongings. There are various modes and hierarchies of belonging, they are multiple, varied and depend on circumstances and contexts. Belonging, Yuval-Davis (2011) writes, can be stable, contested or transient. Sometimes people even hold contradictory forms of belonging (Vasta 2013). Further complexity is added in that belonging can refer to material, symbolic and emotional dimensions of life.

Despite its complexity, the concept of belonging is often used without clarifying its meaning, which is assumed to be evident - 'affinity, togetherness, recognition, acceptance and security in social relationships' (Vasta 2013: 198). What is certain is that it is about the relationship between self and other, and self and society (Vasta 2013). Belonging, Gammeltoft (2014: 20) writes, connotes ownership and membership. She employs the term to capture the sense of attachment that binds individuals together with others and into larger social communities. Similarly, Skrbis et al (2007) understand belonging as processes that are central to the way in which human relationships are conducted. The relation between the notions of home and belonging is close. For example, Yuval Davis (2011) describes belonging as being about '*an emotional attachment, about feeling 'at home'*'.

Belonging and identity are also of course closely linked. In this thesis I will explore this relationship in several ways. First of all, I do this by approaching my informants' migrations as forming part of a larger project of seeking a meaningful life based on ideas of personal identity. I explore, for example, the dimensions that made them locate themselves as belonging in Montreal. That is, I look at how identity and belonging becomes articulated through real or pre-imagined experiences of place attachment. I also approach the link between identity and belonging through the notion of lifestyle and class. Class, here, is not understood as a social position in a stratified structure of wealth, but rather as a cultural process, which will be seen from the perspective of

individuals. As discussed in the previous chapter, class will also be seen in relation to multiple, transnational contexts.

Class belonging becomes ambiguous through migration, and in the case of my informants generally implied a downward movement. In this situation, the fact of having been selected as skilled migrant somehow served to uphold a class belonging that was otherwise challenged. Indeed, many qualities that my informants presented as related to their middle class belonging, were also the ones that had been (at least, so they felt) emphasized in the migrant selection process, for example being educated, independent, and goal-oriented. They would also typically present themselves as 'professionals', thus drawing attention to education and work experience, which were aspects that could not be revoked by their post-migration economic situation. In addition to seeing class in a transnational frame, Kelly (2012) also argues in favor of understanding class from the perspective of the individuals. Individuals play out or perform class through consumption and embodiment, sometimes related, sometimes unrelated to 'objective' class identification. These performances and narratives are what Anthias (2005) refers to as *narratives of location*, that is, narratives where we place ourselves in terms of social categories.

The complexity, the pluralistic and individual meanings inherent in the notion of belonging calls for empirical investigation. Nibbs (2014) emphasizes the necessity of exploring the notion through informants' uses and interpretations in her study of refugees' belonging vis-à-vis mainstream society. Nibbs defines belonging as 'the state where self-representation is perceived to fit' (2014: 6) and argues that this understanding of the notion of belonging is closely located in emic understandings of 'being in the right place' and, moreover, that it allows analysis to account for '*associative feelings with several collective identities in several different social fields at the same time*' (ibid: 9). As such it has the potential to analytically incorporate the senses of belonging of migrants who are simultaneously involved and integrated in more than one society (de Haas 2005).

Like home, the notion of belonging can work to integrate various levels, in this study ranging from personal emotions to (Canadian) national identity discourses. I have been concerned with the various ways that migrants conceptualize and seek to realize belonging in and through

migration, but also with the ways that national discourses prescribe particular modes of belonging. I approach the latter by examining migration regulations, integration policies, and discourses of national identity, seeking to uncover how these formal structures and discursive landscapes articulate ideas of who can and who cannot belong, upon which elements belonging is premised, and how these are represented. By way of its filtering practices, the skilled migration regime can be understood as an instructive and restrictive context with regards to these issues. In the policy discourse, the admitted candidates are to a large extent discursively constructed as primarily motivated by career or economic opportunities, equipped with globally convertible human and cultural capital, and educated into 'cosmopolitan values' that make them feel at home anywhere. It establishes an association between belonging, particular personal qualities and a capacity to contribute economically that I shall return to this at length in chapters 5 and 6.

Who can belong, and how?

The struggle around the determination of what belonging and being member of a community involves is not a new theme in migration research. Yuval-Davis refers to this as 'politics of belonging' (2011); Favell (1999) describes it as the 'dirty work of boundary maintenance'. Such processes are driven by hegemonic political powers but also by resisting, contesting, challenging political agents, Yuval Davis (2011) suggests. I will look closer at the politics behind the present migration regime in chapter 6. Belonging is often coupled with ideas of national identity and not least with members' sense of belonging as something of a moral obligations. In recent years discussions about belonging and national identity have flared, reflecting a concern that immigrants are not integrating into the destination societies (Vasta 2013). As Vasta notes, in these discussions the notion of belonging is often coupled with the notion of social cohesion, which tends to be used to refer to a society that has common values and civic culture, as well as a common sense of belonging and identity. Although it can be taken to refer to social solidarity, social networks and social capital, the notion thus often takes on an assimilative element of social order and control (ibid: 198)⁶⁸.

⁶⁸ In the Canadian context, social cohesion has become a common term in political discourse over the last decade, and is understood as linked to the ideology of the Conservative party that has been in power in these years, as I will come back to in chapter 7.

In her discussion of belonging to a community or nation, Vasta (2013) concludes that it would be useful to decouple the idea of shared national identities from the requirement of citizenship. She bases this on the argument that citizens might have a sense of belonging to a polity without having a sense of belonging together; that they might identify with the polity's institutions and central practices, and feel at home in them (Mason 2000: 127), without having a sense of belonging with other citizens⁶⁹. Citizenship, then, could be used with reference to legal rights and duties, whereas 'cultural citizenship' points to emotional dimensions and subjective experiences of belonging to a given place or community (Rosaldo 1994, Fog Olwig and Valentin 2015). It is not the intention of this thesis to address these specific issues in other ways that simply point out that perspectives and opinions of such overarching belongings diverge, that ideas of for example national belonging have clear normative overtones, and more specifically that belonging to a community or a polity can mean very different things for different individuals.

Belonging can also have an imperative element, often linked to identity politics, which has increasingly preoccupied scholars who worry about the potentially limiting and oppressive dimensions of such communities. With respect to belonging and community, anthropologists have often privileged '*an ethnicized paradigm in which community is treated first and foremost as an ascribed identity*', Amit (in Amit and Rapport 2002: 165) writes. In the effort to support subordinate groups, they have unwittingly contributed to maintain essentialized categorical differences. However, in such perceptions of community, individual agency and autonomy tend to have a weak position. An opposite view would be that '*inasmuch as community exists, it is a matter of an ongoing negotiation of commonality (...)*' (Rapport, in Amit and Rapport 2002). Amit suggests that in spite of the explosive growth of identity politics in the recent decades, it is still the case for most people that the fellowships we form and engage in are voluntary forms of sociality, often partial, and linked to particular places and activities. *In reality*, she argues, '*(...) some of the most common avenues for forming a sense of fellowship, of belonging and social connection are realized through modest daily practices that are often not strongly marked by symbolic categorical identities*' (ibid: 165). This was the case also for the informants in this study, as the empirical analysis will show.

⁶⁹ Nibbs (2014) shows that the refugees she studied had pragmatic reasons (security, facilitated travel, etc) for becoming citizens that were unrelated to a sense of belonging.

The meaning of place

The thesis seeks to engage with the renewed focus on place in migration studies. This development could be described as a reaction against previous theoretical approaches that underlined flow and placelessness. Much academic text at the turn of the millenium tended to see place as non-existent, irrelevant or *depassé*. Instead, a range of new concepts gained prominence in the social sciences (deterritorialization, placelessness, dislocalization, mobility, time-space compression, hyperspace, transnational social fields) that emphasized detachment and disembeddedness from place. In the past decade there has been a shift or bifurcation among scholars related to the significance attached to place, from underlining deterritorialization, disembeddedness and flow to more recent perspectives where 'place' has gained centrality (Bönisch-Brednich and Trundle 2010). Especially through the transnational framework, the significance of spatialized, local attachments re-entered migration research in a frame that allowed for simultaneous, multiple such attachments, taking a variety of forms. Research in this field have focused on ways that both identity and place are changed and connected through migration (Gilmartin and Migge 2015) and 'belonging' and 'home' have been central concepts here. In conventional parlour home and place are often associated, even conflated. In this thesis the notion of home is many-sided, dynamic and not necessarily tied to place. Equally, the notion of place can refer to a real or imagined physical site.

The link between migration and place has been explored for example through the lenses of identity and belonging, communities and collective organizations, and citizenship. In the edited volume *Local Lives* (Bönisch-Brednich and Trundle 2010), the role of place in the migration experiences is underlined with regards to how individuals construct identities in part through a sense of belonging in place and how they engage in contested politics of belonging. In the introduction chapter, the editors write that '*[s]cholars of migration are realising that place matters, and are once again ready to focus on localities as sites within which the social fabric of migrant lives are woven*' (ibid: 1). For one, the significance of place is related to the 'carving of channels' that Tsing (2000: 330) referred to in her call for the incorporation of material and institutional dimensions. While connections and movements stretch out in space they nevertheless remain limited by inequality, borders, power disparities and other barriers, Åkerlund (2013) notes. Indeed, 'borderwork' (Rumford 2009) emerge as more important than ever.

Bordering processes include discourses that frame communities, resources, jobs, etc as 'local' and 'under threat' from immigrants (Bönisch-Brednich and Trundle 2010).

The link between site, identity, home and belonging is also a central dimension, since belonging not only ties people to social relationships but also to place. Belonging, Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst (2005: 12) argue, should be seen as an embedded process in which people reflexively judge the suitability of a given site as appropriate. Indeed, understanding 'home' in conjunction with 'belonging' yoke together the concepts of identity and place, and thus illuminates the relationship between them, Ralph and Staeheli (2011) suggest. The contemporary world is one that enables individuals to imagine themselves at home somewhere else. In this perspective, place also becomes significant, linking spatial relocation and self-realization. Hage (2005: 470) employs the notion of 'existential mobility' in order to capture spatial relocations that are related to a sense of self as moving and developing, suggesting that *'we engage in the kind of physical mobility that defines us as migrants because we feel another geographical space is a better launching pad for our existential selves'*. These processes are also articulated in narratives that tie individuals to specific places. Drawing on the notion of narratives as 'emplacement' (Mattingly 1998), Jervis Read suggest the term 'narrative emplacement' to capture the ways that individuals situate themselves narratively with regards to a place, including with regards to its history, politics and representation. Her informants' narratives of emplacement served to give them legitimacy as residents of a particular neighbourhood. Along similar lines, Fog Olwig (2007: 87) suggests that migrants' life-story narratives are not merely accounts of movements in time and space, but also *'foundational stories seeking to assert the rightful place in society that these people wish to establish'*. These insights serve to make me better aware of aspects of migrants' narratives that somehow served to justify their migration and give legitimacy to their being in Montreal.

Åkerlund (2013) notes that while narratives concerning home and belonging reflect the identity projects of migrants, it remains necessary also to come to terms with the notion of place in our analysis. In recent years, understandings of place have shifted and geographical relationships have been framed as changing from roots to routes (ibid). A number of anthropologists have proposed new analytical concepts and frameworks as part of an attempt to rethink the meaning of

'place' (Appaduraj 1995, Gupta and Ferguson 1997, Augé 1995) and a scholarship on space and place has developed where contextual and relational dimensions - the connections between people, places and events - have been important (Massey 2005). Locality, then, is not primarily spatially grounded (Gupta and Ferguson 1992, Appaduraj 1996), rather localities are made up of relationships (Hastrup and Fog Olwig 1997). For example, for Ingold (1993) a place is woven together by the movements and the tasks of its inhabitants. He is thus concerned with pointing to the dynamic dimensions of place, in line with Casey's (1996: 23) observation that *'places not only are, they happen'*. Caroline Knowles' (2010) has phrased it this way: 'A place is made in the tangle of journeys crossing it'.

Much of the work within the transnational scholarship has also sought to conceptualize the relationship between place and identity in more integrated ways (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007, Gilmartin and Migge 2015). Though, as we have seen, there is a current tendency to underline the mobile dimensions of home, in recent years some scholars have also focused on emplaced belonging and the micro-politics of place. The local is still a significant category of belonging, Benson (2010), argues, and the desire for local belonging sometimes concur with identity claims. In this, she follows Anthony Cohen (1982) who saw espousing a particular locality as a form of (self) identification (Benson 2010: 71). Bönisch-Brednich and Trundle (2010: [1]) note that *'most people still become mobile with the intention of settling once more and of making the new locality a meaningful site for daily life'*. The choice of these sites may reflect migrants' perceptions of their ability to express and enable identity (ibid). They can also be read as articulations of life projects, in the sense that the migrant sees her or his life as having a particular character, force and direction (Rapport 2010). The lifestyle migrants studied by Benson (2010, discussed in the previous chapter) move in search of a new home and a better way of life, but importantly, these are linked to ideas of local lives, anchored to a place, real or imagined.

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So far I have considered various dimensions of the key concepts that anchor the thesis' analysis. I have pointed out theoretical development and understandings of them that I found particularly relevant in the discussion of my informants' narratives. For example, I share the view of identity as dynamic, multiple and open-ended. Moreover, I understand my informants as interpretive,

active individuals whose experiences are unique; individuals who make their own decisions even in constraining circumstances. Taking their personal narratives as point of departure I seek to explore belonging as constructed around identity, but also as formed in the interplay with other individuals and with structures. Through migration, identity and desired belongings becomes related to movement, and this in turn calls our attention to the multiple dimensions of 'home'. In this regard I understand home as both material and immaterial, as origin as well as desired destination, and as plurilocal.

While I have privileged the notions of home, identity and belonging to guide the empirical analysis and discussions in an overarching way, these in turn are also inextricably linked to other concepts and insights that have inspired this work. In the remaining paragraphs of the chapter I will briefly consider these.

Migration as transformative action

Migration scholars in general acknowledge that the drivers behind many migrations are often related to the desire for a better life, yet this better life is often reduced to questions of improved material wellbeing for the migrant her/himself or for family members in the society of origin through remittances. Many dimensions of these desired better lives have to a little degree been explored, or have been assigned a somewhat insignificant place in the analysis. The effort at linking migration and identity represented by the lifestyle migration scholarship has tended to focus on privileged, affluent travellers, though some of the insights could apply also to other, less free-floating migrants. For example, the desire for a different kind of life can entail the desire to live in safety, stability, a functioning democracy, and so on, while simultaneously being informed by ideas of self, values, preferences, belonging. Seeing migration as a transformative action can be a useful way to capture these aspects. It also links migration to processes of identity construction; and to individuals' efforts to realize desired lives, in which migration may represent a transformative action that renders this possible.

Based on her research on travelling consultants Vered Amit (in Amit and Rapport 2002) suggests that the motivations for much contemporary travel is the chance to experience an '*extrication from the embeddedness of everyday life*'. Anthropologists, she argues, all too often ignore the emphasis on disjunction that frames migration for at least some travellers (ibid p. 164). For the

informants in her study movement was a temporary escape and eventually they envisaged coming home and having a 'normal' life. A recently emerged strand of migration research, however, focuses precisely on this dimension in decisions of (at least envisaged) lasting migrations. Migration, here, is seen in relation to identity and life projects, and signifies a transformation linked to this (cf Benson 2010). Many of the ruptures that migrating involves can therefore be positive and desired. For example, Benson and O'Reilly (2009a, 2009b) found that in their informants' accounts, the decision to migrate was cast as a transformative action allowing for self realization. Another example is Hoey's *'Opting for elsewhere'* (2014), where the people studied had chosen to leave careers and resettle in places that they felt better reflected their redefined or potential selves. Migration, then, was about the desire to 'start over'.

Caroline Oliver's (2007) describes the migration of her British retired informants as 'aspirational movements'. These migrants' new lives in Spain was presented for example as a better way of living on pensions. However, it was 'better' not only in economic terms, but by offering a desired lifestyle related to the qualities of place. The concept of lifestyle has seen resurgence in the social sciences, particularly through the works of Michaela Benson, Karen O'Reilly, and Caroline Oliver (Oliver 2000, 2010, O'Reilly 2000, O'Reilly and Benson 2009a, 2009b, 2015, Benson 2010) who all employ it in studies of migration. In a rendering of the lifestyle migration frameworks theoretical ambitions, Benson (2010: 12) writes that it *'draws attention to the idea of migration as motivated primarily by the search of a more fulfilling way of life, articulated as an individualized lifestyle choice and indicative of the reflexive project of self'*. In this rendering, the act of migration is integrally linked with the individual's self-identity. The perspective draws attention to identity not only with regards to post-migration experiences, but also with regards to the decision-making processes, and the hopes, expectations and imaginings that inspired the decision to move.

Stebbins (1997) has argued that in addition to related sets of values and attitudes, lifestyle include shared patterns of behaviour. It thus has a dimension of performativity, and a desire to be recognized by others, to belong. In the interstice between migration, identity and performativity we might not only explore narratives of migration, but also migration-as-narrative; the narratives that locate the migrant as belonging in this particular place, as discussed previously.

Personal decisions and agency

People don't 'flow', they have travel plans, Caroline Knowles (2010) reminds us. One problem with the focus on flow is the tendency to overlook these dimensions. In a 1992 essay, Tony Fielding pointed to migration research' failure to come to terms with migrants' personal decisions in relation to migration projects. Migration is a statement of an individual's vision of the world and therefore an extremely cultural event, he wrote, yet researchers tend to conceptualize it as a product of material forces at work (1992: 201, in Brettell 2003). The issue concerns the individual's possibilities or capacities for acting freely and the role or influences of external forces, and ways of understanding this relationship between structures or discourses and individual agency. Many researchers have opted for a middle ground. For example, Brettell (2003: 7) who suggests that an anthropological approach to migration *'should emphasize both structure and agency; it should look at macro-social contextual issues, micro-level strategies and decision-making, and the meso-level relational structure within which individuals operate. It needs to articulate both people and process'*.

The question of agency, Faist (2000: 23-4) writes, is particularly important in the study of migration because migrants' (and non-migrants') agency continues to play a central role both in the development of theories of migration as well as for policy responses. Since the 80s and 90s there has been more attention to agency in migration through the transnational perspective (Leach 2012, Rauböck and Faist 2010). Yet, some anthropologists call for even more attention to agency, for example Gardiner (2013: 1266), who states that *'it remains important to theorize the complexities of migration through more attention to the agency of emigrants'*. Similarly, Leach (2013: 32): urges us to *'take migrants' agency seriously'*. Migration represents a fertile terrain for exploring these issues, in part because constraining structures and influencing discourses are often easily identifiable. Through narratives, the work of these can be examined empirically, and we could gain more nuanced insights into their nature and their individual, contextual and contingent impact.

Up til now, attention to agency has been reserved relatively affluent migrants (see for example Ong 1999, Werbner 1999, Bryceson and Vuorela 2002, Hannerz 1996). Migrants who are considered as involuntary or under-privileged movers are often studied as having been pushed out

by structural forces, and presented in ways that ignore agentic, pragmatic aspects of their migration, related to for example values and orientations, aspirations and larger life projects. In the case of refugees they have often been represented as victims, passive and helpless (Korac 2009). This tendency has been criticized by for example Malkki (1996) who suggest that approaching refugees as devoid of agency have the effect of dehumanizing them. In a similar vein, Harrell-Bond (1999: 158) writes that such views prevent us from seeing refugees as 'ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances'. Refugees, Korac (2009: 8) argues, '*make decisions about their flight, however coerced they might be, and they create opportunities within the limitations of their predicament*'. His understanding of agency tallies with Long's claim that actors exercise agency '*to process social experience and to devise ways of coping with life, even under the most extreme forms of coercion*' (2001: 16).

Skilled migrants, who generally have greater opportunities to legally resettle elsewhere, are understood as driven primarily by professional and lifestyle concerns, and their migrations are cast as driven by individual choices and personal values and attitudes. Recently, some scholars have pointed out that these elements are not exclusive to skilled migrants and that attention to the pragmatism, personal preferences and desire to explore the world represent a blindspot in much migration research. In a recent publication, Karen Fog Olwig focuses on pragmatism and adventurousness as significant elements in many migration narratives (Valentin and Fog Olwig 2015). Such 'narratives of adventure', she suggests, often complement other narratives concerning the decision to migrate, yet they have received little attention from researchers who have tended to privilege migrants' desire for social and economic mobility. However, by paying attention to narratives of adventure, we become better aware that migration is not only conditioned by structural circumstances and restricted possibilities, but also in many cases involve explorative and creative elements, a '*desire to experience and explore the world that one is part of*' (ibid p. 20, my translation). Narratives of adventure can be said to express the hopes, aspirations and obligations that migrants relate to migration, Olwig suggests, and she therefore urges us to better incorporate them in our analysis. In the narratives of my informants, these elements come together most prominently in what I call narratives of 'migrant minds'. These were narratives in which the teller typically presented herself or himself as agentic, pragmatic and open-minded, and as driven in part by the desire to experience a different kind of life, a life better aligned with

personal values, preferences and attitudes. These narratives were usually part of a broader constellation of narratives that also included narratives of violence and insecurity. To incorporate the 'adventurous' dimensions does not, as Olwig (ibid) underlines, entails that we disregard for example migrants' economic aspirations or the existence of structural constraints, but rather represents a way of assessing the shifting role and significance of these, as they are experienced, interpreted and narrated by migrants.

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The intention of the present chapter has been to clarify and discuss the key concepts and theoretical perspectives employed in the analysis and interpretation of my informant's narratives. I started out by suggesting that by bringing together the notions of identity, home and belonging, we can gain fruitful insights about the aspirations and claims of identity that underpin migration trajectories. We can also better comprehend the diverse meanings of home and home-making practices that also inform migration decisions and shape migration experiences. The analysis seeks to explore these issues from several angles and has therefore been inspired by different theorists. I have particularly drawn on literature that explores different constellations of identity, home, belonging, movement and place, and that approaches migration as located within these. In the following chapter, I will explain the methodological choices that informed the empirical investigation and discuss some of the concerns that these involved.

4. Methods and Setting

Choices and considerations

We seek intersections of discourse and practices of specific and displays. We look for patterns, relations, and contradictions across such sites and events. Or we look for connections from fleeting moments to broader processes, from particular things to their trajectories through larger circulations.

Alaina Lemon, in Svasek 2006: 215

The purpose of this chapter is to clarify my methodological choices and reflect upon the benefits, challenges and limitations that these choices came to represent. As Alaina Lemon explains in the citation above, anthropologists work with a variety of methods and study diverse connections in the effort to shed light on the phenomena we study. Participant observation is often seen as the emblematic anthropological method, but when the researcher seeks to access the informants' inner landscapes or explore relationships that are not visible, conversation become the most important pathway.

In order to explore the topic of this thesis I found it appropriate to study migrants' personal narratives. The first part of this chapter will therefore focus on some central aspects related to narrative method and qualitative research interviews in general. Most qualitatively oriented researchers would agree that the knowledge such interviews produce is not simply 'abstracted from the object of study', but rather co-produced in the dialogue between researcher and informant (Tedlock 1991, Goodall 2000). Accordingly, Tedlock (1991: 69) describes narrative ethnography as one that places the character and process of the ethnographic dialogue at centre. Similarly, Hampshire et al (2014: 215) write that narrative ethnography is an approach that renders explicit the relationships formed between ethnographer and informant who engage in

'ethnographic dialogue to create a world of shared intersubjectivity'. I will focus on three themes that emerged as particularly significant with regards to this, namely the relational dimension of the research interview (knowledge as co-produced by the informants and myself), the issue of trust and sensitivity, and the temporal dimension. I will also give an account of the actual unfolding of the fieldwork, which serves to illustrate the open-endedness of narrative method, the importance of improvisation and the ongoing interplay between method and analysis. As part of this rendering I will also present the more general characteristics of the informants.

In the second part of the chapter I will locate the thesis in its geographic context; the city of Montreal. Here I have taken inspiration from the city-as-context framework as proposed by Brettell (2003) and Glick-Schiller and Caglar (2009). The authors call on migration scholars to better incorporate localities - especially cities - in our analysis, on the basis that cities are differentially affected by migration and also increasingly 'de-nationalized' (Sassen 1991). In studies of migration it is therefore as important to study the city as context, as it is to focus on national levels. An important challenge is related to the fact that big cities like Montreal are in many ways unbounded sites where inhabitants might live for entire lives without ever meeting. The Montreal I present here is therefore one among a myriad of possible narratives, which can be more or less recognizable for other inhabitants. Conscious of the impossibility of creating anything but a partial account, I have sought to focus on some crucial ways in which the city has been shaped and appropriated by previous migrants. These, I argue, have contributed to establish the foundation for Montreal's present reputation and identity as immigration city, which is an important backdrop for my informants' negotiation of belonging.

Informants

November 10, 2010. Mail from Ana:

Saludos Turid,
Espero que todo esté bien de tu parte, por aquí todo muy bien.
Como va tu investigación? Te quiero comentar que hace un mes nos mudamos para un apartamento que compramos hacia el este de la ciudad, y que [Miguel] estuvo en Venezuela hace un par de semanas. Quizás sea de interés para el trabajo que estas haciendo.

Si quieres mas comentarios me avisas y nos hablamos.

Feliz semana!

(Hi Turid,

I hope everything is going well with you; here everything is well.

How is your research going? I wanted to mention that one month ago we moved into an apartment that we bought towards the east of the city, and that [Miguel] was in Venezuela a few weeks ago. Maybe this is of interest for the work that you are doing.

If you'd like to know more, let me know and we'll talk.

Have a nice week!)

The fieldwork that the thesis is based upon was initiated in 2008 and somewhat unintentionally came to stretch over several years⁷⁰. The long period of research gave me the opportunity to follow some of my informants over a long period, even into the moment of writing these lines (2016). Thus, what was originally planned to be an ethnography based only on narratives was therefore supplemented with follow-up interviews and conversations. This meant that certain retrospective reflections could be added to the material, which I found very enriching.

It should be noted that from the outset I had not planned to focus on Venezuelans, or on any one particular nationality. This choice was the eventual outcome of a meeting I had with a representative of an NGO working with immigrant newcomers while I was preparing the research. Incidentally, this person mentioned the name of an organization of Venezuelans in Quebec, where a friend of hers was on the board. I had contacted various immigrant organisations, but this one responded immediately and the contact person was very positive to the idea of a study of migration from Venezuela, which she said was too recent to have attracted the attention of academics. I therefore saw it as a good place to start, and the contact person let me post an advert on their mailing list to recruit interviewees for my project. The mailing list had many members, including individuals who had not yet left Venezuela.

The first interviews filled my tapes and notebooks with rich retrospective accounts involving descriptions of circumstances, self-conscious reflections about feelings of belonging and

⁷⁰ During the project I had the fortune of spending two long periods of maternity leave in Montreal, during which I occasionally meet some of the informants.

aspirations in life, and the experience of attachment and rupture. I realized that if I were to explore these vast themes, it would be necessary narrow the scope, and I therefore did not seek to broaden my group of informants with migrants of other nationalities. To interview Venezuelan immigrants only was therefore a pragmatic decision in response to the richness of the narratives.

During the period of research I conducted in-depth interviews 31 migrants, some of them several times. Most of them were among those who responded to the advert, others were recruited through what is known as the method of *snowball sampling*⁷¹, that is, they were recruited through the networks of my informants. I also encountered some interviewees through activities I participated in. The advert I posted on the mailing list was addressed to immigrants who had lived in Montreal for 5 years or less. With a couple of exceptions, the migrants interviewed in the study had obtained status as permanent residents and were in an early phase (most of them less than 2 years) of their lives in Canada when the first interviews were conducted. The most recent immigrant among them had come to Montreal two months before our first encounter. It soon turned out that length of stay was something I needed to pay close attention to given the typical ups and downs that many experience in the first period after resettlement. Over the first year, newness becomes familiarity, reality meets expectations and immediate absences become long-felt. This plays out differently for everyone, but I had to keep in mind that the narratives would be coloured by such phases and states of mind. Also, time of year played in; for example, the first winter was hard for many of them, or celebrating Christmas without family⁷². Summer, on the other hand, was for most a time of optimism and 'normality', as one put it. Changes could also sometimes manifest themselves for example before and after visits to Venezuela. The fact that I had the chance to follow them over time, closely or at a distance, enabled me to better observe such changes. Thus, the timing of our meetings were sometimes more crucial than the frequency.

The interviews would usually last for about two hours, and during that time the interviewees did most of the talking. This generated quite a lot of transcription work, but I found that going through the stories again, in detail, was useful for the further work. However, I conducted the broad part of the interviews before commencing the transcription work, and consequently I

⁷¹ Biernacki and Waldorf 1981

⁷² As an anecdote, one French course teacher once told me that she could always feel an elevated level of frustration among the students in the late winter months.

sometimes became aware of themes that I wished I had seen while I was still doing interviews. For example, I sometimes regretted not having asked more specifically about their perception of values, norms, lifestyle, etcetera in Montreal, compared to what they had imagined beforehand, which was something I came to discuss only with a few of them. In retrospect I think the main weakness in the planning of the research was precisely this; that I did not accord sufficient space for the achievement of a good interplay between fieldwork and analysis. Nevertheless, the coincidental longitudinal character of the research did give me the opportunity to at least bring up or return to some of these themes in follow-up interviews.

My informants' age ranged from early 20s to 60s, but the absolute majority of them were young adults somewhere in the 30s. They had at least a few years of working experience in their profession and some had young children. The gender distribution turned out to be quite equal (15 females, 11 males) although I did not make any particular arrangement to achieve this⁷³. Most of my informants were in couples and had migrated together with their spouse and in some cases children. There were also several singles among the informants, and some were divorced. Among the latter, three had been in relationships when they initiated the migration process, but had split with their partner. The migration project was mentioned as one reason for this, given its emotional charge. Also, one of my informants told me she and her husband had separated only a few months after coming to Canada, an unexpected event that had made her reconsider the whole migration project.

Family situation was significant both for the decision and the experience of migration. For example, for those of my informants who had children, the separation from parents and siblings in Venezuela was experienced as extra difficult and had weight heavily in the decision to migrate. As one said, making the choice that her children would grow up far from the grandparents was the most difficult. At the same time, most of the informants who had children said they had been encouraged to migrate by for example parents who wanted them to raise their grandchildren in a safer place. In a few cases the decision to migrate had created minor conflicts within the extended family. For example, in one case the informants' parents were very much in favour of Chavez and

⁷³ It was my impression that the migration stream from Venezuela is relatively gender equilibrated; at least there were also a high number of female immigrants having migrated alone. Unfortunately I have not found statistics to support this subjective impression.

simply could not understand that she would want to raise her children anywhere else. Another informant said that his decision to migrate became something of a taboo when the family gathered, since his mother was strongly against it. Most of my informants had quite close relationships to their parents, and often skyped with them several times a week, but when I asked whether they would like to bring them to Canada the answer was invariably no, owing to parents' age and routinized lives, and the Canadian climate.

With very few exceptions, the informants in this study were all university-graduated and had immigrated to Canada as skilled workers. As I will discuss later, the issue of class was salient, as they often without reserve self-identified as middle class as part of their initial presentation. In addition to bringing class in as a significant dimension in the personal stories, this also illustrates a broader watershed in Venezuelan migration around the turn of the millennium. Not only was earlier immigration to Canada from Venezuela more limited in numbers; it also had less political undertones. For example, one informant who had been in Canada since the 90s underlined that in contrast to recent immigrants he was issued from the 'lower class' and had migrated for economic - not political - reasons. According to other informants (and corresponding to personal observations), pre-2000 immigrants tended to come from less favourable economic conditions and mostly migrated in order to improve material wellbeing⁷⁴. These were also typically more positively oriented towards (then) president Hugo Chavez and more likely to be involved in for example activities organized by the Venezuelan consulate in Montreal. In comparison, none of the post-millennium migrants I interviewed were involved in such activities or had any contact with the consulate beyond what was necessary. Neither did they have contact with the 'older' migrants, except in a few cases where they were related through family.

Montreal was their first migration destination and they had planned to settle there for good, that is, they had not imagined their migration as something temporary⁷⁵. When asked why they had chosen Canada, answers were typically comparative, usually with regards to Europe or Australia. For example, some would say that they did not hold a European passport (which many Venezuelans do) or they referred to Europe's reputation for discriminating immigrants. Thus, they

⁷⁴ There were of course also individuals who had come to Montreal for personal reasons such as marriage.

⁷⁵ Although some mentioned that they would consider moving elsewhere if for example they did not find work.

would typically answer by explaining why they had gone to Canada instead of Europe. I do not know whether this was because Europe is seen as a more obvious or better option, or whether it was perhaps related to me being European. A significant factor in the decision was that many had travelled before; many had visited Europe, but some had also been to Canada and based their choice on these previous experiences. Two informants, both of whom were slightly older than the average, had previously spent sabbaticals in Canada. Two informants had children already living in Canada, although not in the province of Quebec. In contrast, Australia - otherwise the most common comparison - was described as too far, geographically and not least with respect to time zones, which outbalanced the country's obvious advantages in terms of climate and language (almost all of my informants commanded English). Some of the informants said that the choice of Canada or Quebec had been influenced by recruitment sessions (referred to as *charlas*) organized by the Canadian or Quebecois authorities, or they had consulted websites such as www.mequieroir.com (described in chapter 9) where destination countries are listed and compared. The choice of Quebec versus other provinces in Canada was often explained as the less expensive and faster option. Plus, the west of Canada, one said, is too far away.

The research interview as dialogue

Eva: - Do you know Alejandra and Jorge? Did you talk with them yet?

Turid: - No...

Eva: - Oh well, they have been here for more than 15 years so I guess they wouldn't be part of this project, would they? I'd say that to get a result that is more or less coherent I would chose those who have been here for 10 years or less. Or 8 years.

Eduardo: - That depends what you are looking for. Because if you focus on the last 5 years you will find a very strong tendency. Politics, personal security. But if you go 20 years back you will find more individual motives and personal stories.

(excerpt from one of the interviews)

As mentioned already, it is through conversations with informants that the researcher can hope to access the inner landscapes of for example emotions, meaning, self-understanding, hopes and desires. The qualitative research interview, Kvale (1996: 1) writes '*attempts to understand the*

world from the subjects' points of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples' experiences, to uncover the lived world prior to scientific explanations'. However, there is no straightforward manner of achieving this, and volumes have been written about the variety of techniques, the potential pitfalls, the ethical considerations and the theoretical implications related to interviewing as method. In the following I will reflect upon some that were particularly relevant in this research. First, I will account for the interviewing in more general terms, and then move on to more critical reflections concerning qualitative interviews as research method, focusing especially on the understanding of knowledge as co-produced. As illustrated in the citation above, particular issues may emerge in situations where the interviewees are themselves habituated with academic research. I will address some of these below.

In preparing for the interviews I considered various aspects related to the aspiration of having the interviewees share with me longer and detailed accounts of their migration; and making the connections between events, circumstances, reactions and considerations in ways that reflected how *they* interpreted and gave meaning to these, not my own preconceptions. First of all this implied that my own interventions should be few and open, and ideally, that the informants should do most of the talking without my interventions. It does not follow from this that I think the researcher should take a passive role or erase herself from the ethnography. Rather, as Tedlock (2000: 467) suggests, we should emphasize the '*ongoing dialectical political-personal relationship*' between the researcher and the informant. Tedlock is concerned with a central dimension of narrative ethnography, namely that it is co-produced, and that Self (researcher) and Other (interviewee) can therefore not be separated. As Holstein and Gubrium (2003: 141) put it, '*[r]espondents are not so much repositories of knowledge - treasuries of information awaiting excavation - as they are constructors of knowledge in association with interviewers*'. This view implies, as Kvale (1996: 42) writes, that the interview should be seen as a 'construction site for knowledge', where the knowledge created is inter-relational, or interviews seen as *Inter-Views*, in his words. The outcome of the interview, then, is the joint production of *accounts* or *versions* of experiences, emotions, identities, knowledges, opinion, truth, etcetera (Rapley, in Seal et al 2006: 16). These insights were important guidelines for me as I set out to interview the informants.

I conducted many of the interviews during an intense period of around 3 months. Later I also interviewed informants I came in contact with in other periods of the research, as well as conducting several follow-up interviews and infrequently re-encountering some of the informants from the first round. In retrospect I think that it would have been better for the analysis if I had had planned for periods of interviewing, which would have allowed me to distance myself more and reflect more broadly on certain themes in the narratives during the in-between periods. I was fortunate to have the occasion to return to some such themes in the follow-up interviews, but as mentioned above, there were themes I think could have been further developed in interviews with informants that I did not meet again. The scheduling of the interviews thus affected the extent to which there could be an ideal interplay between methods and analysis.

One advantage of being periodically immersed in the interviewing is the habituation of speaking Spanish. All the interviews except one were conducted exclusively in Spanish, and all transcriptions and translations in this thesis are my own. Another advantage of grouping together interviews is that I would have statements from previous interviews fresh in mind, and could more easily detect resemblances.

Uncertain of whether I would be able to create an interview ambience that would make long and open narration happen, I had prepared a rather extensive interview guide, which eventually I did not really follow⁷⁶. Thus, the conversations would usually unfold without the structuring of my guide. In the first weeks of interviewing I would nevertheless go over and adjust the guide after each interview, gradually reducing the lists of questions into a few broader themes. With time I also felt more confident improvising and 'playing it by the ear', but I do not know whether my growing confidence inspired different kinds of narratives. I always started by introducing the project and myself, an opening that became somewhat ritualized. Since most of the interviewees had university background it was natural to mention the theoretical landscape I would locate the work in and say a few words about methodology. The more technical aspects, such as for example the preservation of informants' anonymity, typically seemed like superfluous information to them. A couple of times informants underlined that they would only be glad to be cited with their names, which I did not do. With the exception of one informant, no one had

⁷⁶ I would usually ask the first questions, that is, I would ask them to present themselves, and then move on to ask about the circumstances around their decision to migrate. When the talk was flowing, I would ask questions occasionally mainly to address specific topics or reorient the conversation if it strayed too far.

anything against me recording the interview. It is possible that the reaction of this informant could be linked to his prior experiences as fired and blacklisted after the oil workers' strike⁷⁷, although I cannot say for certain. Most of the time I was left with the impression that anonymity and being recorded was not at all a concern for them. Neither was the fact of telling their personal story. Rather it was my impression - and a few of them expressed it - that the interview represented an appreciated occasion for them to tell their 'whole' migration story for the first time, to reflect upon, review and make connections in their experiences. This points us back to the theories around the role of narratives as discussed in the previous chapter.

Interviews are of course influenced by context, which I will discuss more in-depth below. The interview setting is also made up of the persons present. I usually met my informants one by one, in some cases with their spouse, and on a few occasions there were several family members present. Though I liked the dynamic that arose when several persons were involved in the conversation, my experience was that in one-to-one interviews the interviewee would venture deeper into personal feelings, experiences and aspirations. As noted, the interviews were mostly conducted in Spanish, though two informants preferred the conversations to take place in French. In the first case the informant had lived in Montreal for many years and was fluent in French. The other one wanted to practice his French, but rather shortly into the interview he switched back to Spanish. I did not take notes during interviews, but recorded and later transcribed them, and usually also took some notes immediately after.

In most cases the interviewees picked the interview location and as a result around half of the interviews were conducted in the informants' home, the others in a cafe, restaurant or library. The latter interviews would typically take place after work or after their French course ended, for example in some nearby cafe. Late in the fieldwork I on some occasions went for walks with some of them, which I found inspired other kinds of conversations than those around the table⁷⁸. The fact of moving around seemed to make the accounts more dynamic and associative and they were also nourished by the environment we walked in, which sometimes brought to mind particular events or experiences; yielding anecdotes that I do not think would have come up in the

⁷⁷ In 2002, described in chapter 1.

⁷⁸ More elaborate reflections around the method of walking and narrating can be found in for example Irving 2007

more structured table conversations. The challenge was to capture them in notes afterwards, and retaining a proximity to the material. I partly regretted not having proposed this way of meeting before; at the same time I think that the success of these 'walk conversations' was very much linked to the 'table conversations' we had already had.

In addition to the interviews, I participated in some activities together with migrants (my informants and others), such as concerts, a visit to a sugar shack, the celebration of the 20th anniversary for Chavez' *rebelliòn militar*, baseball matches, dinners, or demonstrations⁷⁹. Meeting them in various settings, including work, leisure activities and social gatherings was useful, not least as a way to learn to know them outside the more self-conscious interview setting. However, the classical anthropological method of participant observation was of limited importance in the research. For one, there was the issue of practicality, since my possibilities of participating in activities with the informants were limited. I did not have the possibility of following any of them on a daily or weekly basis as they were often very occupied with work, French courses, children, and so on. Neither did my informants have regular common arenas for meeting (except perhaps Facebook, for some), they lived in different parts of the city and worked in different sectors. My focus of research did not correspond with a field of social relations; indeed, few of my informants had ever met each other. Secondly, the narratives - some supplemented with repeated conversations - provided me with more than enough material upon which I could base the analytical discussions. I did not want to generate more data than I could handle analytically in the thesis⁸⁰. Moreover, I did not feel that the issue of a possible disaccord between 'say' and 'do' was something I needed to explore in order to analyse the narratives. More relevant in this aspect was the possibility of meeting informants again, in different moments.

I also conducted a smaller number of more formal interviews, one with a representative from the Venezuelan consulate in Montreal, and some with representatives of various NGOs that provide support and services to immigrants. Finally, I also observed various kinds of activities going on online; for example on news websites, the authorities' websites, in personal blogs of migrants, discussion forums, mailing lists, on Facebook, to mention some⁸¹. This served to supplement my

⁷⁹ During the student strike in 2012

⁸⁰ This aspect has been pointed out by for example Kristensen 2011

⁸¹ I did not participate actively in any of these.

consultation of other documents and publications, and provided me with a broader insight into the diverse situations, dilemmas, and options that people experience through migration. I did not follow my informants in their online activities⁸², but sometimes they would reflect upon the new digital dimensions of migration in our conversations, and talk about the role that for example social media had played in their own migration. The online sharing of experiences was significant for many of the migrants at different points, and would sometimes influence their trajectories, as I will return to in chapter 9.

The interviews I conducted can be referred to as semi-structured life world interviews, which Kvale (1996: 5-6) defines as '*interviews whose purpose is to obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena*'. Kvale (1996: 30) mentions several aspects that characterize such interviews on a general level, for example that the topic of the interview is the everyday lived world of the interviewee, that the researcher seeks to interpret meaning, and seeks open and nuanced descriptions of specific situations and action, not quantification or general opinions. Another dimension, often mentioned in textbooks on methodology (eg. Bryman 2012, Seale et al 2006), is the issue of rapport and trust. For example, Ackroyd and Hughes (1992: 108) write that the interviewer should seek to establish a 'suitably relaxed and encouraging relationship', something that is achieved in part by communicating 'trust, reassurance and, even, likeableness'. This should be seen as an 'ideal' which most interview situations will not fully reach. However, by focusing on this ideal attention is drawn towards the importance of establishing an ambience of trust and intimacy for the openness and quality of the interviews.

Trust and sensitivity

Issues of trust, intimacy and sensitivity inevitably spring up when we as researchers are seeking access to migrants' narratives as their personal stories. In the preparation of the interviews I considered various factors related to how I could best establish relationships of trust, which I understood as crucial in order to access the kind of information I was seeking. Given that their migration had been voluntary and that they were not refugees of war or famine, I did not expect that narrating it would be a particularly sensitive matter. As noted, the informants seemed above

⁸² Except for one who kept a blog.

all pleased that migration from Venezuela was being studied and were more than willing to contribute. However, I must admit that the amount of accounts of experiences of violence came somewhat unexpectedly on me. Since I had not initially planned to focus on one specific country, my preparative research had not sufficiently taken in the extent of violent crime in Venezuela, or perhaps I presumed that my informants had been somehow sheltered, given their privileged position. Yet, the theme of violence invariably came up. It turned out to be something they would talk about regularly, also with others, and the interviews apparently did not open wounds. With time I realized that the violence in Venezuela was a rather common topic of conversation among Venezuelans and it was sometimes mentioned that it is one that receives too little attention outside the country.

With regards to possible issues of sensitivity I had expected that political matters would be a more difficult terrain. I was prepared to be careful with regards to the theme of politics and also expected the informants to be more fiercely anti-Chavez than they turned out to be. In reality, although none of them were pro-Chavez⁸³, opinions were quite diverse and so were the kind of comments they would make. It should be noted that I did not ask any specifically 'political questions' but politics would often come up through other themes. In relation to the political situation in Venezuela, I had also been worried that some informants would be sceptical of me due to my previous work in Cuba, which a brief Google-search would have pointed them to. However, in most cases it was their curiosity regarding where I had learnt Spanish that led us to the subject of Cuba, which gave me the opportunity to comment upon my stays there and explain what my research interest had been. Sometimes this would lead to some curious questions about life in Cuba or inoffensive jokes about Cubans, but I never felt that it in any ways inflicted on my credibility.

Self-disclosure and common rapports

As already noted, the view that it is possible to 'abstract data' from informants in a 'neutral' way, uninfluenced by the researcher, has largely been discarded in favour of a recognition that knowledge obtained through interviews and conversations is always co-produced. Narrative ethnography therefore foregrounds social relations and the broader interview context, as well as

⁸³ With the possible exception of one informant who had migrated before the present wave.

the narrative content. These factors have implications for the ethnography, in particular with regards to the relationship between informant and researcher. It is for example important to consider the possible influence of factors such as empathy, power, or informants' desire to legitimize actions (Petersen et al 2007). At the same time, it is essential to establish relationships of trust. In-depth interviewing, Hampshire et al (2014) note, is contingent on rapport building and a sense of common purpose between ethnographer and interviewee. One aspect of this is related to self-disclosure and the question of whether (or when) the ethnographer should disclose or emphasize certain dimensions of her personal life. Neutrality is illusory, even interactionally impossible, some scholars argue (Holstein and Gubrium 1995, Rapley 2001). Trust will depend on a certain mutual self-disclosure between the parties. Moreover, as a way to build trust the interviewer will typically seek to disclose or emphasize those elements that are common in the identities of the interviewee and the researcher (Hampshire et al 2014).

My status as PhD student (which, of course, they were all aware of) can serve as an illustration of how influential such disclosure can be, in this case given that almost all the informants had university education. This meant for example that they had a good comprehension of what a PhD project entails. Some of them had completed PhDs and I would frequently be asked about my 'preliminary results', about the 'sample', or about what I had found to be most interesting so far. Sometimes informants would mention aspects they believed I would benefit from looking into, or they would mail me articles, recommend websites or books, or make jokes about the ups and downs of research processes.

The upside of this was that I did not have to worry about protecting their interests or integrity since they fully understood the implications of participating in the project. I was also freer to present my project in a more or less 'academic language', though I had to be prepared to answer questions regarding methods and theoretical approaches. The informants would remain conscious of my role as researcher, but as noted, I did not detect issues or tendencies that could be ascribed a power/status asymmetry⁸⁴. In fact, one of the early interviews firmly placed me in the role as student-vis-a-vis-the-tutor, as the informant had worked for many years as a PhD tutor at a

⁸⁴ The interview setting in itself can be interpreted as an expression of power asymmetry in the sense that the interviewer is the one asking the questions, has monopoly on interpretation and so on. This has been discussed by for example Kvale 1996.

Venezuelan university, and took it as her role and responsibility to guide me towards significant themes.

Given that the informants were both well-articulated and well-read, I had to be aware of 'right answers' related to them having read numerous articles about Venezuelan migration. It happened several times that an informant referred to a published article instead of giving me the personal answers I was looking for, or pointed to literature that underbuilt his or her own experiences. Also, I had to be aware that informants would sometimes analyze their own experiences and sentiments with regards to how others (journalists, scholars) have analyzed Venezuelan migration, employing the same terms and angles.

Another factor that influenced the interviews was my status as immigrant⁸⁵, and having passed the same formal migration process as themselves. Our shared immigrant status implied for example that we had had to do the same kind of paper work upon applying, we had passed the same bureaucratic round after arrival, and had attended the Francisation programme. I could relate to many of their experiences with recognition, and also shared a certain outsider's regard of Montreal as city of adoption. This, I think, contributed to making the ambience relaxed, and not least, making it one in which different views of and experiences with Montreal/Quebec/Canada could be openly shared.

However, it also infused the interviews with a certain taken-for-grantedness and sometimes I had to downplay the 'sharedness' of our experiences in order to make them actually narrate them instead of simply referring to them. I think that the fact that I was personally familiar with the formal process and structural dimensions of migration led them to focus on experiences that we *did not share*; experiences that were their very own, or at least considered typical for Venezuelans. This was obviously a great advantage. At the end of the day, my outsider status with regards to Canada was mostly problematic with regards to the analytical part of the project, since I needed to devote a great deal of time studying for example history, policies, social and formal structures in order to be able to contextualize the migration experiences and link them to broader local processes.

⁸⁵ Other elements were for example being non-francophone and young adult

Being university educated and being a migrant represented stable common rapport, however, in some cases, such rapport could be more situational such as family situation/having children, going to yoga classes, disliking a type of music, wishing for spring, being afraid to drive on the highway. All these forms of self-disclosure had the more or less intended effect of building sentiments of 'sharedness' and, conversely, to evacuate possible feelings of alienation related to the interview setting. By the same reasoning, there might be elements of one's identity or personal life that one rather prefers to down-play. For example, I would sometimes avoid mentioning my family or friends in Montreal to informants whom I knew were alone and perhaps lonely. I would also tend to not disclose my opinions on topics that I knew we disagreed on, and typically seek to change subject whenever I was asked about my interpretations concerning migration from Venezuela.

Other classificatory factors that could have influenced the interview setting include gender. However, I could detect that interviewees acted differently with me in relation to our respective genders. Compared to other fieldworks I have conducted, for example in Cuba, the element of gender seemed rather irrelevant. As it were, I reflected on it only in certain moments, for example when my female informants talked about mother-daughter relationships, and I sensed a presumption of a common understanding related to me being a woman.

Kvale (1996) argues that interview conversations are not a mutual exchange of views. Interviewer and interviewee are not on equal footing. Rather, the interview is characterized by power asymmetry, resembling that of the 'professional' interrogating the 'object'. The interviewer is not only the one asking the questions, but also has monopoly on the interpretation of the answers. Czarniawska (2004: 48) on the other hand points out that 'the power of knowledge' rather lies on the side of the interviewee, since the narrators are 'the only experts on the question of their own lives', and by consequence the interviewer who is interested in this knowledge must offer respectful and interested attention in exchange. I did not sense that the interviews I conducted were characterized by asymmetries of power between my interviewees and me, or if there were, they were shifting. This should also be seen in relation to our equal statuses with regards to for example education, age and the fact of being immigrant. I tried, however, to be

conscious of my possible influence on answers and narratives, for example by paying close attention to my verbal interventions, my reactions, my body language, etcetera. Some of these considerations are included in the analysis of the narratives.

The narrative approach

'When you are in the middle of a story it isn't a story at all, but only a confusion; a dark roaring, a blindness, a wreckage of shattered glass and splintered wood; like a house in a whirlwind, or else a boat crushed by the icebergs or swept over the rapids, and all aboard powerless to stop it. It's only afterwards that it becomes anything like a story at all. When you are telling it, to yourself or to someone else.'

Margaret Atwood, *Alias Grace*, ch.33/p.298

The broad part of the ethnography that my research interviews yielded can be called narratives. Although anthropologists' engagement with stories goes a long way back, the concept of narrative is fairly new. Its growing prominence over the last decades - often referred to as the 'narrative turn' - should be seen in the light of the turn away from positivist modes of inquiry and master narratives of theory in the human sciences (Riessman 2005). Studies of narratives were until the 70s the domain of literature studies where focus had been on narratives as *texts*. In the 70s and 80s the interest in narratives began to enter the humanities and social sciences, where many took inspiration from MacIntyre's (1981) claim that human lives are narratively constituted, that they are quite literally 'enacted narratives', a 'story put into practice'. Somers (1994) sums up this shift as one inspired by scholars who postulate that 'social life is itself *storied* and that narrative is an *ontological condition of social life*'. As discussed more at length in the previous chapter, narratives both guide action and constitute experiences, as people make sense of what happens to them by attempting to integrate the happenings within one or more narratives (ibid: 614).

Drawing on these insights, I found it useful to focus on migrants' narratives in order to investigate otherwise unobservable dimensions of migration experiences, such as migrants' self-understanding and sentiments of belonging. There are, however, several problematic aspects to consider related to narrative method. First, for all that has been written about the narratives, there is no general consensus about a precise definition of what a narrative is and isn't. Narrative,

Georgakopoulou (2006: 122) writes, '*remains an elusive, contested and indeterminate concept* (...)*'*. This is to a large extent related to the fact that such stories come in a variety of forms. Chase (2005: 652), for example, writes that a narrative can be a short topical story about a particular event and specific characters such as an encounter, or an extended story about a significant aspect of one's life, or a story of one's entire life. This is far from an exhaustive division. Ochs and Capps (1996) mention as narrative for example novels, diaries, letters, gossip, legal testimonies, boast, medical history, satire, opera, mime and dance. Disagreeing with these two author's understanding of a narrative as having for example a coherent temporal progression of events and a plotline (Ochs and Capps 2001), Bamberg and Georgakopoulos (2008) argue that narratives should also include *story telling talk* or *small stories* - 'the ones we tell in passing' (Bamberg 2004) - which are also sites of identity work.

In interviews where informants provide long continuous accounts of their experiences, it is easy to categorize the information as narratives. In my research I also chose to treat later comments that supplemented, supported, altered or reframed these narratives as part of the same story-telling processes. The epistemological fundament for this is the understanding of a narrative as not only a *text* or *product*, but also as a *social process* and *performance* (Cortazzi, in Atkinson et al 2001). Narratives can also be expressed non-verbally, in gesture or behaviour (Cohen and Rapport 1995). In this perspective, narrating is not only 'saying', it is also 'doing'. This also implies that the relationship between story and the story-telling process is crucial. Narrative researchers, then, are not only interested in narratives for what they are *about*, but are also interested in narrating as a process (Gubrium and Holstein 2010). As Riessman (2008: 187) points out, '*a narrative is not simply a factual report of events, but instead one articulation told from a point of view that seeks to persuade others to see the events in a single way*'. That is, narratives are the tellers' *versions* of events, which is precisely what makes them interesting for researchers. As Goffman (1974) noted, every tale is told from a particular vantage point. Polkinghorne (2007: 279) states that narratives serve not to determine if events actually happened but about the meaning experienced by people. Storied texts, then, are evidence for personal meaning, not for the factual occurrence of the events reported in the stories. Therefore, as Riessman (2005) writes, the 'truth' of narratives lies not in their faithful representation of the past, but in the shifting connections they forge among past, present and future. Fog Olwig (2007: 99) makes a similar argument, stating that

[m]igrants' narratives should not be treated simply as factual accounts of moves undertaken by individuals of a particular social and economic background in order to achieve well-defined goals. They are also modes of accounting for lives within social and cultural frameworks that give meaning and purpose to the individuals involved.

Narrative study, then, is concerned with the participant's particularized meaning-making interpretations (Loh 2013). In my analysis I therefore approach my informants' retrospective accounts of their migration in terms of *what* they narrate, but also as reflective of the selves they claim and of their ideas of belonging today.

Narrative analysis provide the opportunity to focus on both the uniqueness of each narrative as well as the shared tropes. According to Cortazzi (in Atkinson 2007: 384), a *'careful analysis of the topics, content, style, context and telling of narratives by individuals or groups under ethnographic study should, in principle, give researchers acces to tellers' understandings of the meanings of key events in their lives, communities, or cultural contexts'*. For example, some happenings are interpreted or experienced as turning points, or *biographical events* (Kupferberg 1998) that particularly affect self-understandings or life projects. Such turning points can be planned or unplanned (Thomsen 2006). In the case of migration narratives it becomes particularly interesting to look at where people place such turning points and how they are interpreted. For example, as the narratives in this thesis illustrate, the actual spatial relocation is not necessarily experienced as such a turning point, although migration scholars typically work from this assumption.

By drawing attention to the uniqueness of each migration story, narrative analysis also serves to illustrate the significance of lived experience and subjectivity in social processes. For example, Benmayor and Skotnes (1994: 15) write that *'[k]nowing something of the utter uniqueness of particular individual migrant experiences certainly enhances our generalizations about the group experience, but it also elicits humility about the adequacy of these generalizations and a realization that few actual individual lives fully conform to the master narratives'*. Moreover, narrative method also brings to the surface the different meanings and interpretations that lie beneath apparently conform understandings or patterned behaviour.

As already noted, it is important to keep in mind that the narration takes place in a context and as a dialogue between informant and researcher. Narratives, Cohen and Rapport (1995) note, are simultaneously incidental (one among many possible) and enduring (an *'ineradicable element in the aggregate narrative'*, *ibid*: p. 9). We should not, they caution, treat a narrative as privileged over others simply because of the *'more or less adventitious fact that it is in our notebooks'* (*ibid*). Since narratives are situated in time and space, they are partial and provisional, and this influences which memories, concerns and expectations that are evoked in them, Ochs and Capps (1996: 22) suggest. Gubrium and Holstein (2008) hold that conditions of communication and encounter create the possibility for certain kinds of narratives to occur. Narratives, they argue, *'comprise the interplay between experience, storying practices, descriptive resources, purposes at hand, audiences, and the environments that condition storytelling'* (2010: 250). They refer to these conditions as the 'narrative environment' (*ibid*). The narrator and her/his connection to the researcher is part of this environment and the narrative is viewed as an *'interactive process of jointly constructing and interpreting experience with others'* (Gubrium and Holstein 2010). This brings up methodological considerations which I have already discussed with regards to research interviews. When it comes to the analysis, Gubrium and Holstein (2010) write that in the effort to include the complex and overlapping contexts of the *'storying process'*, the researcher must also look at narrating as a process of co-construction, where the teller and the listener create meaning collaboratively. The researcher has to critically assess her own possible influence on the narratives by approaching the narratives as a dialogic process between informant and researcher (Riessman 2005). Finally, fieldwork is also a narrative, as Cohen and Rapport (1995) remind us, and is written as such. Throughout the research I have sought to be guided by these insights. It should also be mentioned that I found it very helpful to discuss narratives with colleagues and also to re-read transcriptions.

Montréal: The city as context

Anthropology is a discipline that accords great importance to context. We interpret the phenomena we study with regards to political, economic, social, moral, religious and historical contexts, to mention a few. Contextualizing implies defining the field, since making connections by implication means making disconnections (Dilley 1999). This is an analytical task that has

been much discussed within the discipline in recent years, both in the light of the de- and reterritorializing and transnationalizing effects of globalization, and with regards to the discarded premise that locations of study are fixed and given⁸⁶. A central insight has been that through our theoretical and methodological approaches, we *produce* the locations we study (Amit 2000, Coleman and Collins 2006), in the same ways that we also produce the object of research (Bourdieu 1998), - that there is no 'reality' out there, waiting to be discovered by an inquisitive researching eye. Contexts, then, are 'in our heads' (Keesing 1972). We must treat them not as a given but instead be critical of how contexts are construed as relevant in analysis (Dilley 2002: 440-441). It is important also to remember that it is not only analysts who do this; our informants also construct, order and delimit 'relevant contexts' in their narratives which means that there are parallels between their meaning-making and interpretative processes, and those of the anthropologist (ibid). Mindful of these insights, I will in the following attempt to present Montreal as the setting for this study, underlining dimensions that I have found relevant and enriching in my analysis, without claiming that they necessarily were so in my informants' narratives.

Anthropologists have long worked in urban contexts and have particularly been interested in ethnicity and ethnic relations in the city⁸⁷ (see f.ex Hannerz 1980, Mitchell 1987, Rogers and Vertovec 1995). In recent years, the relationship between migration and the city context has been placed centre stage, as researchers have sought to explore the restructuring of cities within neoliberal globalization and the role of migration in these processes (Glick Schiller and Caglar 2003, see also Sassen 1991). Trying to go beyond the conventional analytical treatment of cities as 'containers where migrants settle', Glick-Schiller and Caglar (2003) call for a stronger focus on migrants as *actors* in what they call the 'contemporary reinvention of cities' (ibid: 178). This reinvention, seen as necessary to attract foreign capital or new-economy industries, often means recasting the city as centres of knowledge, finance, recreation or tourism. Currently, the authors note, this implies offering a '*certain mix of human capital, higher education, cultural and*

⁸⁶ See for example Burawoy 2000.

⁸⁷ Hannerz (1980: 243) defines the city as a 'sizeable, dense settlement in whose more or less common physical space a relatively high level of accessibility between a relatively large number of people obtains'.

recreational facilities' (p. 187)⁸⁸. Echoing Saskia Sassen's work (1991), the authors argue that all cities are global although they are differently situated within various trajectories of power. Migrants contribute to cities' global positioning for example by labouring, raising families, and creating and reproducing social institutions. But also, in the context of neoliberal globalization, cultural diversity can become a marketable asset, and migrants' transnational connections and cities' cultural representations become competitive advantages⁸⁹. As Coombe (2005: 42) note, *'[a]s cities and regions compete for capital investment and for 'knowledge workers' their cultural attributes have become 'resources' ripe for marketing and integral to urban development'*.

The importance of accounting for the city as context has also been underlined by Caroline Brettell in her essay *Bringing the City Back* (in Foner 2003), where she writes that *'each city constitutes a particular social and economic field shaped as much by history as by present-day local, regional, national and often global forces'*. This claim brings to mind sociologist Lewis Mumford's (1938) observation that while phases of development are successive in time, in cities they become cumulative in space. In migration studies, giving an account of the city (or conglomerate or region) is as important as giving accounting for the national level, Brettell suggests. In doing this, we should consider for example the city's history as a receiving area for immigrants, the extent to which it is dominated by a single immigrant population, and the character of race and ethnic relations. Working along similar lines, migration scholar, Roger Waldinger (2001) has looked at how geographical and historical particularities in different urban regions have shaped immigrant populations in terms of skills composition, diversity and time of arrival, also with regards to structural (social, economic, political) factors that shaped options available for immigrants⁹⁰. Drawing on these perspectives I will give an account of Montreal that especially focus on the relationship between the city's demographic growth and economic development in the light of its history of migration. This relationship, I argue, forms the core of master narratives concerning the city's identity and ethos. This in turn shapes the city's reputation

⁸⁸ As an example, The Canadian Conference Board has stated in a report called *Mission Possible: Successful Canadian Cities* that 'if Canada's largest cities are to become world-class centres of design, architecture, and culture, and attract young, talented, creative people, they will have to do more than invest in physical infra-structure. They will have to sustain vibrant cultures and become centres of excellence in education (...) Cities that offer a high-quality of life attract and retain firms and workers in the knowledge-intensive and creative fields'

⁸⁹ The role of skilled migrants in these processes has been explored by for example Smith and Favell (2006).

⁹⁰ Though, as Foner (2007) notes, cities are also affected by national laws, policies, and institutions; they are not 'worlds apart' (p. 1017)

among immigrants-to-be and also the pathways to incorporation. Montreal's cultural diversity is a central component in the strategy to attract skilled migrants, with its double message of openness to diverse ways of life and the presence of immigrant communities.

A social history of migration⁹¹



Map reprinted with permission from YohoMaps

The 500 km² island called Montreal is located at the confluents of the Ottawa river and the great Saint-Lawrence⁹² river in Canada's eastern part. The birth of a city right here has its own logic: Centuries ago, when the river was an important travelling route for native fur traders⁹³, the rapids just south of the island forced travellers to stop here and make a part of the trajectory by foot. Before French settlers established the Ville Marie settlement in this strategic site in 1642, an

⁹¹ The outline of Montreal's history draws in part on documents retrieved from the websites of *McCord Museum*, *Ville de Montreal archival services*, *Montreal Museum of Archeology and History (Pointe-à-Callière)* and the *Libraries and Archives Canada*.

⁹² Which connects the Great Lakes with the Atlantic ocean.

⁹³ And later also for European explorers and fur traders

Iroquois village called Hochelaga with around 1500 inhabitants was located here⁹⁴. The Ville-Marie settlement was originally a mission colony that had been established with the intention of converting natives to Christianity and create a model Catholic community, which was a project inspired by a religious revival among French elites at the time. The village soon grew to become the commercial and political centre of a vast French-American fur trade network⁹⁵. The new inhabitants divided the land around the settlement in long, narrow lots⁹⁶, in order to maximize the access to the river and the few existing roads⁹⁷. As the city gradually expanded it came to absorb these lots, but the lots still define the city's street layout; all north-south street blocks are long, east-west street blocks are short.

The Iroquois natives and the French settlers were at war until 1701, when a peace treaty was signed. However, the French territories in North America were lost to the British in 1760, following the battle of the Plains of Abraham. With this event French-Canadians were turned into a minority in the British Empire, a situation that continues to influence Canadian politics today. Over the following century, Montreal became the largest city in British North America⁹⁸, a commercial metropolis and a major port. The Lachine channel was completed in 1825, permitting ships to bypass the un-navigable rapids of the St-Lawrence River. A decade later the first Canadian railroad to the Prairies was finished, and as a consequence of these two developments the city became the largest industrial and manufacturing centre of British North America.

The period of industrialization would shape both the city and its population, in particular by triggering immigration, including a massive rural-urban migration (Gavreau et al 2007). According to Gavreau et al (2007), Montreal was a city of newcomers, most of whom were young women⁹⁹ from Britain, other European countries, the U.S., and rural communities in

⁹⁴ *Archeology of the Iroquois* by Jordan E. Kerber (2007).

French explorer Jacques Cartier described this village that he visited on his first voyage to the area in 1535. However, upon his return 6 years later the village had disappeared. Scholars continue to debate the exact location of the Hochelaga village, see f.ex.: <http://montrealgazette.com/news/local-news/mystery-of-the-missing-village-of-hochelaga-persists>

⁹⁵ Stretching to the Great Lakes in the west and to the Mississippi valley to the south (Ville de Montreal, *online archival services*)

⁹⁶ As was all farmland along the St Lawrence River banks.

⁹⁷ This form of land distribution is called the *seigneurial system*, in which land was granted by a feudal *seigneur* to tenants.

⁹⁸ It was also its capital in 1844-1849.

⁹⁹ Reflecting the increase of young unmarried women in the waged labor force

Quebec and Ontario. Around the turn of the 20th century, the city had become a metropolis of 500.000 inhabitants, having doubled its population in only 20 years and increased its territory fivefold, as a consequence of immigration both from Europe -especially from Britain, but also Italians, Poles, Chinese, Russians and Eastern European Jews - and from the Quebec countryside (Gavreau et al 2007).

After the First World War Montreal became famed for attracting a quite different category of foreigners. During the prohibition years in the U.S, the city became a major destination for people seeking alcohol, and taverns, jazz clubs, and variety theatres, but also brothels and gambling houses, flourished¹⁰⁰. In spite of the moral 'clean-up' of the city's mayor Jean Drapeau, this period, in which the city earned the nickname *Sin City*, still lingers in the popular image of the city's relaxed attitude to diverse moral norms and life styles, but also more concretely in the continued economic importance of the entertainment industry.

Global economic restructuring, the rise of the Quebecois independence movement and the introduction of the point-based system of migration has been important factors in shaping Montreal in post-war history. A significant part of the manufacturing industry has been closed, and the importance of knowledge-intensive work and the service sector has grown. This shift is strongly reflected in the immigration policy, as I will show in chapter 6. To curb the strong movement for an independent Quebec, the Federal government granted the province the right to determine its own immigration policy, which has served to favour French-speaking immigrants. For example, the city has significant numbers of immigrants from Haiti, Congo, Algeria, Morocco, Rwanda, Lebanon, Syria and France¹⁰¹. Today, the metropolitan area of Montreal count 3,8 million inhabitants and almost 23 % of these are foreign-born immigrants¹⁰².

¹⁰⁰ This also made the city a centre for entertainment. For example, a number of the most world know jazz musicians at the time played concerts in Montreal.

¹⁰¹ http://www.midi.gouv.qc.ca/publications/fr/recherches-statistiques/PUB_Presence2015_admisQc.pdf

¹⁰² *Immigration and Ethnocultural Diversity in Canada*, Statistics Canada, 2011 census.

Two solitudes

Beyond the industrial boom and immigration, a feature that has marked the city in a number of ways is the persisting divide between Anglophones and Francophones. This division, often referred to as the 'two solitudes'¹⁰³, has shaped cityscape, history, politics, demography and social relations in Montreal. In many ways, Cioran's (1987) claim that '*one does not inhabit a country, one inhabits a language*', seems a fitting description, for example when it comes to social networks, residential patterns and political orientations. With regards to the cityscape, language-based neighborhood divisions are quite evident. For example, Anglophones comprise 20% of Montreal's overall population today¹⁰⁴, however, in certain neighbourhoods (such as Westmount, Cote Luc and Dollard-des-Ormeaux) more than 70% of the inhabitants are English-speaking, whereas in Montréal-East the number drops to 4%. Until the 1960s, when French-speaking Canadians - beginning then to refer to themselves as *Québécois* - mobilized resistance against English dominance, English had been the language of business, of the workplace and of social integration in Montreal. That also meant that pre-70s immigrant groups such as the Italians, Portuguese, Polish, Ukrainians, Greek and Jewish immigrants became English-speakers.

The 60s was a period of important social and political change in the province of Quebec; it saw the control of the Catholic Church over sectors such as health and education give way to a secular welfare state and nationalizations, such as that of Hydro Quebec¹⁰⁵ (Fenwick 1981). These restructurings fuelled the growth of a movement pushing for Quebec's independence from Canada. Although the idea of independence was not new, it now obtained massive popular support among French Canadians (cf Rocher 2002). Liberal candidate Jean Lesage won elections (1960 and 1962) campaigning with slogans such as *Maîtres chez nous* (Masters in our own home). Tensions peaked in 1970 with the so-called October crisis set off by kidnappings

¹⁰³ A term inspired by Hugh MacLennan's 1945 novel *Two Solitudes*. It is used about Anglophones and Francophones not wanting or seeking mutual comprehension or communication

¹⁰⁴ Statistics Canada, 2011 census. Note that 'English-speakers' here include individuals who self-identify as Anglophone by a) selecting English as their mother tongue; or b) English and French as their mother tongue; or c) English and a non-official language as their mother tongue; plus a percentage of those who say English is the language most often used at home.

30% of Montreal's population is allophone (i.e. have a mother tongue other than English or French)

¹⁰⁵ Quebec's hydropower producer, one of the largest in the world.

organized by the radical independence group FLQ¹⁰⁶, which culminated with the death of the minister of labour. The Canadian government deployed military troops in Montreal and Ottawa, a decision that remains controversial in Quebec. The issue of Quebec's independence has been a salient issue ever since, though one advanced through peaceful political means (Rocher 2002). In 1977, the Charter of the French language (known as the Bill 101) stipulated among others that French was the language of Quebec public administration and of the work place. The struggle for an independent Quebec led to two referendums on the question, in 1980 and 1995, both were won by the No-side, though the latter by a razor-thin majority.

One of the measures taken by the Canadian government as a way to curb support for an independent Quebec, was to grant the province decisive power over immigration management¹⁰⁷. The 1991 Quebec-Canada accord gave Quebec exclusive competences in the selection of immigrants, which means that individuals wanting to immigrate to the province must be accepted both by Canada and by Quebec¹⁰⁸. From the point of view of French-Canadians, immigration was thereafter seen as means to secure the future of French language in the province, which also represented a shift in the view of immigration in Quebec, from perceiving it as challenging the French-speaking community to perceiving it as a way to strengthen it (Blad and Couton 2009). The Quebec point system of immigrant selection therefore accords nearly half of the total points to candidates who command French¹⁰⁹. As mentioned above, the system privileges French-speakers, which means that Montreal has a high number of immigrants French-speaking countries and former French colonies, and also a high number of trilingual immigrants, that is, who speak English and French in addition to their native language¹¹⁰.

¹⁰⁶ Front de Libération du Québec, a militant separatist group.

¹⁰⁷ Through the *Accord Canada-Québec Relatif À L'immigration Et L'admission Temporaire Des Aubains*

¹⁰⁸ by obtaining the *Certificat du Sélection du Québec*

¹⁰⁹ Which has led some to argue that the Quebec system is set up to result in a certain composition of immigrants in terms of national origin (in relation to language skills) rather than labour skills (f.ex. Guillén 2011)

¹¹⁰ See: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/research/english-quebec/section4.asp>

Imprints and expressions of immigration: A view from the Main



Photo reprinted with permission from Archives de la Société de transport de Montréal

Many of the circumstances, relationships and boundaries mentioned above have been transposed onto Montreal as physical space. The most obvious example is the dividing line between the English and the French, which symbolically represents the zero point of Montreal streets¹¹¹: the *Boulevard St-Laurent*, also known as *the Main*¹¹². A century ago, virtually all of Montreal's English-speaking population lived west of the Main, while the French-speaking lived east (Knowles 2004). The street's history is also the history of other divisions and subdivisions, including social class, ethnic and other urban minorities, as many different groups settled there over the centuries. Travelling up St-Laurent, then, provides us with a view of how immigration has coloured Montreal's cityscape and thus represents a glimpse into the city's collective memory. It is a journey through some of the facts and figures of immigration statistics, and a journey through some of the historical layers of developments in which immigrants played major roles. The following is an attempt at presenting Montreal seen through this particular lens.

The Main represents a beginning; in the sense that since its' opening in around 1680 it was always an important artery. At the time when Montreal covered just a few square kilometres of the island's southern side, it was about the only road reaching across the island to the other side,

¹¹¹ Meaning that street numbers begin here and increase in both directions, indicated with 'east' or 'west'.

¹¹² The street was given status as a National Historic Site of Canada in 1996.

departing from the old fortifications. Gradually, the cultivated lands that bordered the road gave way to shops and inns (Benoît et Gratton 1991). The Main begins close to the river and the old stone masonry houses and cobblestone streets that evolved from the Ville Marie settlement, and then climbs the hill crossing on its way Montreal's Chinatown¹¹³ that occupies what was once a Jewish neighbourhood surrounding a synagogue built in 1838 by Montreal's oldest Jewish congregation (Epstein 2012). As the Jewish left the area to move westwards, this part of St-Laurent became Montreal's seediest district of bars, brothels and gambling joints, in the prohibition years in the U.S. Many of these places were run by the Italian-Calabrian mafia, which in fact still has a strong hold in Montreal¹¹⁴. The area resurged as the Chinatown in the 1980s (Lai 2007). The Latin Quarter slightly further north is still an entertainment quarter with theatres and cabarets, but also has a history of being a centre of student life owing to the establishment of the *Université de Laval* à Montréal in 1878¹¹⁵. Here, the St-Laurent intersects with the other main artery of Montreal, Ste-Catherine Street, which stretches into the high-rise downtown area going west and becomes the Gay Village¹¹⁶ going east.

Further climbing the hill, the boulevard crosses a neighbourhood known as *le Plateau*, where a few remaining businesses indicates that this part of St-Laurent was once Jewish. In the beginning of the 20th century, synagogues and Talmud Torah schools were established here and the area was the centre of the Eastern European working class Jewish community¹¹⁷. This part of St-Laurent also housed the largest concentration of garment factories in the 1920s, where employees were largely immigrant. The factories were also the hearth of trade unions and protest movements, and Montreal's first May Day parade was held here in 1906 (Kealey 1998). In

¹¹³ Today one of several areas seen as Chinese, including some of the streets west of Concordia University and part of a boulevard in the Brossard suburb on the south-shore.

¹¹⁴ See f.ex: <http://www.ledevoir.com/politique/quebec/359441/commission-charbonneau-l-implication-de-la-mafia-dans-la-construction>

The Cotroni family controlled the mafia in Montreal until the 70s, when the Sicilian fraction led by Nicolo Rizzutto took control. Already in the 1960s, attempting to gain control over the drug smuggling business, Rizzutto travelled often between Montreal, Sicily and Caracas, Venezuela. The Rizzutto family is still considered to be the leading mafia family in Canada, although Nicolo Rizzutto - the godfather - was shot dead in his home while on probation, in 2010. (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/mafia-leader-nicolo-rizzutto-killed-1.886495>).

Other significant gangs of organized crime in Montreal are the Irish mafia known as the West End Gang, the Hells Angels, and various Columbian and Asian cartels.

¹¹⁵ Where courses were taught in Latin, hence the name Latin Quarter.

¹¹⁶ Traditionally a working class area until the 1980s when gay businesses began to establish themselves here, which also served to gather a previously linguistically divided gay community. After years of resistance the neighborhood is now promoted as a tourist attraction and as a symbol of Montreal's openness and *joie de vivre*.

¹¹⁷ A community described in several novels by Mordecai Richler.

particular, many of the immigrants arriving from Portugal in the 50s and 60s found work in the garment factories (Goldstein 1997, see also Brettell 2003) and although most of them have gone to live elsewhere; the park, the bank, the church, and many shops and restaurants still uphold this Portuguese heritage.

At this point the Main crosses the Avenue, which leads up to the Mount Royal, named by French explorer Jacques Cartier on his first visit, as he was led there by Iroquois locals. The Plateau today is the city's clearest example of the process of gentrification, which has turned a former, largely French working class area into a hip neighbourhood boasting a high density of people working in the so-called creative economy¹¹⁸. Continuing north, St-Laurent traverses the Mile End neighbourhood. Here one finds a mix of young and multinational game developers¹¹⁹, a big Hassidic community, Portuguese and Greek from the communities that settled here in the 50s, and various sub-cultural groups. Continuing northwards, St-Laurent crosses the heart of Montreal's Little Italy, part of which was previously an Irish neighbourhood¹²⁰. At the end of the 19th century, many of the Italians immigrants working on the railway that crosses St-Laurent south of the neighbourhood, settled here. Today, this area and eastwards is increasingly becoming the *barrio latino*, the Latin-American neighbourhood of Montreal, at least with respect to businesses and commercial services. North of this St-Laurent runs alongside a vast park where cricket matches are being played every weekend since it is part of the largely South Asian neighbourhood called Parc-Ex¹²¹. Further north, it traverses the Chabanel area, the soul of Montreal's manufacturing (called the *needle trade*) district today and still employing mainly immigrants (Hill 2002)¹²².

In this urban landscape, the migrants in this study settled in the first decade of the 2000s. Most of them lived in such centric neighborhoods for at least the first years; a few of them later moved out to suburbs. Migration from Venezuela is gradually also setting its mark on the cityscape, through commercial activities, cultural events, and so on. For example, as I began my fieldwork I

¹¹⁸ Such as for example music, film, architecture, design, advertising, performing arts, publishing, R&D, and video games (Howkins 2001).

¹¹⁹ Working mainly at Ubisoft, a large multinational video game company behind games such as *Assasin's Creed*.

¹²⁰ Anctil 2002.

¹²¹ Short for 'Extension of Avenue du Parc', the neighborhood has formerly been Greek, Italian, and Jewish.

¹²² Although several of the factories have relocated production abroad in recent years, which in turn has led to many lay-offs.

tried to locate Venezuelan businesses but found only one restaurant, and heard rumours of another that had apparently been closed. At the time of writing this, there are at least 6 Venezuelan restaurants only in the hip Plateau neighborhood. Also, in the summer of 2015, the first Venezuelan festival of Montreal took place, where music and dance but also various kinds of businesses run by Venezuelan immigrants were on display.

To sum up, the purpose of these pages has been to present the setting in which the research was conducted. I have sought to provide an image of the significance and influence of migration for Montreal, beyond the figures from Statistics Canada or the Immigration authorities¹²³. Picking up the threads proposed by the authors mentioned introductorily, I have tried to show historical underpinnings and also that the relationship between migration and the larger economic, political and social processes has been as inseparable as it has been dynamic. A central aim has been to illustrate that the informants in this study entered a context in which migration is part and parcel. Another point has been to show the image of Montreal as a multicultural, open-minded, immigrant-friendly place, which combined with the possibilities for professional self-realization, quality of life, vitality and safety promoted by the Quebec immigration authorities¹²⁴, produced the city as an imagined destination when they were immigrants-to-be. Their negotiation of belonging and efforts to realize various life projects must therefore be understood against this backdrop.

¹²³ See for example: [<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2013/permanent/10.asp>] and [http://www.midi.gouv.qc.ca/publications/fr/recherches-statistiques/PUB_Presence2015_admisQc.pdf]

¹²⁴ <http://www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/biq/vienna/>

PART II



The study sets out to explore skilled migrants' negotiations of belonging at the interface between personal life projects and identity claims, and structural conditions of migration. In doing so, a series of questions related to the notion of belonging emerge. Some have been discussed in previous chapters, but some crucial aspects have not yet been considered. In part II of the thesis I will focus on ideas of belonging as they are articulated in structures such as migration policies and selection practices, public discourses and historical threads. More specifically, I will look at how ideas of who can and who cannot become a 'member' of the community construct notions of ideal and unwelcome migrants. The underlying argument of part II is that individual negotiations of belonging unfold in contested fields of ideas concerning who can and who cannot belong. Such ideas thus form an important backdrop of the analysis of the narratives. The following 3 chapters examine them from different angles, with regards to history, current migration policies, and broader discourses of national identity.

In a 1994 article discussing migrants' intentions of settlement, Leo Chavez takes Anderson's (1993) notion of *imagined communities* as starting point. '*[I]magining oneself as part of a local community is a powerful influence on settlement*', Chavez writes (ibid: 52). Drawing on Van Gennep's concept of incorporation as a process of going from outsider to insider, Chavez argues that full incorporation is only possible if the larger society 'imagines' immigrants as members of their community however (Chavez 1991, in Brettell and Hollifield: 105). Belonging, in this perspective, becomes two-pronged; imagined differently from the points of view of the larger society and of migrants. In contrast with the undocumented migrants studied by Chavez (1991), the migrants in this study came with their resident permit already in hand. Living in Canada (or living in Montreal) had been a central part of the migration project from the beginning. Migration, in their cases, was conceptualized as a long-term commitment, as a trajectory towards a place where belonging, home-making, self-realization could be realized. Indeed, this had been a significant driver behind the decision to move to Canada. Yet, as I suggested in chapter 3, belonging comes in many forms and layers, and can be experienced or realized with regards to a broad range of 'sites', including social networks, work communities, virtual communities, physical places, lifestyle, values and beliefs, even habits. How we construct or realize belonging or detachment is an ongoing, dynamic process that puts identity at the centre but that engages with many contexts. Policies, public discourses, communities, segments of society, to name

some, operate with different explicit or implicit ideas concerning which migrants are wanted or unwelcome, ideal or undesired, as members. Such sometimes concurrent, sometimes conflicting ideas influence whether belonging to these contexts is experienced as optimal, possible or even desired on the part of the migrant.

The aim of this part is to shed light on some ways in which the ideas are articulated. More specifically, the chapters discuss ideas of migrants' belonging with regards to political, social, cultural and historical processes. By pointing to the polyphony inherent in these, I also hope to bring forth the complexity behind their creation.

Chapter 5 discusses the historical underpinnings for today's policies of migration selection based on desired qualities. The chapter situates contemporary policies with regards to historically shifting ideas of Canada's national identity and desired citizens. In chapter 6 I contextualize my research in the present by explaining the workings of the migration system at the time of my informants' migrations. The focus here lies on formal requirements and explicit as well as built-in expectations that articulate belonging as somehow conditional on economic contribution. The chapter also makes the argument that present notions of ideal migrants should also be seen in the light contemporary discourses of neoliberal selves described in chapter 3.

Finally, in chapter 7, I discuss the Canadian multiculturalism policy as a significant context in that it promotes specific understandings and imaginations of the country's demographic make-up; that is, ideas concerning what *kind* of people(s) Canadians are. I will do this by first examining the multiculturalism policy's political-historical roots and build up, and thereafter discuss its underlying premises and effects. The image of Canada as an open and inclusive society where immigrants have a natural place was part of what the choice of Canada was based upon. As I will discuss in the following chapter, my informants often contrasted a Venezuela that they described as conformist and narrow-minded, with Canada, perceived as open to diversity and generally immigrant-friendly, in ways that for example European countries were not. This openness also represented opportunities, in the sense that choices were seen as more numerous and life trajectories less predictable. The chapter examines the idea of this Canada, represented through

its official multiculturalims policy, as a contested field of ideas concerning ways of belonging and possible homes.

5. Weaving the Canadian Fabric: The ideal migrant in a historical perspective

Ideal immigrants

I know so many people who have left. In our circle of friends, my daughters' friends, neighbors... Many! It is incredibly sad. But the rich don't go. The rich are still there. And the poor cannot go. It is the middle-class who has left, that has disappeared.

Michelle

The immigrants in this study were part of largest stream in the Canadian immigration system, the *economic class immigration*, which seeks to admit candidates expected to prosper in Canada. Selected candidates can be seen to represent ideal immigrants on the basis of qualities desired by the labor market. However, the immigration system also aims to select ideal *future citizens*. In this chapter I will locate my informants' migrations in the larger frame of nation building in Canada. I take as my point of departure that today's selection of immigrants is also founded on a deep-rooted understanding of immigration as a response to the challenge of creating a population. I will also suggest that the idea of *ideal* immigrants has been a leitmotif throughout the history of Canada's migration policies. While the desired character and qualities of this ideal immigrant may have changed over the years, policies always sought to construct a particular kind of immigrant subject that was welcome and wanted.

Canadian immigration legislation and policies have changed significantly over their 150 years of being, reflecting the different social, political and economic objectives and anxieties that marked the country in different moments. Freda Hawkins (1972) has argued that underneath the shifting priorities and strategies one can distinguish two gravitational fields between which the idea of the

ideal immigrant was alternately pulled: that of the good citizen and that of the productive worker¹²⁵. Drawing on her insights I will discuss some of the different and historically shifting ideals that produced the immigration regime as an empiric reality.

Policies as conversation

Migration is fundamentally political, sociologist Triadafilos Triadafilopolous (2012:1) writes. More than a movement in relation to environmental space, migration is individuals moving, temporarily or permanently, from the domain of one state to another (ibid, see also Zolberg 1983:16). Although contemporary approaches to migration, such as the transnational, often focus on dimensions that ignore national-borders, scholars have - as noted in the introduction - also been increasingly interested of the continued significance of national structures such as borders, in recent years (c.f. Alvarez 1995, Wilson and Donnan 1998, Kearney 2004, Cunningham 2004, Balibar 2009, Fassin 2011, Rumford 2012). The possibilities of entry and settlement are shaped by states' policies, and so are many dimensions of the post-migration situation, including social institutions such as the education system, the welfare system and labour market structures, generating in varying degrees what Jeffrey G. Reitz (1998) calls 'the warmth of the welcome'¹²⁶. These are all political matters and produced through decisions and debates related to questions of inclusion and exclusion, and distribution of resources and power.

The relevance of looking at states' immigration policies owes not only to their instrumental and purposive nature. As plans of action generating concrete, practical situations they are grounded in cultural and political contexts, and – at least in liberal-democratic states - they must be considered acceptable by the general public. Inclusion and exclusion must be justified or legalized by discourses, Rumford (2008) has noted with regards to border practices. Policies, anthropologist David W. Haines (2013) writes, must to some extent be consistent with broader beliefs, social conditions and ethical considerations of a society. Yet, it is important to keep in mind that migration policies rarely reflect the full variety of society's voices. Discourses of different epochs must be interpreted carefully in order to understand the possibly hidden values they reflect, Kelley and Trebilcock (2010) note. Moreover, the uniform nature of rules and

¹²⁵ See also Kelley and Trebilcock 2010.

¹²⁶ According to Charles Tilly (1978: 62), the main factors influencing long-distance migration are i) the geographic distribution of employment opportunities, ii) demographic imbalances, and iii) actions and policies of nation-states

regulations may work to conceal underlying disaccords regarding their justness and utility, and also that they may have been pushed forward by individuals with specific interests and more prominence and power. For example, Sturgis and Davis (1998: 13) note about Canada's immigration policy history that there have often been congruency or overlapping interests between government and capital.

Harney and Baldassar (2007) argue that we should consider the impact of the state by looking at how the 'labyrinths of controlling forces' are negotiated. States, they write, should be approached not as entities but as processes with effects, with different interests, gaps and inconsistencies' (ibid:196). With this in mind, I will approach Canada's immigration policies not primarily as political and juridical tools producing certain consequences for migrating individuals, but rather follow Haines' (2013) suggestion and approach them as an ongoing conversation with variously situated partners involved; and with changing partners involved over time (see also Kelley and Trebilcock 2010). Policy makers, voters, activists, employers, media, NGOs and immigrants are some of these participants, and often they fill several roles. The goals of policies are influenced by the participants in the conversation; by the broader issues they are addressing, and also by whom they want to be heard. That means that they are also shaped, for example, by the identity the participants seek to project abroad, to other governments, international organisations, and so on (Zolberg 1978, Gurowitz 1999). Immigration policies, then, should be understood as invested with both domestic and international concerns.

One aim of this chapter is to show the mixture of 'rational' and 'emotional' factors at play when policies are created, which means that policy changes often occur in unforeseeable ways.

However, it is possible to distinguish two central and often competing ideas in the history of Canadian immigration policies related to the perception of the role of immigration, on the one hand as a means to achieve long-term goals related to nation-building, and on the other as serving to resolve more immediate needs for (specific kinds of) manpower (Hawkins 1972, Fleras 2014, Sturgis and Davis 1998). The two goals are not mutually exclusive and policy shifts, even those considered radical (such as for example the skills-based model introduced in 1967) have involved both ruptures with and continuations of the different perceptions of the role of immigration. The fluctuating popularity of guiding ideas behind policies should therefore rather be read as

indicators of concerns that at different points in time engaged public debates and became translated into policies.

Immigration as nation-building

Triadafilopoulous (2012) holds that the greatest dilemmas related to immigration concern the compatibility of newcomers. The arrival of potential new members begs the questions of ‘who are we?’ and ‘who do we wish to become as a nation?’, since nations imply boundaries, and boundaries implies enclosure (Kelley and Trebilcock 2010) Immigration policies, Triadafilopoulos (ibid: 2) writes, should be understood as answers to questions related to the reconciliation of nation-state membership with the entry of outsiders. In this respect, policies can be seen to work as sites of formation and articulation of national identity, by setting the parametres of inclusion and exclusion in society (Dauvergne 2005). A number of different factors feed into reflections around this, including economy, traditions of nationhood, and regime type, but also broader normative contexts and the kind of images and identities states seek to project to both domestic and external audiences (Castles 1995, Triadafilopolous 2012, Gurowitz 1999).

In Canada, the history of state-administered immigration began when British colonizers had taken possession over the immense but ‘undeveloped’ territory of today’s Canada, and needed a population to transform it into a prosperous country (Vineberg 2004). In 1867, the Canadian Confederation was established and the most pressing concern for the young country was to construct a nation and secure sovereignty; that is, to populate the vast territory with pioneers willing to take upon them the task of opening up farmlands on the prairies, where soil was arid and the winters harsh, and where few facilities and institutions had been developed and few people had yet settled¹²⁷. From the outset, then, the construction of the Canadian people was envisioned as a task to be achieved largely through government-planned and -administered immigration programs. The goal of these programs was to recruit individuals who - based on their character and compatibility - would make good Canadians (Triadafilopoulos 2012, Day 2000).

¹²⁷ Sources for this part include: Libraries and Archives Canada, Canadian Museum of History, and Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21.

Canada was not unique among the 'new world countries' in this pragmatic approach to nation building. Immigration was an important strategy also in countries such as Australia, USA, Brazil and Argentina (Driedger and Halli 1999, see also Solberg 1987). The difference between these countries' immigration policies and European ones; was that the former were not primarily reactive against influxes of people and oriented towards restriction and protection. Rather, they were future-oriented, pragmatic and expansive. This in turn shaped the way that the nation was imagined. For example, Triadafilopoulos (2012) suggests that Canada has a distinctive tradition of nationhood related to its self-identification as settler country, and consequently, debates around immigration typically concern admission criteria and the compatibility of specific groups of immigrants, but never the fact of being an immigration country. In the following I will present some of the historic underpinnings for this.

Acres of dreams

In 1869, when the first Immigration Act was passed, nearly all the settlers in Canada were of French or English¹²⁸ origin, often referred to as the 'charter groups'¹²⁹ (Fong 2009). Most had arrived relatively recently, after the invention of the steamship had made the journey across the Atlantic less dangerous and exhausting. They had settled in what was known as Upper and Lower Canada (today's Quebec, Ontario and Labrador) in communities that mainly served as trading posts, as described in chapter 4. France had established their colony, referred to as *La Nouvelle France*, along the Saint-Lawrence river, in 1608. Around 10.000 French immigrants had settled there, but in 1760 they were defeated by the British and became a part of the British Empire (Verbeeten 2007).

A century later, the colonies under British rule known as *British North America* formally obtained status as self-governing confederation, *The Dominion of Canada*, although still under the British Crown. An enormous territory known as Rupert's Land¹³⁰, covering the prairies and

¹²⁸ According to Kelley and Trebilcock (2010) they were encouraged by the British government who saw emigration as a way to release the pressures caused by unemployment and poverty. Britain preferred to direct immigrants towards Canada rather than the US, against whom they had recently been at war. Also trade unions, shipping companies and landlords pushed in the same direction. The authors also note that the majority of English-speaking immigrants were Irish.

¹²⁹ The territory was of course also inhabited by at least 50 distinct indigenous groups (First Nations and Inuit) (Burnet, J. (1981) *The social and historical context of ethnic relations*. In R.Gardner and R.Kalin (eds) *A Canadian social psychology of ethnic relations*. Toronto: Methuen)

¹³⁰ Constituting about one third of present day Canada.

encircling the Hudson Bay, was still on private hands. It had been granted to the *Hudson Bay Company* 200 years earlier, ensuring its monopoly in fur trade (McCullough 1996). Now the confederation bought the lands back and shortly after the provinces of Manitoba and British Columbia were also included, making Canada a country that touches both the Pacific and the Atlantic oceans.

The government proceeded to outline plans for a large-scale settlement in the mid-west, which in their eyes was 'empty' although inhabited by several indigenous groups (Day 1998, Harney 1988). The grand vision of the *Dominion Lands Act* of 1872 was the interweaving of the vast territories, by creating a dynamic relation between the industrialized eastern part, receiving resources and agricultural produce from the newly developed western part, and in turn selling their goods back (Green and Green 1999). Two factors would be particularly crucial to achieve this goal: large quantities of settlers and the construction of a transcontinental railway (Brodie 2002). According to Dunn and West (2011), the transcontinental railway (completed in 1885) can therefore be understood as representing a sort of 'unifying myth' in Canadian history.

Immigration was seen as the cornerstone for developing the nation, but it was imperative for policy-makers that the process of populating the territory would be regulated, planned and orderly, and not unlawful and chaotic, as they thought had been the case south of the border (Knowles 2000, Parkins and Reed 2012). The government therefore made surveyors carve out 1,25 million homesteads on the Prairies that were to be distributed freely to new settlers. The Dominion Land Act stated that any free man over the age of 18 or any woman heading a household would get 160 free acres of land (pitched as '*acres of dreams*'), on the condition that they cultivate the land and build a permanent dwelling (ibid). In line with the approach to new settlers, immigration was handled through the Department of Agriculture. The 'pull' factors of free land, economic opportunity and independence was expected to draw immigrants in great numbers. Another fortunate and timely coincidence, policy-makers believed, was the invention of weather-resistant wheat.

However, very few immigrants arrived. According to Verbeeten (2007), Canada largely missed out on the great migrations of the nineteenth century (2007: 2), and the main reason for this was that Canada was considered too cold, too remote, and too backward as destination. In fact,

towards the end of the century there were more people leaving Canada - mostly going to the U.S. – than there were new settlers (Triadafilopoulos 2012, Kelley and Trebilcock 1998). Canada, then, was a country of *transients* rather than a country of immigration (Verbeeten 2007: 3). Over the last two decades of the 19th century, Ontario – the ‘engine-room of Canadian industrialisation’ – lost around one million people to the south (Sturgis and Davis 1998). In this situation it became urgent that Canada change its recruitment strategy to be able not only to attract, but also retain, immigrants. Thus the way was paved for a large-scale marketing campaign to sell the image of Canada as the land of bright futures to prospective immigrants.

Sifton and the stalwart peasant

Few recent accounts of Canada’s immigration history fail to mention the forceful and vivid description of ‘*the Immigrant Canada wants*’ in a text written by Sir Clifford Sifton, a former Minister of the Interior, published in Maclean’s magazine in 1922. The ‘*good quality immigrant*’, a much-cited sentence reads, is a ‘*stalwart peasant in a sheep-skin coat, born on the soil, whose forefathers have been farmers for ten generation, with a stout wife and half a dozen children (...)*’¹³¹. In academic texts the quote often serves as an entry into a discussion around the nature and function of the core process of immigration systems, namely the separation of immigrants into desired and undesired candidates. The stalwart peasant recommended by Sifton embodied certain values and qualities that served crucial goals of Canada’s migration policies in the years when the peopling of the prairies was the main priority (Stasiulis, in Clement 1996). Rural individuals constituted the ideal immigrants, much more so than modern, urban immigrants who - in Sifton’s eyes - would only add to unemployment and slum conditions in the cities (Stelter 1984: 441- 442). Canada was looking for people to contribute to developing its agricultural potential in the West, and the desired immigrant was therefore a strong and experienced farmer, able and willing to endure hardship¹³².

It is interesting to note that in the same text, Sifton states that it makes no difference whether or not the immigrant is British-born; it is the person's *productive* capacity which is significant (Sifton 1922). Sifton was well aware that this was a view many Anglo-Canadians did not share,

¹³¹ Only Farmers Need Apply: Sir Clifford Sifton, “The Immigrant Canada wants”, Maclean’s magazine, April 1, 1922, pp. 32-34

¹³² Museum of Civilization, *Presenting Newcomers to Canada 1910-1911*

since the expansive immigration policies he had instituted during his time in office some years earlier had suffered a backlash from those who worried about the dilution of the 'Canadian character' caused by the large numbers of newcomers from non-British countries (Francis and Kitzen 2007, Kelley and Trebilcock 2010). What Sifton argued for was a return to the kind of policies that he himself had introduced when he took office, which based immigration intake mainly on migrants' presumed capacities as workers.

Sifton's role in shaping Canadian migration policies has often been noted. In 1896 Sifton had obtained the position as Minister of the Interior in the newly elected Liberal government of Wilfrid Laurier¹³³. This happened just when Canada was coming out of a longer period of economic recession and Sifton's first challenge as Minister was to rethink and reshape the plan for populating the west, since the strategy in force was considered a great failure (Knowles 2000). Sifton's view was that the prairies were an ideal destination for skilled farmers, and also that developing agriculture was the key to prosperity for Canada. He attributed the slow flow of immigrants to the lack of positive promotion (Francis and Kitzen 2007). Experienced as he was with media and communication, he proposed a massive marketing campaign to woo immigrants. He convinced the government into granting the project a budget of a never-before-seen size (Murray 2006)¹³⁴. Prospective immigrants were to be enticed by colourful posters, pamphlets, display booths, 'editorial articles' commissioned by the department and inserted in foreign newspapers, free trips to Canada for journalists, free lectures and various kinds of events, including the projection of silent films, which was still an unknown media for most people (Knowles 2000, 1997, Francis and Kitzen 2007). The government also gave bounties to European shipping companies to attract immigrants (Sturgis and Davis 1999).

Among the most original inventions of the campaign were exhibition wagons sent to far-off villages in Britain¹³⁵. The wagons were filled with agricultural produce of the Prairies which naturally attracted crowds of curious villagers, creating the perfect setting for immigration agents who could then try to win their hearts and minds to the idea of migration (Murray 2006). It was

¹³³ He was then leading a career as lawyer and newspaper owner.

¹³⁴ Sifton's advertising budget increased steadily by 400% during his years in office, reaching \$4 million in 1905 (Murray 2006: 50)

¹³⁵ Source: Canadian Museum of History, URL: www.historymuseum.ca/cmhc/exhibitions/hist/advertis/ads1-01e.shtml

of course no coincidence that the campaign targeted these people. In the eyes of the authorities, they represented the most highly regarded candidates for immigration to the Prairies, habituated to physical labor and relative isolation as they were and, not least, having a 'British character' (e.g. Knowles 2000, Hawkins 1991, Sturgis and Davis 1999).

The marketing means were both original and massive, but they also went very far in selling the image of a promising future. Some of the promotional materials of the campaign illustrates well this aspect, such as the freely distributed illustrated atlases, that were printed in 400.000 copies¹³⁶ and translated in a dozen languages (Murray 2006: 56). For those who received these atlases the very event of being given such a publication freely was perhaps in itself something to marvel at. Moreover, the illustrations in the atlases painted idyllic pictures of life on the prairies, presenting them as a place where land is plentiful, cheap and fertile, summers long and harvests generous, where farmers have access to modern farm machinery, and often even possess their own car. Settlers would have every reason to succeed, no reason to fail (Libraries and Archives Canada, Parkins and Reed 2012).

Female immigrants from Britain were also encouraged to emigrate, with adverts underlining the important role of women in holding the Empire together (Sturgis and Davis 1998). The message was mixed, however, as it could hardly be concealed that the main occupation available for independent female immigrants was that of domestic servant, which was associated with long workdays, isolation, lack of privacy and independence, and general low social status (ibid, Milton 1987). Nevertheless, the shortage of women in Canada was presented as a good opportunity and advertising pamphlets underlined that 'a very large percentage enter the matrimonial state shortly after their arrival' which would make them mistresses of their own household¹³⁷. Female immigrants were more certain to find work than male immigrants, because the need for domestic servants tended to be constant while the demand for other kinds of laborers fluctuated (Barber 1991). Middle-class families employed domestic servants not only because they needed help but also as a confirmation of class status (ibid). The demand for domestics was also high among farmers in the West. According to Norma J. Milton (in Armitage and Jameson 1987: 207), around

¹³⁶ At a time when a book was a best seller if it sold 5000 copies (Murray 2006: 56)

¹³⁷ National Archives of Canada, C-80108

250,000 single women migrated from Europe (most of them from Britain) to become domestic servants between 1885-1930. Yet, the work as domestic servant was rarely the preferred option, and those who had a choice often preferred to work in factories, offices and shops, Barber (1991) notes. While wages in these occupations were similar, they offered a greater degree of independence and were often less onerous than housework (ibid: 8).

Assimilable others

Although Western European farmers were perceived as the ideal immigration candidates and the campaign had succeeded in persuading many of them into coming, Sifton realized that it would be necessary to also target would-be immigrants from other regions. Since the dominant view was that settlement would be facilitated if the immigrant had similar values and norms, immigration authorities therefore sought out the ‘less foreign’ immigrants (Somerville and Walsworth 2009). Eastern Europeans were second on the list of preferred migrants, considered ‘less foreign’ than Southern Europeans, although perceived by many Canadians as mostly “illiterate Slavs” (Hawkins 1991: 8). Through a secret arrangement with steamship company officials in Amsterdam¹³⁸ and a clandestine organization of booking agents, immigration authorities succeeded in attracting large numbers of especially Hungarian and Ukrainian farmers¹³⁹.

As Sturgis and Davis (1998) have pointed out, the concern with compatible ethnicities was not unanimous. From employers’ point of view it was often advantageous to overlook ethnicity in order to gain those who provided cheap labor or specific skills¹⁴⁰. The concern with ‘Britishness’ was greater in the East, in particular in Ontario, where British identity had strong historical roots and also stood in contrast to the francophone identity in neighboring Quebec (Harrison 2013). In the West, the large number of immigrants from central Europe and other non-Anglophone countries worked to temper such overriding identities (ibid). Moreover, immigrants from Britain did not necessarily enjoy a very good reputation as workers. In fact, Knowles (2000) note,

¹³⁸ Receiving a bonus each time they brought a farmer willing to settle in Canada (Knowles 2000)

¹³⁹ The immigration of Ukrainians (or Galicians and Bukovinians as they were called at the time) is often largely attributed the personal engagement of Josef Oleskow, who encouraged Ukrainians to come to the Prairies rather than going the usual route to Brazil.

¹⁴⁰ In the article *Who Was the Ideal Immigrant? Settlement in Western Canada 1880-1914* (1998) Sturgis and Davis describe among others how resource-extracting companies in the West were more prone to employing cheap labor regardless of ethnicity, but in case of conflicts played the different groups up against each other.

employment ads in newspapers frequently stated: “No English need apply”. For example, many farmers complained that the British were among the least desirable farmhands, describing them as inexperienced, unreliable, conceited and dissatisfied (Kelley and Trebilcock 2010, Knowles 2000).

In the search for suitable candidates for immigration, the authorities also turned their regard south of the border, to the U.S. Most of the good cultivable land had already been occupied in the U.S., and Canadian authorities could therefore appeal to farmers’ sons that were looking for land. They launched the so-called *Last Best West* campaign and hired a number of regional agents who received a commission for each person they convinced into settling in Canada (Kelley and Trebilcock 2010). The result was that between 1901 and 1914 an estimated 750,000 immigrants came to Canada from the United States. Many were returning Canadians, but a significant portion also included Germans, Norwegians, Swedes and Icelanders who had originally settled in the American West (Knowles 2000). In most peoples’ eyes these were people that had similar values and could be assimilated (Francis and Kitzan 2007). However, not everybody was enthusiastic about the new settlers from the south and many were concerned that they would edge the Prairies “away from Britain and Canada and into the American sphere of influence” (Knowles 2000). Less welcome still were black settlers moving north. However, instead of adopting policies that explicitly excluded them, they were sought kept out through shrewd administrative procedures that made sure their applications were rejected (FitzGerald and Cook-Martin 2014).

A Canadian character

The combined efforts to recruit immigrants bore fruits insofar that over a period of just 17 years the Canadian population increased by 40% (Verbeeten 2007). In the first decade of the 20th century, close to one million immigrants sailed from Europe to Canada, and half of them were British¹⁴¹. The campaign was considered an immense success in spite of growing criticism from newcomers regarding the overly idyllic picture of Prairie life that they felt had allured and even misled them¹⁴². Many of the newcomers had arrived with high hopes and ambitions of leaving not only poverty but also the rigidity of the British class system behind them¹⁴³. According to

¹⁴¹ Source: Canadian Museum of History.

¹⁴² An aspect that has been described for example in Aksel Sandemose’s novels from Western Canada

¹⁴³ Though, according to David P. Gagan (1989) Canada had a fully fledged class system by 1900

Valerie Knowles (2000, 1997) many of the British immigrants were issued from the middle- and upper classes¹⁴⁴. Similarly, Sturgis and Davis (1998: 10) write that emigration was '*less the move of desperation by those on the lowest wrung of society than it was the calculated move of a stratum of people more literate and ambitious than their neighbors*'. This phenomenon is not unique for Canada but has also been described by researchers of migration in other settings. An insight often attributed to Michael Lipton (1980: 7) holds that contrary to conventional understandings it is seldom the poorest who migrate, since migration involves certain costs and risks that the poorest are often less willing or less capable to assume.

Life in the Prairies was often hard for newcomers; both for farmers and for those who chose paid work instead of farming. Urban workers, Kelley and Trebilcock (201: 116) write, often worked up to twelve hours a day, six days a week, doing onerous and poorly paid factory work under harsh discipline, with no job security and no unemployment insurance. Employers treated many of them in unacceptable and inhumane ways, as several Royal Commissions revealed¹⁴⁵. One example is the Royal Commission concerning Italian immigration who concluded that many of these were exploited economically by immigration agents also functioning as employment brokers, called *padronis*, and who in particular recruited unskilled laborers (*navvies*) for work on the construction of railroads¹⁴⁶. Moreover, the *padronis* were accused of preying on poor people's hopes by recruiting them in impoverished regions of southern Italy with deceptive tactics and false pretences¹⁴⁷.

The goal of populating the prairies was on its way to realization, but increasingly domestic harmony was under pressure. The loudest of the critical voices were not those of disillusioned Prairie immigrants, but those of established Anglo-Canadians fearful that the sudden population growth would threaten national unity (Knowles 2000). Many had doubts about the 'quality' of the newcomers and their abilities to become part of the Canadian social fabric and felt that their foreign ways demonstrated their unwillingness to assimilate to a 'Canadian way of life' (ibid). For Anglo-Canadian cultural conservatives a primary goal was to uphold Canada's place in the British Empire and they therefore called to guard the nation against being 'swamped' by inferior,

¹⁴⁴ So-called 'gentlemen emigrants'

¹⁴⁵ Royal Commissions are official inquiries into matters of public concern

¹⁴⁶ Royal Commission on Italian Immigration 1904-1905

¹⁴⁷ Canadian Museum of History at Pier 21

ignorant, non-English-speaking foreigners that would undermine Canada's British character (Sturgis and Davis 1998, Day 1998). Such assumptions regarding race, supported by so-called scientific racism (theories of evolution and eugenics) were however widely accepted and embedded in the popular common sense of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (FitzGerald and Cook-Martín 2014, Triadafilopoulos 2012).

Much of the criticism was directed at Eastern Europeans (most of them Ukrainians), but also at a number of religious groups, utopians and other sectarian movements¹⁴⁸ that had settled in the 'pure' lands of the prairies, where they sought to maintain spatial and cultural separateness. Initially, block settlements had been endorsed by the government, who believed that less effort would be required to make new immigrants comfortable in such areas (Knowles 1997). The idea was that surrounded by friends and family, they were more likely to be successful and the community would provide support for those who struggled, thus reducing the need for government assistance. Moreover, it was also seen as favorable that certain groups of immigrants in such settlements (in particular the Ukrainians and the Russian Doukhobors) were thus kept from regular contact with English settlers who were uneasy about their presence¹⁴⁹.

However, this last point served to generate concern among English settlers (Knowles 1997). Although many worried about having non-English neighbors, they also feared that these new immigrants would never become 'Canadian' in settlements where foreign languages, schools, religions and cultures predominated. In media, in public meetings and in the Parliament, the view was increasingly put forth that Canada should restrain immigration in order to preserve 'Canadian character', or even in order to prevent 'deterioration in morality and intelligence', as Frank Oliver, the man who would shortly after succeed Sifton as Minister, expressed it in a 1905 speech (FitzGerald and Cook-Martín 2014: 158).

Newcomers were also increasingly seen as the causes of rising social problems (Kelley and Trebilcock 2010). Parliamentary politicians who opposed Sifton's strategy claimed that Canada had become the '*dumping ground for the refuse of every country in the world*', as conservative MP Dr. Thomas Sproule, expressed it (ibid: 133). Although criticism mainly hit Eastern

¹⁴⁸ Such as Mormons, Doukhobors and Mennonites

¹⁴⁹ Darling's chapter *The Doukhobors* in White and Corbett 2014 discusses this in detail.

Europeans, other groups were placed even further down in the pecking order. A particularly striking example of the fear is found in the attitudes towards immigrants from Asia. Among these were thousands of immigrants from China who had been brought in by rail magnates to work on the construction of new rail lines, but who had ever since been targets of both official and popular racism (Stasiulis, in Clement 1996). The Japanese and Chinese, referred to as 'the Orientals', were commonly considered inassimilable, described by author J. S. Woodsworth (1909) as 'clumsy men' who 'can live on rice exclusively' (1972:147). They were also accused of bringing wages down and making it impossible for locals to make a living wage (Knowles 2000). Asian immigrants had been subjected to discriminatory treatment also on earlier occasions, for example through the Chinese Head Tax, introduced in 1885, and several other measures intended to prevent them from settling permanently¹⁵⁰ (Kelley and Trebilcock 2010).

When Japan defeated Russia in the Russo-Japanese war in 1905, the antipathy towards the Orientals also became vested with anxiety. In British Columbia, where most of the Asian immigrants had settled, Anglo-Canadian habitants feared that Japanese immigrants were actively involved in a Japanese expansion project (Knowles 1997). According to Dhamoon and Abu-Laban (2009), they were thus no longer only thought of as 'unassimilable' but also considered 'dangerous internal foreigners'. In 1907, such anti-Asian attitudes culminated in several violent attacks on Chinatown and Little Tokyo in Vancouver, incited by the Asiatic Exclusion League (Triadafilopoulos 2012).

Some important public figures, however, did not see the 'problem of immigration' as stemming from heterogeneity as such, but rather as a matter related to a lack of instructive contact with Anglo-Canadians, combined with poor living standards. The social conditions of newcomers and the attitudes they encountered were the issues at heart in J.S Woodsworth's influential book *Strangers Within Our Gates*, which was published in 1909. Woodsworth, a Methodist minister and a central activist within the social democratic movement, was also worried about the disruptive consequences that massive numbers of immigrants could have on social cohesion, but as a Christian he nevertheless felt it his duty to work to improve the conditions of these people. The problem, as he saw it, was that of 'welding this heterogeneous mass into one people, one

¹⁵⁰ Such as not admitting female Chinese immigrants.

nation' (Woodsworth 1972:167), and the solution he proposed was education and assimilation in order to turn them into worthy citizens (Day 1998: 51). On their hand, the newcomers should adhere to the norms of the Anglo-Protestant majority.

Woodsworth's book devotes most of its pages to discussing the intelligence and industriousness of different national, racial and religious *types* of immigrants, with the purpose of evaluating their abilities to contribute to country. In this aspect, Woodsworth was typical of his time. The varying suitability of migrants was understood as a question of race, culture or religion, that not made them good settlers or not, but was also seen as related to skills and abilities. For example, Jews were in general not admitted on the basis of their 'unsuitability as agriculturalists' (Abella and Troper 1986). It is interesting also to note that French immigrants do not come high on Woodworth's scale of desirability. Only one page discuss French immigrants, and Quebec and the Quebecois are not mentioned at all (Day 1998: 53).

Kelley and Trebilcock (2014) write that Woodsworth's ideas of regarding race reveal just how conventional they were, since he in fact represented 'those most sympathetic to the plight of the economically downtrodden and politically oppressed' (2014: 132-133). Assimilation, then, was a rarely questioned end goal. Hence, the capacity to assimilate and wash away differences was an important characteristic of the ideal immigrant.

To sift the wheat from the chaff

Having achieved the primary goal of populating the West, the government's priorities changed. From being concerned with augmenting the numbers, the focus was now set on the *kind* of society that was being created (Harney 1988). Like his Liberal colleague Clifford Sifton, the new Minister of the Interior Frank Oliver was in favor of a vigorous immigration policy. However, for Oliver, the vital concern was that newcomers shared the values of established Canadians and he cared less whether they were farmers or not (National Archives of Canada).

Indeed, the perception that the immigrants who came went into farming had also proven to be only partly true. Estimates of the period indicate that there was a nearly equal distribution between those who went into farming and those who instead found work in industry, transportation and other services that the increased population demanded (Green and Green

1999). Upon taking office, Oliver declared that Canadians had not immigrated '*simply to produce wheat*' but to

'build up a nation, a civilization, a social system that we could enjoy, be proud of and transmit to our children; and we resent the idea of having the millstone of this Slav population hung around our necks in our efforts to build up, beautify and improve the country, and so improve the whole of Canada'

(cited in Triadafilopoulos 2012: 28).

In line with these thoughts, the government introduced new and more restrictive immigration legislations in 1906, seeking to restrain access for an increased number of categories of people (Knowles 1997). The shift reflected Oliver's position but was also an attempt to placate voters who were skeptical of foreigners and labor unions fearing the impact of surplus workers (Knowles 2000). However, the debates preceding the passing of the new Act illustrate that opinions were divided when it came to the immigrant intake.

Quebec MP Henri Bourassa spoke in favor of restrictions but also underlined that immigrants had been instrumental to Canada's prosperity by providing for example the backbreaking labor behind the transformation of the Prairies (Knowles 2000). But, the high number of immigrants had also affected the position of French-Canadians and Bourassa was therefore critical to measures that would favor the admission of English-speaking immigrants at the cost of other groups¹⁵¹.

A small but powerful minority wanted instead an open-door policy when it came to immigration, in particular industrialists and other business-owners, who benefited strongly from the inflow of people willing to work hard for a low pay. Former president of the Canadian Pacific Railway, Sir William Van Horne, was one of these, and his point of view is well expressed in one of his speeches where he declared that immigrants are '*like a new dollar. Hand it out from the Bank and it turns itself in value a dozen or more times a year*' (Knowles 2000).

An important feature of the new Act concerned the right to deport any individual unable of adapting to society or incapable of supporting themselves and their families. This category included immigrants accused of being "feeble-minded," "epileptic," "insane," "deaf", "blind",

¹⁵¹ La Presse, April 10 1907, p.13

"destitute, "vagrant," or "criminal," as well as those who were carriers of contagious diseases, or those who failed in being self-sufficient (C.G Anderson 2012). These policies illustrate that the notion that only those capable of becoming productive and assimilated deserved to stay in Canada, was widely supported by the public (Library and Archives Canada). No political party, union or organization publically opposed them. The expectation that an immigrant should be able to 'stand on his own two feet' was the reigning ideal in public opinion as well as in public policies, and it was also shaped by pressures from the owners of capital (Sturgis and Davis 1998)¹⁵².

Indeed, Clifford Sifton himself complained that after he had resigned in 1905 policies had led to a great influx of immigrants of a 'lesser quality' (Mosher 1998). He was, however, more concerned with the new immigrants' work moral and attitudes than with their ethnicity. In this period, the impression that undesirable poor, idle and criminal people were streaming in from Europe was gaining ground (Knowles 1997). For example, conservative writer Stephen Leacock - the most widely read English-speaking author in the world at the time - lamented the arrival of '*the herds of the proletariat of Europe, the lowest classes of industrial society, without home or work*' (Leacock, in Palmer 1975). In this situation it was only to be expected that Canada would try to 'sift the wheat from the chaff', as William Scott, then Superintendent of Immigration, put it (Knowles 2000).

This climate shaped the Immigration Act of 1910 where the government was granted the right to deny immigrants of any class, occupation or character¹⁵³, on the basis of particular economic, industrial or other conditions - however temporary - in the country. From then on immigrants could be categorized as undesirables due to peculiar customs, habits, modes of life, and methods of holding property (Hawkins 1988), and also based on '*probable inability to become readily assimilated or to assume the duties and responsibilities of Canadian citizenship within a reasonable time after their entry*' (Ibid: 17). The government introduced measures such as the 'continuous-journey' regulation, under which immigrants were required to have travelled by

¹⁵² The authors place this in the context of laissez-faire capitalism that characterized Canada at the time.

¹⁵³ Including immigrants who 'did not suit the climate'

continuous passage from their country of origin, which had the (intended) effect of barring most immigration from Asia by closing off their primary routes¹⁵⁴.

Nevertheless, immigrants continued to arrive in huge numbers, peaking in 1913 with 400,000 newcomers (Kelley and Trebilcock 2010). Perhaps surprisingly, most of these came from central and Eastern Europe and seen as 'non-desired' (this was the case for many Italians, Poles, Ukrainians and Russians, Triadafilopoulos (2012: 31 writes). This situation was produced by a system of 'back door policies', which granted employers the possibility to actively recruit migrant workers regardless of official classification. Employers were warm adherents of this practice and put pressure on politicians to allow the continued influx of these immigrants, who were considered more 'malleable' than immigrants from Britain¹⁵⁵ (Knowles 2000).

National unity and ambiguous loyalties

The period before the First World War had seen a shift in migration policies from attracting potential settlers to selecting the most desirable future members of the country, Kelley and Trebilcock (2010: 252) note. Worries were growing with regards to the multi-ethnic and polyglot composition of the population, which not only served as catalyst for fear over national unity and weakened 'Britishness'; but was also framed as a political problem of loyalty (c.f Hartzig and Hoerder in Satzewich and Wong 2011, Sturgis and Davis 1999). Many immigrants maintained strong connections to their countries of origin, for example by sending remittances to family members, purchasing land or property, or participating in nationalist movements¹⁵⁶. The transnational connections of these immigrants raised questions of their allegiance and were negatively valued (Sturgis and Davis 1999, see also Glick-Schiller, Basch and Szanton Blanc 1995). Such attitudes were strengthened by a general sentiment that times were unstable, with economic recession and political tensions increasing (Kelley and Trebilcock 2010). There was a growing fear that ongoing conflicts in Europe would spill over to Canada and people were worried about the events taking place the Balkans. Eventually, the conflict between Serbia,

¹⁵⁴ the regulation was challenged in 1914, with the arrival of the vessel Komagata Maru carrying close to 400 Sikh passengers. After weeks of detention, in the Vancouver harbour, deprived of food and water, nearly all of the passengers were deported in spite of having valid British passports on the grounds of having violated the continuous-journey regulation.

¹⁵⁵ who were accused of expecting 'high wages, a feather bed and a bath tub' (Knowles 2000)

¹⁵⁶ this was especially the case for Czechs, Slovaks, Hungarian and Irish immigrants.

Russia and France on the one side, and Germany and the Austro-Hungarian empire on the other, did bring Britain and thus also Canada into the First World War.

The war came to change significantly the underlying premises for the ideas of who makes ideal migrants, bringing political views, ideology and loyalty to front stage. Suspicion increased towards immigrants who had their origins in the now enemy countries of Europe, and the perception of German immigrants shifted perhaps most radically, from ideal (described by Woodsworth as '*among our best immigrants*', 1972: 84) to unwelcome immigrants. But hostile sentiments also hit Eastern Europeans, especially Ukrainians, who were disenfranchised and many also placed in internment camps (Kelley and Trebilcock 2010). The 1910 Immigration Act had also granted the government the authority to expel individuals on political or ideological grounds, and a number of other potential enemies of the state, such as anarchists, communists, and other 'troublemakers' were deported (Avery 1979). At the same time, immigration from Europe slowed down since people were held back to contribute in the war and travel across the Atlantic had become risky.

Canada's industry was reoriented to produce military equipment, which had the effect of boosting the modernization of production (Knowles 2000). However, as the war ended, so did the demand for these products, thus production decreased. At the same time, the number of returned soldiers looking for work was high. Popular views demanded that existing jobs should be given to these 'returning heroes' rather than to foreigners (ibid). Some companies (for example the International Nickel Company) followed up by firing thousands of foreign employees to make place for returning soldiers. However, Knowles (2000) suggests that employers' true motive was to prevent the homecoming soldiers from turning to socialism, inspired by the contemporary revolution in Russia¹⁵⁷.

The events of the war combined with the economic situation created a climate in which culture and now also political views of immigrants were seen as more significant than whether he or she was a good worker. Revisions were made of the Immigration Act and these emphasized immigrants' culture and ideology and barred all 'enemy alien groups', including for example the

¹⁵⁷ A fear often referred to as the 'Red scare'.

Doukhobors and the Mennonites. In effect, Canadian borders were sealed off for everyone but British or US citizens in the period between the two world wars.

Prospective immigrants were now officially classified as 'preferred', 'non-preferred' or 'excluded' (Triadafilopoulos 2013). The preferred class consisted mainly of 'British subjects with adequate means' as well as US citizens. The 'non-preferred' class comprised immigrants from eastern and southern Europe, who were nevertheless admitted in periods of economic growth. The 'most excluded' were the Chinese, who became completely barred from entering Canada through the Chinese Immigration Act in 1923.

Migrant labor

However, policy-makers had not taken into account that labor market possibilities in the U.S. would pull large numbers of Canadians towards the south, and that immigration from the 'preferred' classes of immigrants would remain low (Knowles 2000). Increasingly, demands were put forth to open up immigration also for other nationalities. Especially industrialists, transportation company owners and mining company owners put pressure on the government to lift the barriers on immigration (ibid, Sturgis and Davis 1999). In 1925, the government plighted to the pressure and entered an agreement with the two main Canadian Railway companies and granted these the authority to recruit immigrants from non-preferred countries when their labor was needed¹⁵⁸. The companies, Thompson and Weinfeld (1995: 188) write, mocked the government's restrictive policies in their search for unskilled labor, and the majority of the recruited workers (160.000 in 1929) came from 'nonpreferred' categories. The agreement, which especially brought central Europeans to Canada, lasted 5 years. Labor unions, on their hand, were very much against the policy, since the influx of workers pushed wages down and rendered union work difficult. The practices ended, however, when the economic crisis hit. Several policy measures were now adopted to keep *poor* immigrants from coming, such as for example landing-money requirements (Verbeeten 2007). With unemployment soaring, the government was trying to link immigration to sectors that were in need of labor, illustrated for example by the decision to turn the Department of Immigration into a sub-agency of the Department of Mines and Resources in 1936.

¹⁵⁸ Source: Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21

Then the Second World War broke out. With regards to ideology, the war was cast a fight against the Nazi ideology of racial superiority, although some scholars argue that this was the case only when the Nazi atrocities became known (e.g. Kelley and Trebilcock 2010). In fact, during the war, domestic racial practices (such as for example the relocation of Canadians of Japanese origin) were rarely contested since they did not really conflict with views held by the population at large (ibid). Meanwhile, immigration fell to an all time low in 1942, when fewer than 8000 immigrants¹⁵⁹ entered the country (Hyndman 2013: 21).

Just like the First World War, the Second World War was emotionally costly¹⁶⁰ but economically lucrative for Canada. Industries developed and the output of production boomed. The economic upswing after the war made new goods available for many. However, it also affected views with regards to ‘correct’ occupations for newcomers (Troper 2013). Earlier, the dream of owning a few acres of cultivable land had been perceived as the ‘proper’ motivation for immigrants, because it demonstrated a willingness to engage long-term and a desire to make roots. There had been something potentially unstable and disloyal about immigrants who preferred city life and working for a salary rather than owning a piece of land (ibid). For example, this was the attitude towards many Irish immigrants, since having fled from famine and hardship in rural areas of Ireland, they for the most part preferred factory work in the city (Kelley and Trebilcock 2010, Troper 2013). This choice, in addition to their ambivalent position between the English (with whom they shared language) and the French (with whom they shared religion), often made of them the ‘tricksters’ of the immigrants¹⁶¹. With the development of the manufacturing industries, however, this kind of motivation came to coincide with the priorities of the government, namely to channel in the right kind of immigrants to fill the need for labor (Vineberg 2011). Industries needed skilled workers; the stalwart peasant had become obsolete.

Mass immigration

The fact that Canada had become an advanced industrial power (ibid) paved the way for a radical shift of direction when it came to immigration, namely the decision to once again pursue mass

¹⁵⁹ compared to 400.000 in 1913 (Boyd and Wicker 2000)

¹⁶⁰ with the loss of 43,000 lives (Knowles 2000)

¹⁶¹ see f.x. Soper 2005

immigration (Triadafilopoulos 2012). Prime Minister Mackenzie King stated in 1947 that the dual goals of this large-scale immigration were to increase the population and to support economic growth (Green and Green 1999). The economic contribution of immigrants was to be assured through a careful selection of candidates but precisely how to do it was a matter of debate. The conflicting views on the matter can be apprehended through the tension between the two departments that dealt with immigration at the time: the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, holding a longer-term perspective on the outcome and focusing on the making of the Canadian population, and the Department of Labor, championing short-term goals more closely related to labor market needs (e.g. Hawkins 1972).

The eventual move towards privileging skills in the selection process was largely brought forward by the economic concerns advocated by the Department of Labor (see f.ex. Green 1976, Li 2003, Kelley and Trebilcock 2000). However, immigrant workers were still often, as Zolberg (1987) has phrased it, ‘wanted, but not welcome’, that is, desired as workers but not necessarily as Canadians. The question of preserving Canada’s character and guarding it against ‘inferior’ foreigners was still present and the government felt it necessary to reassure people that resuming large-scale immigration did not mean flinging the door wide open to any group wishing to enter. Prime Minister Mackenzie King declared in his speech to the House of Commons in 1947 that “(...) *Canada is perfectly within her rights in selecting the persons whom we regard as desirable future citizens. It is not a “fundamental human right” of any alien to enter Canada. It is a privilege. (...)*” (Vineberg 2011). According to Triadafilopoulos (2012) these lines could be read as an affirmation of the authorities’ understanding of immigration as constituting primarily an element in the nation-building project, that is, emphasizing long-term objectives. Indeed, this was a time when Canadian nation building entered a new phase, since after the war the ties waned between Britain and Canada. Canadian nation building was now translated into symbolic and concrete institutions such as the 1947 establishment of the Canadian Citizenship and the introduction of the Canadian passport (Abu-Laban 2013, Brodie 2002)¹⁶².

In the speech, Mackenzie King also refers to the ‘general agreement’ among the people of Canada that one does not wish immigration to alter ‘the character of the population’, and later in

¹⁶² I discuss this further in chapter 7

the same speech he notes that a considerable immigration from Asia would ‘give rise to social and economic problems’ (Kelley and Trebilcock 2010). These phrases reflected perhaps dominant public opinions at the time, but by comparing the speech with what the Prime Minister wrote in his private diary in the same period, Vineberg (2011) argues that for Mackenzie King the main priority was to increase the Canadian population and in that matter ‘there should be no exclusion of any particular race’ (Ibid: 206).

Admitting diversity

Thus, in the first decade after the war, immigration restrictions were gradually eased (Green and Green 1997, Troper 1993). Although still limited, the number of classes of accepted immigrants was widened through the Immigration Act of 1952. The Act made it possible to admit also non-British healthy applicants of good character if they had skills that were needed in Canada and if they could be expected to integrate easily into Canadian society (Green and Green 1997). This category of immigrants, qualifying on the basis of their own merit, was considered a separate group from sponsored immigrants, who were economically the responsibility of settled relatives.

In theory the legislation opened the door to applicants of a variety of origins, - but in theory only. Under the pretext of lessening the bureaucracy involved, the Act granted wide discretionary powers to immigration officials and this had the - perhaps unsurprising - outcome that discriminatory practices continued and that non-white immigrants were in effect still excluded (Kelley and Trebilcock 2010, see also Troper 1993). Until 1956, the only realistic pathway for would-be immigrants of non-European origin was either to be sponsored by a Canadian male, or to accept work as farm workers or domestic servant (Anwar 2014).

Throughout the 50s, popular and political concerns still lingered as to the ‘suitability’ of certain groups of immigrants to assimilate and become a part of the social weave¹⁶³. In general, only European immigrants were admitted, although no longer only British. The largest streams in 50s and 60s were Germans, Italians, and Dutch, and Portuguese and Greek sponsored relatives, most

¹⁶³ For example, Harney (1988) and Troper (1993) mention that an opinion poll realized one year after the 2nd World War showed for example that Canadians favoured German rather than Jewish immigrants.

of whom were unskilled (Castles and Miller 2003: 75, Green and Green 1997)¹⁶⁴. Migration from northern and western Europe diminished as living conditions improved and Eastern Europeans were by now kept behind the Iron Curtain (Troper 1993). In response to employers pressing for labor, immigrants from southern Europe – Italians, Greek, Portuguese and people from the Balkans – were therefore granted entry (ibid). By the late 50s, the number of Italian immigrants, a group in that in prewar immigration documents had been listed as ‘non-preferred stock’, surpassed the number of British immigrants (Harney 1988).

Triadafilopolous (2012) argues that after the war, the broader moral context had changed, and non-discrimination and humanitarianism had become central themes in political discourse. The horrifying experiences of the war were still fresh in peoples’ memory, while at the same time a number of colonies were in the process of obtaining independence, and a culture for universal human rights was emerging¹⁶⁵. All of this contributed to creating a normative climate where discrimination on the basis of race and ethnicity became unacceptable in liberal democratic states (Joppke 2005: 49)¹⁶⁶. Calls to change the approach to immigration were voiced by an increasing number of domestic and international critics, such as the Canadian Council of Churches, various ethnic organizations, the Canadian Congress of Labor, and Canada’s Caribbean partners in the Commonwealth. Moreover, the Cold War produced a particular climate in which origin became second to political orientation, and the gatekeepers were focused on the communist threat, as Troper (1993: 263) put it.

The situation was not only uncomfortable on a domestic level. There was a problematic lack of coherence between Canada’s immigration policies and the government’s international efforts to cultivate the image of Canada as a progressive and liberal country. Signals of an inevitable shift were apparent in the government’s presentation at the UNESCO conference on ‘The Cultural Integration of Immigrants’ in 1956, which stated that Canada’s immigration policy should reflect Canada as a ‘society built on the ideas of individual worth and cultural differences’ (Berry 2013:

¹⁶⁴ However, the then Minister of Immigration also took the step of admitting a group of Palestinian refugees, as well as 37.000 Hungarian refugees of the 1956 uprising (Troper 1993)

¹⁶⁵ Also on a national level, for example through Canada’s adherence to the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* in 1948 (Leman 1999)

¹⁶⁶ This was a view that took hold in many countries in this period, including in Venezuela, where the ban on non-white immigration was lifted in 1945.

664). The presentation also stressed that the pressure of one group to assimilate the others was 'impractical' as a general theory (ibid).

The double moral related to immigration policies became even more blatant in the 1960 Commonwealth Conference debates over apartheid and South Africa's membership in the Commonwealth, during which the Canadian Prime Minister at the time, John Diefenbaker, strongly criticized racial discrimination (Triadafilopoulos 2012). His stance did not go unheeded by the critics of the immigration policies (Kelly and Trebilcock 1998). The same year the *Canadian Bill of Rights* was passed, in which human rights were recognized in a context of diversity, rejecting all discrimination based on race, religion, nationality or sexuality (Cardoza and Pendakur 2008). These events underscored that the end of discriminatory policies was overdue, and the problem could no longer be solved by a simple operation of adjusting categories and shuffling the lists of preferred classes. The principles underlying selection methods had lost their legitimacy and had to be dismantled; the shift would have to be radical.

At the same time, employers in the modern manufacturing industry underlined the need for *skilled* workers (Green and Green 2004, my italics). In this context, the obvious solution was to opt for an economically focused immigration policy. As Triadafilopoulos (2012) argues, the shift was not exclusively an economical move, but also related to the normative context that had rendered racial discrimination unacceptable. However, in the reigning climate of economic prosperity and technological development, the idea of the skilled worker as constituting the best settler for Canada was easier to embrace for most people. In this same period, the number of immigrants from Western Europe had dropped and skilled immigrants increasingly came from elsewhere. Yet, the situation apparently did not provoke the same kinds of anxious concerns with regards to the 'Canadian fabric' as it had in earlier times. The normative climate was one factor in this, but also new and highly popular media such as radio, TV and cinema which served to educate the population about people from the rest of the world and to counter narrow-mindedness (e.g. Hayday, in Allen and Robinson 2009). Following Haines (2013), then, the move to universal and non-biased criteria could be described as not only economically beneficial, but as consistent with broader beliefs, social conditions and ethical considerations in the Canadian society.

Unlocking the doors?

'Canada unlocks its doors to all who possess skills', a headline in the Toronto-based newspaper *the Globe and Mail* declared in January 1962 (Triadafilopoulos 2013). The article informed readers that the Diefenbaker government had finally decided to abandon the principle of nationality-based admission policies. In the future, immigration policies were to be steered in a non-biased way towards building human capital, stressing skills and schooling (Pendakur 2000). The minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Ellen Fairclough, emphasized the importance of having an immigration system that was planned and predictable, and mandated to select 'suitable, desirable and adaptable immigrants' who would represent an economic benefit to Canada and become 'worthwhile citizens' (Green and Green 2004: 116). A non-discriminatory selection was to be assured through the introduction of a universal regime in which all immigrants would be evaluated on the basis of their individual characteristics only. An Order-in-Council adopted in 1962¹⁶⁷ stated that admission should be granted to persons who *'by reason of his education, training, skills and other special qualifications is likely to establish himself successfully in Canada and who has the means to support himself until he is established'* (Green and Green 2004).

The new model represented a radical shift, but as we have seen, it can also be understood as a continuation of the consistent concern with bringing "the best possible settlers to Canada", as Minister Fairclough had phrased it in a 1962 speech (Green and Green 2004, see also Vineberg 2011). In 1963, a liberal government replaced the former conservative government and the new Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson was strongly in favor of immigration and convinced that training new immigrant workers would counter the problem of a surplus of unskilled workers. The point-based assessment system, the framework of immigration for the migrants in this study, was introduced under his government in 1967¹⁶⁸.

The government also merged the two existing departments dealing with immigration into the new Department of Manpower and Immigration, a move that was interpreted as a victory for

¹⁶⁷ P.C.86 (18 January 1962)

¹⁶⁸ And remained the in effect until January 2015.

those favoring the view of immigration as an immediate labor market policy (Green and Green 1999), rather than a long-term nation-building project.

A rallying cry

1967 was also the year that Canada celebrated its 100th anniversary. The most important commemorative project in the year-long celebration was the *International and Universal Exposition*, better known as *Expo 67*, held in Montreal from April to October. During the event, 60 countries participated, each with unique pavillions on a partly constructed island in the Saint-Lawrence river. An ambience of national pride washed over Canada and the Expo 67 was an immense success with over 50 million visitors¹⁶⁹.

The Expo 67 planners, Miedema (2005) writes, understood their project in the light of Canada's struggle for national unity. Author Gabrielle Roy, who participated in the group of intellectuals invited to brainstorm about the upcoming event, noted that the Expo 67 would permit '*the word "Canada" [to] re-echo throughout the world like a rallying cry and an invitation to friendship*' (cited in Kenneally and Sloan 2010). Significantly, the Canadian pavillion presented the country as one in which '*the many worlds of our people... are held together by the tenuous bonds of nationhood and a common love for liberty*' (Miedema 2005: 121). This vision was also displayed in an enormous spherical structure called the *People Tree*, which was described as representing both the diversity and the unity of Canada. Canada was presented as essentially pluralist, which was a whole new official self-understanding. Canada's projected self-image at the *Expo 67* can therefore be read as an attempt at changing the meaning of the word 'Canada', Miedema (2005: 114) suggests. In many ways, the *Expo 67* foreshadowed the official policy of multiculturalism that was adopted 4 years later, through which Canada's identity as essentially pluralist would be stated. Symbolically, there goes a line between the Railway and the Expo.

However, it has also been argued that the *Expo 67* unintentionally pushed forward the sovereigntist movement in Quebec (e.g. Curien 2006). In part this is often attributed to Expo guest and French President Charles de Gaulle's famous '*Vive le Québec libre!*' shouted from the City Hall balcony to a crowd of enthusiastic Quebecers. More importantly perhaps, according to Pauline Curien (2006) the *Expo 67* worked to produce a vision of Quebec as a modern

¹⁶⁹ Guide Officiel Expo 67

‘somebody’, which was crucial for the subsequent rapid growth in support for and belief in Quebec independence. Paradoxically, then, the *Expo 67* ended up strengthening the only real challenge to Canadian national unity.

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In this chapter I have discussed how categories of ideal migrants have been constructed historically through policy designs, practices and discourses. I have been concerned with how these processes and practices are as rooted in a long history of immigrant selection in Canada, and how this in turn reflects the larger project of nation building. In the next chapter I will explain how the selection of skilled immigrants work in practice and discuss its underlying logic. I also situate the Canadian model with regards to broader tendencies regarding migration management, and analyse recent policy developments and present goals.

6. Grains of Gold, Grains of Sand: Policies, practices and discourses of the skilled immigration program

If you want to live in Montreal you get 0 points. But if you go to live in Chicoutimi, or Sherbrooke, or other cities, you get 4 points. So if you are 4 points short, go to live in Chicoutimi, and after one year you move to Montreal. Quebec accords 4 points for each child under 12 years of age. So imagine, you have 2 children, that's 8 points right there! Or go to drive a truck in Saskatchewan, that will give you extra points! My job is to find all the possible ways. Because they exist. But we have to be updated constantly.

Gustavo

Points of Entry

Migrants are often defined as individuals who have moved from one country to another, that is, individuals who have crossed the boundary of a political or administrative unit for a certain minimum period of time. For example, in UNESCO's glossary the term migrant is understood as referring to '*any person who lives temporarily or permanently in a country where he or she was not born, and has acquired some significant social ties to this country*'¹⁷⁰. As we saw in the previous chapter, such movements are regulated by immigration policies and these can be seen to reflect ideas concerning who can or should become a member of the polity and not. So far I have discussed how shifting and contingent notions of desired and undesired new members have shaped Canadian immigration policies in the past. In this chapter I will examine how these notions play out with regards to contemporary migration policies¹⁷¹.

Contrary to the idea of the world as allowing for more mobility and circulation than ever, contemporary societies are increasingly bastions with borders and control, Walters (2006) has argued. However, borders are polysemic in the sense that they have differential effects on

¹⁷⁰ <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/international-migration/glossary/migrant/>
The website also notes that according to some states' policies, a person can be considered a migrant even when he or she is born in the country.

¹⁷¹ Until 2015

different groups of people (Balibar 2002). Border practices serve a double purpose for states; reasserting borders while at the same time making them selectively more difficult to cross (Bauman 1998, see also Alvarez 1995). State and international regulations and systems of surveillance play important roles for regulating and legitimating mobility and immobility. Glick Schiller and Salazar (2013: 7) propose the concept 'regimes of mobility' as analytical tool for the investigation of these. The Canadian skilled migration stream is an example of dual bordering practices and in the following I will therefore explain how the stream works and discuss some of its underlying assumptions. I will continue to approach policies and practices as representing ways of constructing categories of desired and undesired future citizens, also discursively, in ways that address both Canadians and prospective migrants. A central aim is also to show how the welcome reserved selected migrants is somehow rendered contingent on the 'ability to prosper' called for by the system. I will also look closer at changes implemented after the turn of the millenium and situate these within broader processes of restructuring referred to as neoliberalism. Many scholars have suggested that under neoliberalism, certain human qualities, skills and behaviours, such as self-sufficiency, self-management and responsibility are emphasized and valued (for example Barry et al 1996, Sennett 1998, Ong 2006, Freeman 2007, Miller and Rose 2008, Urciuoli 2008, Gershon 2011). Such ideas of ideal individuals also influence the notion of ideal immigrants (see for example Barber 2008, 2013, Barrass and Shields 2013, and Kilbride 2014). I therefore found it necessary to consider them as a potentially important context in the analysis of my informants' narratives of their migration trajectories, identity and belonging.

67 Points

I will begin by summing up the rationale of the point-based system for selecting skilled migrants. Those familiar with Canada's point-based skilled worker program know that 67 represent the score that candidates must meet or exceed in order to qualify for immigration¹⁷². As noted in the previous chapter, the selection model implemented in 1967 was presented as a 'universal, non-biased' way of selecting immigrants (Green and Green 1999). The shift was a move away from considering migrants on the basis of ethnicity, national origin or confessional background, towards a individualized focus on skills and professional background. As such, it represented a

¹⁷² In the initial point system the minimal requirement was 75 points, but this was lowered to 67 in 2003 (Verbeeten 2007)

novel approach to immigration based on what Schuck (1991: 25) has calls 'source country universalism'. It also meant that immigrants would be considered as individuals, and not as representatives of a larger group.

Immigration became oriented towards specific economic, social and humanitarian goals (Somerville and Walsworth 2009), however, it is the economic utility of immigration that is the baseline in the discourse around immigration in Canada, Bauder (2008) argues. The economic class immigration stream¹⁷³ embodies this pragmatic approach to immigration, and in particular, the Federal Skilled Worker Program (FSWP), where the merit-based system is embedded. The FSWP is the most important immigration program in terms of number of immigrants. It is explicitly defined as a strategy to meet the need for certain kinds of workers and select the individuals 'most likely to prosper in Canada'¹⁷⁴. The grid of points upon which selection is based thus represents specific qualities and experiences that is perceived as beneficial for social and economic integration.

The points in the grid, Green and Green (1995: 1108) write, give a concrete form to the main immigration policy goal, which is to '*calibrate the composition of immigrants to the skills and experience believed to be in demand in Canada*'. Through this model the regime seeks to single out the exact type of competence that the labour market lacks, while simultaneously seeking to minimize the probability that the immigrant will be needing financial assistance from the state. That is, it seeks candidates with the capacity for fast economic integration, who are thus expected to be economically independent and begin to contribute by paying taxes soon after arrival. Beyond consolidating the emphasis on the immigrant-as-worker, the immigration model also served to reorient intake towards an increasingly urban, post-industrial, and service sector economy, rather than a rural and agricultural (Boyd and Vickers in Verbeeten 2007). Canada was a pioneer with this model, but other countries have followed, some with almost similar models

¹⁷³ The economic class also includes programs for investors, entrepreneurs, self-employed, caregivers, a relatively new program for skilled trades workers, and the new Canadian Experience Class and Provincial Nominees program (see <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/immigrate/eligibility.asp>) These will be briefly described later in the chapter.

¹⁷⁴ <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/immigrate/skilled/apply-who.asp>

(i.g. Australia, New Zealand), others using elements of it (such as Japan, UK, Austria, and Denmark)¹⁷⁵.

Though by far the largest¹⁷⁶, economic class immigration is not the only path to immigration in Canada. The immigration model is constructed around three separate pillars of admission: economic class, family class and humanitarian class¹⁷⁷. The family class immigration stream, sometimes referred to as the 'social component', is made up of candidates sponsored by close family members. The third stream, sometimes referred to as the 'humanitarian component', consists of people in need of protection¹⁷⁸. This stream is the smallest in numbers, comprising around 20-30.000 individuals a year¹⁷⁹.

It should be noted that the proportional relationship between the streams is a matter of political decisions and does not reflect the number of received applications in the various categories. Shifting the proportional relationship is seen as a tool to achieve specific economic or political objectives. One example of this took place during the recession years of the 1990s, when the number of immigrants seeking recourse to welfare benefits from the state was augmenting (Simmons 2010). Up til then, immigrant intake had always been restricted in periods of recession, but in 1993 the immigration level was made independent of economic cycles (Verbeeten 2007, Kelley and Trebilcock 1998). Instead, policy makers decided to downscale family class and refugee class migration, and increase the economic class stream, from approximately 30 to 60% of total immigrants (Simmons 2010, see also Castles and Miller 2003: 91). The political

¹⁷⁵ Anwar 2014. It should be noted that while Australia and New Zealand implemented the point system already in 1973 and 1991 respectively (Chiswick and Miller 2014), the other countries mentioned above introduced their versions of the point-based model over the last decade, a period in which immigration in many of these countries has changed both in kind and quantity especially related to the EU expansion in 2004 and the free internal migration. A point-based selection of skilled immigrants is also part of the immigration reform bill that was passed by the US Senate in 2013, but that has not yet been debated in the House of Representatives.

¹⁷⁶ Over the last years the number of economic class immigrants have been around 160 000 per year (including spouses), which represents around 60% of all migrants. Source: Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov/law/help/points-based-immigration/canada.php>

¹⁷⁷ I refer here to the main streams. In the present system there is a total of 8 different immigration streams: i) Skilled workers and professional investors, ii) entrepreneurs and self-employed people, iii) provincial nominees, iv) Quebec selected skilled workers, v) Canadian Experience Class, vi) sponsored family, vii) live-in caregivers, and viii) refugees (Anwar 2014)

¹⁷⁸ There are three sub-categories in this group: i) State-sponsored refugees who are invited by Canada to seek refuge, ii) privately sponsored refugees who are selected and supported by voluntary groups, and iii) landed-in-Canada refugees who have arrived on their own account (Yu, Ouellet and Warmington 2007).

¹⁷⁹ <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/statistics/facts2014/permanent/02.asp>

reasoning behind this move was that economic class immigrants expectedly would be less likely to need financial assistance. The shift can therefore be seen as an effort to strengthen both the economic advantages of immigration as well as the welfare dependence statistics (Simmons 2010).

The move also exemplifies how skilled immigration is discursively constructed as an economic opportunity for Canada, though views on the economic benefit of immigration are divided¹⁸⁰. Different narratives exist about the role and effect of immigration, Bauder (2008) has noted. He identifies two main narratives in the debate of the economic utility of immigration, one that sees Canada as in a global competition for young, skilled immigrants; emphasizing the importance of being 'on the winning side', and another that sees immigrants as competing against Canadian-born in the labor market¹⁸¹ and that a tightly controlled immigration is necessary to protect the latter (2008: 138). He also points out the contrast between narratives that depict immigrants as victims of exploitation and deskilling, and narratives that present immigrants as a threat to Canada's economy. Nevertheless, all governments since the model was implemented have referred to immigration as positive for the national economy. According to Jeffrey Reitz (2014), this is part of the explanation why Canadians are generally positive to high levels of immigration, and it could be read as a way for governments to build social cohesion (e.g. Banting and Kymlicka 2006). I will come back to this in the next chapter.

Immigration of human capital

Focusing immigration on skills is a complex matter, not least due to the possible conflicts between short-term and long-term goals. From the outset the point system was designed to respond to short-term labour market needs in terms of occupations in demand (Ferrer et al 2014). The diagnosis of the demand situation were based on reviews of vacancies produced four times a year (Green and Green 1999). Immigrants, then, were selected primarily on the basis of their occupation and the model is therefore sometimes to as the 'occupations in demand' model (Ferrer et al 2014). 40% of the total points were based on '*predicted short-term success in the applicant's intended occupation and destination*' (ibid: 432). However, it turned out to be difficult to produce

¹⁸⁰ Some organizations have questioned the economic benefit of immigration, claiming for example that Canada already has a surplus of skilled workers (*Immigration's Flaws*, in *the National Post*, December 15, 2003)

reliable forecasts about occupations in demand since the labor market changed quicker than the selection procedures were able to adjust to, and the changes were often hard to predict. Another problem was that demand was often lagged by long application processing times which meant that by the time the immigrant obtained her or his permit, the need for their skills was perhaps no longer there (Green and Green 1999).

Moreover, as Canada's economy shifted from industrial to so-called post-industrial activity many of the traditionally important manufacturing jobs were lost (Fong 2009). In earlier times, industries had needed great numbers of workers and immigration was partly meant to fill this need. However, since the early 90s, labor market requirements have grown more complex as the new knowledge economy needed highly specialized workers (Biles et al 2008: 7). The present model of immigrant selection, often referred to as the 'human capital model' (Ferrer et al 2014), emerged in the 1990s in response to changes linked to the development of the knowledge economy, including new technology, fast changes, transactional work contracts increasingly replacing relational contracts, and new ways of organising and delegating work that require independent, disciplined and flexible workers. The knowledge economy, Reitz (2005: 414, 415) notes, relies on education-based skills and assessing immigrants' credentials - which previously had been essentially irrelevant - became critical to the success of the program. This development improved the bargaining power of a section of migrants (Robin Cohen 2006).

In 1995, the list of specific occupations was replaced in by a list of preferred training areas (Green and Green 1999). The development was an attempt to single out migrants who would presumably adjust well to structural (e.g. the growing knowledge work sector) as well as cyclical labor market changes. Hiebert (2006) claims that the immigration model's endorsement of general rather than specific competence was based on expectations that well-trained and flexible individuals with work experience are better equipped to handle the changing labour market circumstances. In 2002 the model was further adjusted in order to better identify the skills and experience of candidates presumed to have the 'ability to successfully move from job to job as the labor market changes' (Ferrer et al 2014: 6). The new Act stressed the importance of

education, language, experience and adaptability, and points in these categories were considerably increased¹⁸².

As mentioned, since the 1990s, the strategy has been to continue to admit high numbers of immigrants regardless of Canada's economic situation. The immigration level was set around 1% of the existing Canadian population level per year, which made Canada the country with the highest rate of legal immigration per capital in the world (Kelley and Trebilcock 1998: 386). According to Green and Green (1999) the strategy of continuing to admit high number of immigrants during economic recession periods could be interpreted as abandoning the short-term views of migration that had oriented the economic stream. The establishment of the new department of Citizenship and Immigration in 1993 could be interpreted along the same lines since the coupling of citizenship and immigration signals the primacy of the view of the immigrant-as-citizen rather than the immigrant-as-manpower. Not all scholars share this view, for example Bauder (2008: 133) who argues that the emphasis on skills in the selection process indicates that the short-term economic contribution of immigrants remains most important. The desired immigrant worker in the new labor market is just of a different kind than before. The distinction was made clear by former Minister of Immigration Ellinor Caplan in an interview with Toronto Star in 2001, where she stated that the 'hard-working blue collar immigrants who built the country' was a 'thing of the past' (Bauder 2011). Canada, according to Caplan, needed to raise the threshold to 'attract the world's best' (ibid).

The best and the brightest

The development also has a global dimension. Citizenship and Immigration Canada's overview of the Immigration Act of 2001 notes that '*Canada needs young, dynamic, well-educated skilled people. It needs innovation, ideas and talents (...) Immigration legislation must be adapted to enhance Canada's advantage in the global competition for skilled workers*' (CIC 2001:1, cited in Simmons 2010: 84). In newer literature on different migration regimes and skills- or merit-based migration, terms such as 'immigrant shopping', 'cherry-picking regimes' and the 'competition for global talent' have become commonplace to describe certain countries' strategies to attract skilled migrants. Policy makers of so-called immigrant shopping countries, with Canada as an

¹⁸² From 16 to 25 for Education, from 15 to 24 for Official Language, and from 8 to 21 for Experience (Begin, Goyette and Riddell 2010)

often mentioned example, conceive the world as a global labor pool, from which they seek to attract the best and the brightest (Robin Cohen 2006). The notion of 'immigrant shopping', Cohen (2006: 187) writes, implies that certain types of immigrants are solicited and encouraged to migrate, namely the ones who are expected to add on to the plus side of the economic calculation.

Indeed, the endeavour to attract skilled migrants is often expressed as a 'competition', where adversaries are other potentially attractive countries. One articulation of this situation is that the system contains active components; strategies to recruit migrants, such as for example informative and promotional events in what is seen as 'promising source countries'¹⁸³. With regards to the 'competition', Verbeeten (2007) notes that the significance of the fact that skilled migrants tend to originate from developing countries or from advanced societies disturbed by war, economic recession or political instability (Verbeeten 2007: 6). This situation is unsurprising, since individuals from very poor countries tend to be less likely to obtain enough points to qualify for immigration, whereas individuals from rich and peaceful societies have fewer incentives to emigrate. However, when developing countries develop, the competition for skilled workers increases, Verbeeten writes (ibid: 6). The paradox, then, is that by selecting individuals with the most skills, flexibility and ability to adapt in the global, transnational economy, Canada and other similarly minded countries are selecting those individuals with the least incentive to stay in any one spot (ibid: 6) and the consequence is a higher chance for return or onward migration (Verbeeten 2007). Indeed, in a study Aydemir and Robinson (2006) found that immigrants who are uneducated, married, non-Anglophone and of refugee status tend to outstay the educated, single, multilingual and entrepreneurial ones (cited in Verbeeten 2007: 7.) This is particularly problematic in the light of the way that the present system constructs skilled migrants as 'permanent' and low skilled as 'temporary', as I will discuss further below.

Another characteristic of skilled migrants is that they are often the ones who have the least to gain economically from changing country and starting all over. They typically belong in the higher social and economic strata of their societies and know that migration might very well imply a lowered social status and material living standards. Migration would represent an

¹⁸³ For example, several of the informants in this study had been won to the idea of migrating to Canada after attending such sessions.

economic loss for them, at least for the first few years. Therefore, immigration authorities emphasize other factors in the promotion of migration, such as for example life style, environment, leisure possibilities, education system, low levels of crime, and so on, and 'competing' countries largely compete on such factors. The strategy to attract skilled migrants has often been to insist on career opportunities while also placing a strong emphasis on the inviting country's other qualities. For example, the Canadian immigration authorities' pamphlets and websites are lined with pictures of beautiful nature, children practising sports, historical buildings, and crowds of ethno-culturally diverse and happy Canadians. Skilled workers, Biles et al (2008) write, are sought attracted through good physical, intellectual and social infrastructures, ranging from good roads to good universities, health care, education, and a peaceful, tolerant society (p 12). The strategy is to promote what Florida (2005) calls the 'quality of place', which in this context is meant to capture the characteristics of the day-to-day environment that skilled migrants might desire. An example that illustrates this is a little film on the website of Quebec's recently renamed Ministère d'Immigration, Diversité et Inclusion called *'What if your future was in Quebec?'* that ends with a number of callouts reading for example *'A unique culture and diversified leisure activities'*, *'A place to reach your full potential'*, *'A dynamic job market'*, *'The ideal environment for a family'*, and *'Information at your fingertips'*¹⁸⁴. Another example is a description of Canada that Simmons (2010: 91) found on the website of Citizenship and Immigration Canada's Manilla office, which - I will suggest - brings to mind Clifford Sifton's marketing campaign: *'(...) Canada has grown into a knowledge-based nation with world-class governance, corporations, culture and lifestyle. Canada prides itself on its stunning natural attractions and vast open spaces. Committed to education, the environment and health care for all, Canadians look to the future with confidence and optimism'*.

The federal skilled workers program¹⁸⁵

Before discussing the Canadian migration management further, I will explain more precisely how the skilled workers program functioned at the time of my informants' immigration¹⁸⁶. As noted,

¹⁸⁴ <http://www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca/placeauquebec/en/#/Home%20page>

¹⁸⁵ When defining 'skilled work' the immigration system relies on the National Occupational Classification matrix. Included in the skilled category are: Management occupations (skill level A), professional occupations requiring a university degree, and work requiring two or more years of post-secondary education, apprenticeship training or on-the-job occupation-specific training, or occupations with significant health and safety responsibilities (source: Statistics Canada: National Occupational Classification (NOC) 2011. Statistics Canada catalogue No.12-583-x (Ottawa: January 2012))

the point system introduced individual screening, where candidates represent and can be judged from nothing beyond their individual selves (Simmons 2010). In this sense, the system not only screens individuals; it turns them into *dividuals*. Each candidate represents a composition of skills, competences and personal qualities that are sought measured and weighed against the expectation of economic contribution and non-assisted integration. In the following we shall see how.

The present model operates with six selection factors; language skills, education, experience, age, arranged employment and adaptability. The grid contains a total of 100 points unevenly distributed in six different categories. Up to 24 points are assigned for English or French skills, which reflects the importance that language is expected to have for work force integration. At the time of my informants' immigration, candidates self-assessed their language skill level in the application form and was thereafter tested during the immigration interview. This meant that one could (as most did) tick off a higher level than one actually mastered at the time of submitting the application, and then work on 'getting there' until passing the interview much later¹⁸⁷. In the education category, candidates holding a Master's Degree or a Ph.D. could obtain up to 25 points, whereas completed high school was worth 5 points. Translated copies of their diplomas had to be submitted and these passed a comparative evaluation by 'experts' designated by Canadian or Quebecois authorities¹⁸⁸. Points are also awarded for work experience, where four years of experience in a full-time, permanent, paid occupation requiring a certain skill level equaled 21 points. The Federal Skilled Workers Program (FSWP) is also understood as a tool to counter the demographic challenges associated with Canada's aging population¹⁸⁹. Up to 10 age points are therefore awarded candidates who are between 21 and 49 years old. Candidates who can demonstrate that they have a job offer in Canada earn up to 10 additional points. Finally, there is

¹⁸⁶ Main sources for this part are CIC and MICC webpages, Reitz 2010, and the Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov/law/help/points-based-immigration/canada.php>

¹⁸⁷ 6-12 months later at the time of my informants' immigration. Note that in 2012 the system was changed, and applicants must now submit a proof of language level along with the application, which means that learning the language – which can be a matter of months, not to say years - must take place before applying, a measure meant to discourage some potential candidates.

¹⁸⁸ This has also been changed and now the validity of these as equal to a Canadian credential must be pre-assessed by an agency approved by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, which adds another round of paperwork and delays the process.

¹⁸⁹ Hence, applicants between 18 and 35 of age score the most age points, while those over 46 score no age points at all.

the category of 'adaptability' in which candidates can be awarded up to 10 more points. In this category previous experiences in Canada or family relations are emphasized, but points can also be given for, for example, a spouse's education.

As mentioned, successful applicants must pass the bar of 67 points. The points are relative to each other, and more weight is attached to certain factors over others. For example, points are skewed to favor young workers. In principle, the system is transparent and the CIC website offers an easy way to calculate one's score in advance; the *online point calculator*. However, when it comes to subjective categories such as 'adaptability', the points granted are much less calculatable in advance, and the score perhaps more often experienced as unfair¹⁹⁰. The system might also appear internally contradictory, for example regarding the value of work experience, which would favour older workers, set against the value of applicants' young age.

The point system described above is that of Canada, however, the informants in this study applied to Quebec. Since 1991, the province of Quebec has had full responsibility for selecting its own immigrants¹⁹¹. Quebec has its own point system that, for example, places greater emphasis on knowledge of French and also awards points for children¹⁹². Candidates who want to immigrate to Quebec must first apply to the province, and thereafter, to Canada. In spite of this 'double process', immigrating to Quebec has the reputation for being the faster option among immigrants, although I was not able to confirm this. Another advantage is that candidates admitted in Quebec can settle either there or anywhere in Canada, whereas candidates who have only applied to the federal government cannot without further ado settle in Quebec.

When my informants immigrated, the process for those applying to Quebec was as following: When submitting the application forms and all the certified supporting documents to the Quebec immigration authorities, candidates must also pay the non-refundable fee, which at the time of my informants' immigration was 750 CAD for the principal applicant and 160 CAD for the

¹⁹⁰ This situation is mention in a legal report from Library of Congress: <http://www.loc.gov/law/help/points-based-immigration/canada.php>

¹⁹¹ Quebec also has the full responsibility for settlement and integration services offered, including language training. The political context for this agreement will be discussed in the next chapter.

¹⁹² This is related to the aim of increasing the numbers of francophones in Quebec. Children of immigrants are obliged to attend French-speaking schools.

applicant's spouse and for each child. In addition, proof must be provided that the candidate has enough money at her or his disposal to cover expenses for the first three months. When my informants migrated, skilled migrants to Quebec must have at least 3000 CAD in their savings account on the day they arrive, a sum that is estimated to cover basic needs during the first three months.

The next step was the immigration interview, which candidates were required to pass approximately 6-12 months after submitting the application, depending on when a so-called 'selection mission' was scheduled in their region. The interview is where the feasibility of one's migration project is assessed, - including one's economic situation, work experience, presumed adaptability and personal suitability, and language skills. Evaluations of personal suitability is based on for example one's general knowledge of Quebec, knowledge of the job market and living expenses, one's plans when it came to accommodation, occupation, and integration, and having made contingency plans.

Candidates either pass or fail and the decision is immediate. Those candidates who passed the interview would then receive a document called the *Quebec Selection Certificate* and with this they could apply to Immigration Canada for a permanent residency visa, which entailed another round of filling in forms, supplying documents and paying fees¹⁹³. When Immigration Canada had processed the application, a medical exam was required, and also a transcript of one's police certificate. When the application was approved, a permanent resident visa was issued, with the condition that the receiver would 'land' (which means to cross a Canadian port of entry with the visa) within one year after the medical examinations has been completed.

Can migration be designed?

The question of whether or not immigration or ideal migrants can be designed through legal, bureaucratic and administrative categorization touches various ethical issues, that I discuss in chapters 5 and 7. However, the question also touches more 'technically' problematic issues. As Haince (2010: v) notes, the immigration apparatus has several constitutive elements, such as immigration institutions, legislative and statutory texts, policies, speeches, implemented

¹⁹³ 550 CAD for the principal applicant, 150 CAD for the spouse and for each child

procedures and measures, and the practices of employees within the institutions. The actions and messages of these are not always uniform or consistent, and practices may also end up to be contradictory to policy goals. The problem of back logs is one example of this. To achieve the overarching goal of fast labour market entry it is seen as imperative to fine-tune the point system as much as possible and screen candidates very carefully. However, this practice created a huge back log of applications¹⁹⁴, and in 2012 (after my fieldwork ended) a bill was voted under which nearly 280,000 people who had applied as skilled workers had their applications removed from the applicant pool. The bill was intended to eliminate the backlog, which policy makers worried would scare away the desired candidates who would not accept waiting for several years for a response. It would also possibly cause a situation where the need for applicants' skills were perhaps no longer pressing when he or she finally arrived. Scholars have pointed out that long processing time might also influence the choice of pathways. For example, Barber (2013) notes that some Philippino migrants who would have qualified for skilled immigration to Canada opted instead for the live-in caregiver program, because the process was much faster.

The government claimed that the measure was necessary in order to create a *'just-in-time immigration system that is responsive to Canada's economic needs'*¹⁹⁵. The bill was contested in vain by immigration lawyers who argued for example that *'[t]he changes seem to turn immigrants into economic commodities and don't appear to take into consideration the family and societal values immigrants who may be excluded under the changes could bring to Canada'*¹⁹⁶. Still in place, the bill's objective is to have eliminated the back log by 2016.

Arif Anwar (2014) discusses another problematic issue related to putting ideas into practice, namely the question whether potential economic contribution can really be measured¹⁹⁷. The point-based system is generally seen as an attempt to establish in a clear and transparent manner

¹⁹⁴ The backlog was estimated around 1 million in 2012 (http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2012/03/07/canada-immigration-jason-kenney_n_1327332.html)

¹⁹⁵ <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/media/notices/notice-qa.asp>

¹⁹⁶ <http://www.canadianlawyermag.com/legalfeeds/945/90-day-delay-granted-in-immigration-battle-over-bill-c-38.html>

¹⁹⁷ He also discusses the persisting problem of systematic biases against foreign trained workers, which I will come back to in the next chapter. The problem of underutilization of immigrants' skills has become a pressing issue (Reitz 2005). The problem, Reitz claims, is not related to skills levels but to the lack of recognition of these skills in the labor market (2005: 411). Therefore, the focus on careful selection is not producing the desired results. The problem of skills discounting or skills devaluation has also been discussed by Somerville and Walsworth (2009)

of assessing this, however, Anwar points at several inconsistencies in this regard. For example, the system awards points for education, and these increase monotonically with each additional year of education (ibid: 174). Yet, there is little evidence that the higher the education, the better one's chances are of finding employment. Indeed, a much-discussed theme in recent years has been the other obstacles that keep migrants from entering the labour force, such as discrimination, discounting of credentials, language barriers and lack of networks. 'Adaptability' is also a problematic construct, Anwar argues, as it is not clear precisely what it seeks to measure¹⁹⁸. Anwar further addresses some problematic aspects concerning the validity of the construct that the system seeks to measure, namely the potentially successful immigrant. For example, the point-based system is not able to assess intangible qualities such as social adaptability and emotional intelligence (ibid: 170), which are nevertheless crucial for both social and professional integration. In Anwar's words the point-based system is a 'well-meaning but flawed' attempt at making the ideal immigrant an entity that can be measured. As such, the practices reflect a tendency that is typical for our time and that exceeds the field of migration, namely the increased focus on objectification, standardisation, quantification and measurement that is sometimes referred to as the 'calculative turn'¹⁹⁹.

Freitas et al (2012: 2) critically assess the measurement of skills, pointing out that 'skills' are not neutral and universal, but dependent upon specific socioeconomic and political contexts. By looking at how policies of skilled immigration differ among each other, it becomes obvious that countries have diverging interpretations of the notion of 'skills'. In fact, the definition of skills is strongly based on existing labour market demands, and should not be understood as an assessment of 'skills per se' (ibid: 2). Yet, the authors note, few scholarly works actually problematize the conceptualization of skills. Moreover, the importance of personal attributes are generally overlooked, although *'sociologists have long argued that the 'labour market' is not a uniform and abstract system, but pervaded with social ties, networks, etc'* (ibid: 2). The increased importance of networks when it comes to finding employment is very relevant when it comes to skilled migrants, as it has been suggested that since they usually lack the social capital of

¹⁹⁸ As mentioned above, points in this category are awarded for example for previous experiences in Canada, family relations and spouse's education.

¹⁹⁹ Various dimensions of this has been discussed by for example Larsen 2010, Coombe 1998, Hochschild 2003, Garsten et al 2002, J. Røyrvik 2012, Almklov 2008, Giskeødegård 2013

networks that for example family migrants often have, they might not necessarily fare better than other immigrants in the labour market. Empirical examples can serve to demonstrate this porousness or fictionality of the boundaries between 'skilled' and 'unskilled' migration. Parts of the material presented in this study can be seen as a contribution to this discussion, in particular the focus on the significance of personal qualities and projects that escape the point-based assessment system.

Diversified paths of entry

Since the turn of the millennium, the immigration system has been reworked several times and according to Fleras (2014: 93), policies have changed both in terms of rationale, underlying assumptions, focus and anticipated outcome. The informants in this study encountered a system that was in a period of change and depending on the exact year they went through the process, different criteria applied. Some of the changes (i.e. the move towards transferrable and general skills) have already been commented upon. The new legislation introduced through the 2002 Immigrant and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) also implied more complex programs, with more players involved, Ferrer et al (2014) note.

Some main concerns that have oriented changes in recent years, are that of improving immigrants' economic outcome, of responding to regional labor market needs and to channel immigrants to regions and away from the largest cities (Ferrer et al 2014). However, instead of trying to achieve new objectives by manipulating the point system, the government has opted for developing new immigration programs (ibid). For example, the Canadian Experience Class programme was created in 2008, partly in response to criticism over newcomers' lack of Canadian human capital²⁰⁰. The program is aimed at skilled workers who have worked in Canada recently as temporary workers, and gives them an opportunity to obtain status as permanent resident. It also targets international students who have completed a university degree in Canada and grants some of these a post-graduate work permit for up to three years, which gives them the possibility to qualify for either the Provincial Nominee program (described below) or the Canada Experience Class later. The CEC program thus represent an attempt to retain talented students, and is an attempt to capitalize on migrants' skills and prior experience from Canada. The

²⁰⁰ The issue of employers asking for Canadian work experience represented a common frustration among my informants.

underlying assumption is that these are somehow already integrated and therefore will find work easier, which should be seen in relation with the perception that a significant reason why skilled immigrants may find it difficult to find work is that they lack the insight into the local contexts and the local networks that f.ex. sponsored immigrants have.

With regards to the proportional shift and the increased number of skilled migrants, Somerville and Walsworth (2009: 147) suggest that while previous cohorts of immigrants could rely on migrant networks for information, the more recent cohorts appearantly have no such safety net²⁰¹. This was generally the case for my informants, who in many ways were pioneers of a new migration trend. However, even in cases where migrant networks exist, scholars have suggested that the information that travels back to family members is often skewed by immigrants who try to boost their status (Levitt 2001, Mahler 1995). This is perhaps less problematic in the case of skilled migration, since skilled migrants often do not have family members at the destination and tend to rely more on colleagues and friends who have less interest in giving skewed information (Meyer 2001). Moreover, one might argue that the internet, especially discussion forums, blogs, and various social media, to some extent make up for the 'lost' migrant networks.

Since 1996 there has also been a special immigration program called the Provincial Nominee program, which allows provinces to nominate foreign candidates for work permits, based on criteria set by the province itself. Initially used by a small number of immigrants, the program increased dramatically between 2004 and 2009, according to Kelly et al (2011)²⁰². The intention with this program is to address labour market needs in regions outside of the largest migrant hubs; the metropolitan areas of Toronto, Vancouver and Montréal. However, Kelly et al (2011) note that most applicants have the intention of settling in metropolitan areas. The processing time is shorter than the regular FSWP, since it is supposed to address short-term needs and recently the restrictions on eligible occupations as well as the cap on the number of accepted candidates have been lifted (Fudge and MacPhail 2009). A significant new dimension is that candidates must be nominated for permanent residence from an employer, which means that the program is employer-driven rather than government-driven.

²⁰¹ For discussions of the emergence and role of migration networks see f.ex. Basch et al 1994, Massey et al 1993, Rouse 1992.

²⁰² 12% of all landings in 2009, according to the authors.

Other recently launched programs include the Federal Skilled Trades program (introduced in 2013), in which immigrants are selected on the basis of recent experience in one of the trades considered to be in demand (at the time of writing this, there are 43 such trades) and on the basis of language skills. There is also the much-debated live-in caregiver program, through which candidates working with childcare or eldercare in private homes can apply. The program is heavily dominated by Philippine women, and has attracted much attention from feminist activists who have pointed at criteria of the program leave these women vulnerable for oppression and exploitation (see for example Barber 2008: 1273). Another critique is that in order to qualify, caregivers deliberately deskilled themselves (ibid). Strong engagement eventually pushed immigration authorities to grant caregivers the possibility for permanent residency, in a way that did not force them to remain in unacceptable working conditions²⁰³.

Another significant change in the immigration system is the growing importance of Temporary Worker programs, which I shall discuss more in detail below. Finally, through the 'Ministerial Instructions' legislation of 2008, the federal government was granted greater authority when it comes to controlling the occupational mix of immigrants by for example creating lists of eligible occupations and setting a cap for immigrants in various categories (Hall and Sadouzi 2010). However, the list of occupations is based on a non-transparent approach, Ferrer et al (2014:13) claim, and this makes it difficult to know why changes are made and difficult to predict which occupations will be on the next lists²⁰⁴.

Some general tendencies can be read from the developments described so far. First, in addition to the point-based system, several programs have been introduced²⁰⁵. The new programs, Simmons (2010) notes, are part of the goal of diversifying the range of entry doors and make the system more flexible. Moreover, they increase the role of provincial governments in the selection of

²⁰³ Thus, according to Stasiulis and Bakan (2005, in Leach 2013), having the positive effect of turning it into a possible migration pathway for Third World women that does not involve men as sponsors.

²⁰⁴ In 2008 there were 36 occupations on the list, in 2010 there were 29 (Ferrer et al 2014). In May 2014 the list was extended to 50 occupations (www.cic.gc.ca/english/immigrate/skilled/complete-applications.asp)

²⁰⁵ In addition to those described, there are also for example the Venture Capital Pilot Program for investors, and the Start Up Visa Program targeting '*immigrant entrepreneurs with the skills and potential to build innovative businesses in Canada that can create jobs for Canadians and compete on a global scale*' (<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/immigrate/business/start-up/>)

immigrants (with the exception of Quebec who has largely selected its own immigrants since 1991²⁰⁶). The Canadian Experience Class program and the Temporary Foreign Worker program represent a shift that grants non-governmental actors, such as employers and educational institutions, a more important and active role in manipulating the criteria of immigration.

On January 1, 2015, a new and completely electronic process of immigration selection called *Express Entry* was introduced. Through this new system, candidates complete an online profile where they list their skills, experience, language abilities, education and 'other details'²⁰⁷. Qualified candidates become accepted into a pool of candidates, and *Employment and Social Development Canada's* Job Bank will then try to connect candidates with potential employers. A job offer equals points and based on these, the highest-ranking candidates in the pool will then be invited to apply for permanent residence. The new system bears many resemblances with the way candidate pools for job seekers operate, perhaps more than with traditional immigrant selection. For example, whereas in the old system applications were processed in the order of reception, the new system fast-tracks most-desired candidates. However, since the system was not in place when my informants immigrated, I will not go further into it here.

Neoliberalization of immigration policies

A common reading of the recent developments of Canadian immigration policies is that they are expressions of a broader neoliberal shift in the contemporary moment (see for example Abu Laban and Gabriel 2002, Barber 2008, Bauder 2008, Dobrowolsky 2013, Leach 2013, Barrass and Shields 2013, Root et al 2014). Briefly summed up, neoliberalism is founded on the belief in the beneficial effects of unhindered competition and free markets and therefore privileges the interest of private businesses, favors reductions in public expenditures (f.ex. social programmes), and is committed to privatization and deregulation (see f.ex. Rose 1999, Harvey 2005, Stanford 2008)²⁰⁸. Within the neoliberal discourse, the logic and terminology of the market is made relevant, even constructed as inevitable, in a growing number of sectors in society where ideas such as 'production' and 'profitability' were previously considered irrelevant, for example the

²⁰⁶ Reitz 2012: 100.

²⁰⁷ <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/express-entry/>

²⁰⁸ It should be noted that anthropologists in particular have pointed out that neoliberalism is not an overarching, unified, coherent global trend, but must be studied in its local manifestations (Gershon 2011)

education sector and the health sector (Bauder 2008: 131, see also Brown 2005)²⁰⁹. With regards to immigration, short term economic value shapes the basis for inclusion and exclusion, Barrass and Shields (2013) argue. Bauder (2008: 131-132) suggests that the discourse of policy-makers has become dominated by an increasingly narrow and predominantly economic focus, outlining a model in which immigrants should be selected on the basis of making national economies more competitive while limiting the cost of immigration. Although Canada's immigration policies - as discussed in the previous chapter - have always considered the economic contribution of potential immigrants, this contribution is now expected to be immediate. In contrast with the immigration-as-nation building of earlier times, the regime now seeks to build a flexible work-force focused on a 'just-in-time' competitive immigration system (Barrass and Shields 2013: 5).

Canadian immigration policies, Barber (2008: 1276) suggests, in keeping with neoliberal agendas of privatisation, has opened up for private actors, such as employers, to influence terms of entry (p. 1276). The new diversified programs described above (and also in the final part of the chapter) illustrate this well. Immigration patterns are 'marketized', Dobrowolsky (2013: 198) claims. She suggests that the neoliberalisation of the Canadian immigration policy is distinguishable through its present policy objectives: To attract highly skilled immigrants, to expand low wage and temporary foreign workers programs, to diversify immigration 'entry doors' and make some more flexible, to cut admission and settlement costs, to encourage settlement in less-populated areas, to tighten border controls and crack down on undocumented migrants, to change citizenship rules to reduce risks of undesired costs and unrealized benefits to the state, and to sell immigration to the Canadian public through a policy rhetoric that emphasizes the hoped-for benefits of immigration while downplaying risks and disappointing outcomes (2013: 197)

The development also affects ideas about the qualities of desired candidates. Scholars writing about neoliberalization often note that it is premised upon individuals who understand themselves as responsible for their own destiny and wellbeing, and who are inclined to perform self-regulating activities (see for example Ulleberg 2006). The impact of neoliberalism on individual selves is radical, according to some. For example, Brown (2003) suggests that neoliberalism 'may

²⁰⁹ New Public Management practices are often located in this frame (see f.eks. Krause Jensen and Garsten 2014)

even have reshaped subjectivities - their sense of self, their sense of agency, and their identities and solidarities'. This is related to the erosion of social bonds, which according to Lane (2011, in Kymlicka 2013: 99) leaves people *'to fend for themselves (...) in an increasingly insecure world'* (). The setting is also shaped by the withdrawal of the state in many sectors of society where individuals were previously taken care of. This neoliberal subject is therefore often referred to as 'responsibilized' or as 'entrepreneurs of their own destiny' in the sense that he or she is seen as *'the basic constitutive active agent in the construction of his or her fate and society-at-large'* (Krause Jensen and Garsten 2014: 4). The new neoliberal self, Gershon (2011) suggests, 'manages itself as a business', rather than 'owns itself as a property'. In the latter version, individuals are seen as owning their capacity to labour, which they can sell in the market. In contrast, the neoliberal individual is *'a collection of assets that must be continually invested in, nurtured, managed, and developed'* (Martin 2000: 582, cited in Gershon 2011).

In this context, one might expect that the looked-for qualities of ideal immigrant also change. Barber (2008: 1265) writes that neoliberalism is *'associated with hyper-mobility for capital and for certain people with the right social and cultural attributes'*. As we have seen, the point system constructs ideal migrants by defining desired attributes and ascribing them a specific and relative worth. In the Foucauldian reading that many writers of neoliberalism adopt, the practice could be understood as a way of structuring the migrants' fields of action. As noted in chapter 3, Foucault (1988) saw this as a modern way of governing that aims at individual self-governing²¹⁰. Many writers concerned with neoliberalism have picked up these ideas and the notion of the self-governing, responsibilized and enterprising self has been explored by a number of scholars (see f.ex. Barry et al 1996, Sennett 1998, Ong 2006, Freeman 2007, Miller and Rose 2008, Urciuoli 2008, Gershon 2011). Some migration scholars have also applied them in analysis of present notions of the ideal migrant (Barber 2008, Barrass and Shields 2013). Barrass and Shields (2013: 14) suggest that the notion of the ideal immigrant has been redefined along a neoliberal value system and can now be defined as *'one who is thoroughly self-sufficient and takes responsibility through their work ethic and resilience for their own and their families' well-being (...)'*. The present perception of migrants, the authors write, is shaped as a duality between desirable and undesirable based on their 'virtue' in this value system. While immigration policies have been

²¹⁰ For a thorough discussion of Foucault's theory of power, see for example Anthon 2013.

reshaped along these lines for a longer period, the tendency has exacerbated in the aftermath of the so-called 'Great Recession' of 2008. In many countries, especially in Europe, the present moment represents one in which immigration and multiculturalism have become targets of political attack. However, as Hampshire (2013: 11, in Barrass and Shields 2013) notes, immigrant labour has become essential for the effective working of advanced capitalism. For example, policy makers need to consider the issue of aging populations, shifting labour market needs and the global competition for skilled migrants (Barrass and Shields 2013: 2). In Canada, Barrass and Shields writes, immigration continues to be seen as central to restore prosperity and neoliberal policymakers therefore seek to *'direct the more extreme right-wing anti-immigrant sentiment in the direction of a discourse on 'good' versus 'bad' immigration'* (ibid: 4). In the context of the austerity agenda, discourses have increasingly centred on 'morality' and 'virtue', personal responsibility and individual self-sufficiency. Thus, immigrants are also constructed as deserving or undeserving, based on perceptions of them as contributors or as burdens on taxpayers (ibid)²¹¹.

The focus on and celebration of the self-reliant and self-managed 'good immigrant' sets its imprint on Canadian immigration policies in several ways. The desired immigrant projected through the immigration authorities' rhetoric is one who *'embraces the virtues of self-sufficiency, hard work, and effective and efficient labour market participation'* (ibid). Along these lines, immigration is also presented as a 'do-it-yourself project', where the candidate her/himself is responsible and accountable. The list of guides and pamphlets available on or from the CIC website is becoming long, and access to necessary information online is ever-increasing. While it is to be expected that the possibilities offered by the internet in this respect are developed, it is a trend that can also be located in a larger frame of privatization and of positing integration as a personal responsibility of migrants (Kilbride 2014), which I will discuss with regards to my ethnography in chapter 9. The accompanying cuts in settlement and integration services support this view.

The qualities of the ideal neoliberal immigrant can, of course, hardly be translated into points in the points-based system. One might therefore expect that for example the immigration interview becomes a significant arena for the assessment and the display of these qualities. Self-

²¹¹ The same process has been studied in the Danish context by Jørgensen and Thomsen 2013

presentation thus becomes a particularly crucial skill. The migration system's rhetoric works to clarify these 'unmeasurable' qualities that desired candidates should possess, while simultaneously providing candidates with a model and a vocabulary that they should master in order to improve their chance of being selected. Candidates thus seek to present themselves as having particular identities, 'foregrounding what they have learned to be desirable qualities' (Barber 2013: 1268). For example, in the light of the increased emphasis on immediate economic contribution, one might expect that candidates will try to present themselves as 'ready-made' for immigration, rather than only 'promising'. This trend is relevant not only with regards to the question of being selected for entry, but for the future prospect of becoming a Canadian citizen. I will conclude this chapter with a discussion of these issues.

High-skilled permanent, low-skilled temporary

One feature of post-industrial economies is the development of dual labor markets (see f.ex. Sassen 1998), cleaved between high-skilled, high income jobs and low-skilled, low-income jobs. Reflecting this development, migration regimes typically embrace the mobility of high-skilled workers, while they seek to prevent, or render impermanent and less attractive, the migration of low-skilled workers. As noted in the introduction chapter, many scholars have commented the polarization of global migration into a stream of low-skilled migrants mostly met with a closed door or temporary work permits associated with insecurity and weak legal protection, and a stream of highly mobile skilled migrants received with open arms - even actively recruited - by an increasing number of countries. As argued elsewhere, contemporary notions of ideal migrants lean on economic arguments that cast skilled as beneficial and low skilled as likely economic burdens (Faraday 2012)²¹². Migrant workers in occupations that require less formal education are therefore legally constructed as 'temporary', Faraday (2012: 3) notes, even though labour shortages in these occupations might be chronic. Accepting low-skilled immigrants for permanent residency is often presented as placing a 'strain on the public purse'. In contrast, the system provides '*numerous pathways to permanent residence for economic immigrants in professional, managerial or other occupations designated as "skilled"*' (ibid: 4). The various path of entry referred to above can therefore be divided in two main paths, one leading to permanent residency and citizenship, the other positing low skilled workers as temporary and

²¹² Human Resources and Skills Development Canada defines as low skilled workers those who have no more than high school diploma or 2 yeras of occupation-specific training

disposable (Barrass and Shields 2013, Bauder 2011). This implies an increased importance of *form* of immigration, compared to earlier times when all forms typically led to settlement. Leach (2013) argues that policies have shifted from being based on a belief in the long-term value of immigrants as full Canadian citizens, to a belief in non-permanent immigration serving to fulfill short-term labor market needs.

The use of temporary workers programs have grown massively in recent years²¹³ and since the Conservatives of Stephen Harper came to power there have been more temporary migrants coming to Canada each year, than those selected for permanent residency (Abu-Laban 2013, see also Fudge and MacPhail 2009). Akbari and MacDonald's (2014) describe the temporary migration programs as a 'large-scale labour pool for employers'.

Temporary immigration programs are not a new invention, though. They were created in 1973 (Fudge and MacPhail 2009) and were at that time mainly oriented to channel workers to the agricultural sector and for work as live-in-caregivers (then called *live-in domestics*). The programs represent an employer-driven immigration stream, where the number of admitted migrants are not set by quotas but determined by employers' needs²¹⁴. The programs are the joint responsibility of two departments; *Human Resources and Skills Development Canada*, focusing on the impact on the labour market and deals with employers, and *Citizenship and Immigration Canada*, assessing the suitability of the migrant worker with regards to obtaining a temporary visa. The latter includes refusing visa for low skilled candidates believed to have so-called 'dual intent', that is, an intention of settling permanently (Fudge and MacPhail 2009: 8-9²¹⁵)

The low skilled migration stream has been reworked several times over the years²¹⁶. In 2002, the Liberal government introduced the Low Skilled Pilot Project aimed to help employers fill positions in the tar sand industry in Alberta and the construction industry in Toronto and Vancouver. The programs, Leach (2013) notes, brought workers to Canada quickly but their

²¹³ According to Griffith 2013, the number of temporary foreign workers in Canada nearly doubled between 2005 and 2012. In contrast, the number of permanent has remained stable.

²¹⁴ It must also be authorized by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, that requires that employers have already tried to recruit Canadians for the job.

²¹⁵ for discussions of temporary worker programs, see f.ex. Basok 2013, Preibisch 2012).

²¹⁶ Human Resources and Skills Development Canada defines as low skilled workers those who have no more than high school diploma or 2 years of occupation-specific training

possibilities of obtaining permanent residency was limited²¹⁷. For example, barriers such as financial requirements have been raised in order to make it difficult for temporary low skilled workers to bring families with them, thus functioning as a way to prevent permanent settlement. This contrasts greatly to the situation for skilled workers, who find that Canada encourages them to bring their spouses, for example by offering them open work permits.

Faraday (2012) note that the evolution of temporary migration programs shows a progressive stepping down in governments' commitment to workers and that the relationship between workers and employers are increasingly privatized (2012: 4). The flexibility for employers have been increased, she argues, and with it the insecurity for workers (ibid). Thus, low-skilled jobs are associated with what is often referred to as the 'rise of precariousness' (Barrass and Shields 2013). According to Martin, Abella and Kuptsch (2006) such jobs tend to be insecure, low-paid and thus unattractive for permanent residents (i.e. jobs in what Sassen (1990) calls 'secondary sectors', see also Abella 2006). Indeed, a growing number of examples of exploitation by scrupulous employers have been reported (Akbari and MacDonald 2014, Faraday 2012). In Canada several organizations and labor unions have voiced concern over their weak legal protection and have mobilized to support them. Workers have also been exploited by recruitment agencies demanding exorbitant fees or neglecting to fulfill their obligations related to their clients' work permits, or even engaging in human smuggling. Fudge and MacPhail (2009) note that Canada, like many other receiving countries, has not ratified the ILO and UN conventions that give temporary migrant workers rights, only those that criminalize trafficking (2009). They also argue that the measures that the government has put in place in order to ensure workers rights are 'neither well developed nor effectively enforced' (2009: 43). Abella (2006) argues that the advantages of this on the part of the state is to provide flexible labor (and thus satisfy employers), to make immigration politically acceptable for sceptical voters, and to eliminate problems related to settlement and integration (Abella 2006, in Leach 2013).

Especially with regards to seasonal workers, the development could be seen as a return to nationality-based selection. As Western states try to attract the right kind of immigrants to fulfill

²¹⁷ The best hope to obtain permanent residency for temporary low-skilled workers is by seeking transfer to Provincial Nominees contracts.

economic and demographic objectives, Barber (2013) writes, certain nationals are cast as particular kinds of immigrant labour. This is particularly the case for the group she studies, Philippine immigrants, who are closely associated with the live-in caregiver category. Moreover, this category of immigration is also clearly gendered.

The shift have also had consequences for long-established traditions of immigration that established close ties between (sites in) Canada and certain other places. One such example is described by Leach (2013), who has studied the Trinidadian tradition of emigration and settlement in Canada. The recent changes have turned immigrants from Trinidad into temporary workers, a situation they experience as both humiliating and inappropriate. The new logic, Leach writes, is no longer about complete social and economic relationship, creating a web of connections between sending and receiving societies together, rather it has become more economic and less humane.

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In this chapter I have examined the policies and practices of the Canadian immigration system, and addressed the shifting premises it is based upon, especially focusing on policy developments and goals that were the context of my informants' migrations. I approach these policies and practices as articulations of the ideas of ideal and unwanted migrants. They concern the polity's outer boundary and can thus be seen as expressing ideas of who can and who cannot become members of the polity. Inside the polity, other dimensions play in on negotiations of belonging, for example integration policies and discourses of national identity. In Canada, these are articulated primarily through the official multiculturalism policy. In the following chapter I will therefore discuss this policy and its influence on how for example nation and integration is conceptualized.

7. Diversity as Identity. Canada's Multiculturalism policy.

Multiculturalism as national identity

My mother always said, you are *latino* and that is not well perceived in those countries. Canada will be the best option. In Europe you will be a second-class citizen.

Carlos

Over the last years, immigration and integration have been topics of fierce debates in Europe. In particular, the formerly celebrated notion of multiculturalism has suffered a backlash that has translated into a range of events such as for example the rise of rightwing movements and European leaders Angela Merkel, David Cameron, and Nicolas Sarkozy univocally confirming the failure of multiculturalism²¹⁸. Multiculturalism policies have been rejected both by rightist movements who argue that the accommodation of diversity has gone too far, and by centre-leftists who think that the policies have failed to actually support minorities (Kymlicka 2010: 97-98).

Canada, however, seems to have dodged this backlash. Although European concerns have at times spilled over in Canadian debates, the popular support for multiculturalism remains high and Canadians are generally confident about the state of ethnic relations in the country (Banting and Kymlicka 2010: 43). This chapter will look closer at this so-called Canadian paradox, by examining the background, agendas and underlying premises of the Canadian multiculturalism policy.

According to sociologists Hamaz and Vasta (2009: 7) political discourses, policies and practices represent systems of exclusion and exclusion defining the terms and nature of belonging to the

²¹⁸ This took place in 2011 (See for example Jura 2012)

nation-state. The previous two chapters dealt with these dimensions with regards to immigration, by exploring different aspects and shifting concerns of the policies and formal frameworks that define the kind of individuals that are allowed to settle and become Canadian citizens. However, Hamaz and Vasta (2009) also point to another significant dimension of belonging, namely the idea of who can *feel comfortable* here. The discursive landscape that immigrants encounter upon migrating plays a crucial role in this. In this chapter I will explore this dimension, by discussing Canada's official policy of multiculturalism, as well as dominant ideas related to integration and social equity. Policy discourse, Root et al (2014: 16) note, can be understood as the ability to define the policy paradigm and is thus critical for how issues related to immigration comes to be discussed, debated and understood within society. In this perspective, Canadian multiculturalism can be seen as a discourse that establishes a 'common sense' about how we comprehend and define for example 'Canadians', 'national identity', 'national belonging', and 'integration'.

In spite of its now close association with Canada's national narrative or identity, the policy of multiculturalism was 'unintended', geographer David Ley (2007) writes. Its development must be understood as related to the immigration model implemented in 1967, in which ethnicity and creed was replaced with skills and credentials as main criteria for entry. The new model opened up for immigration streams from so-called 'non-traditional source countries' and therefore came to lay the fundament for Canada's very ethnically diverse population today (Triadafilopoulos 2012: 28). The shift away from ethnicity-based selection of immigrants occurred against the historical backdrop of an emerging international human rights culture²¹⁹ and the process of decolonialization. Significantly, the same period was also characterized by a domestic political effort to build and strengthen Canadian national identity and loyalty, since Canada's ties to England - including the perception of Canadians as British subjects – had waned after the Second World War. A number of institutions intended to foster national identity and unity were established, such as for example the Canadian citizenship in 1947 and the Canadian flag superseding the Union flag in 1965.

According to political scientist Allan Cairn (1998), all Canadian governments after the war were engaged in the endeavour to strengthen a collective Canadian identity (see also Anderson and

²¹⁹ For a more detailed discussion of this, see for instance Kymlicka 2007.

Black 2008). However, as sociologist Richard Day (1998) notes, Canadian national identity was consistently understood as problematic and as something to be constructed, and the most significant challenge inherent in this respect was the management and accommodation of the country's ethno-cultural diversity. According to Day (ibid), the management of diversity, including the question of what constitutes a relevant diversity; can be said to represent the central axis around which ideas of Canadian national identity and belonging circulate.

Diversity was nevertheless conceived of as the very essence of the idea of Canada in popular imaginaries (Younger in Singh and Hawley 2012, see also Day 1998), and eventually this was also reflected in concrete policies. In 1971, the government proposed multiculturalism as the answer to the question of Canadian identity, by adopting a formal multiculturalism policy that framed ethnic diversity as legitimate and integral to Canadian society (Kymlicka 2010, Leman 1999). The policy was the world's first officially sanctioned multiculturalism policy (Biles, Ibrahim and Tolley 2010). Its stated objectives include promoting the understanding of multiculturalism as a fundamental characteristic of Canadian heritage and identity, and promoting multiculturalism as an invaluable resource in shaping Canada's future (Hyman et al 2011). That is, the official multiculturalism is meant to be both descriptive and prescriptive.

This chapter will explore the different meanings, agendas and consequences related to the notion of multiculturalism, focusing particularly on the connection between immigration and the notion of national identity and belonging as seen through the lens of the multiculturalism policy. In accordance with Joppke and Lukes' (1999) claim that '[t]here is no multiculturalism *tout court*', only 'specific, context-dependent multicultural problematics' (1999: 16), I will seek to trace the historical, popular and ideational underpinnings of the multiculturalism concept in the Canadian context. Multiculturalism can be said to be a 'fuzzy concept'²²⁰ and its meanings have continuously been debated since the policy's inception. I will address this 'fuzziness' by looking critically at the various meanings ascribed to multiculturalism by social movements, in policies, public debates, academic writing and political formations. I shall also examine some of the critique that has been voiced against the multiculturalism policy. As the chapter title suggests, I

²²⁰ In line with Lakoff's (1973) use of the concept. Likewise, Stuart Hall (2001: 3) describes multiculturalism as referring to a diffuse, spongy and imprecise discursive field.

take the question of diversity to concern not only the different ways it can be managed, but as related to how ideas of relevant differences are produced and the forces that drive this process. I will therefore also examine the concept of multiculturalism with regards to the ontology, production and salience of differences.

Ideas and discourses related to diversity and the management of diversity shape the environment in which migrants seek to realize their different life projects. I suggest that in Canada multiculturalism comprises the framework within which public and political notions of desirable immigrants are positioned and should be interpreted. Moreover, the association between multiculturalism and Canadian identity enables newcomers to ‘narrate themselves in’, in the sense that being ‘Canadian’ is not perceived as an essentialist or geographically rooted identity, but as something one can endeavour to obtain²²¹. This dimension, which I will briefly introduce here, will become more evident in the analysis of my informants narratives in chapter 7.

The nation project

The new immigration model of 1967 shattered the foundation of ‘white Canada’, political scientist Triadafilos Triadafilopoulos (2012: 16) writes. By opening the door to immigration for non-Europeans it turned Canada into one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world (Bélanger and Malenfant 2005, Castles and Miller 2003:75). Central elements of the previous nation-building project were abandoned, most importantly the insistence on cultural homogeneity. This, it can be argued, represented a shift in the understanding of diversity. As Castles and Miller (2003: 14) write, ‘the social meaning of ethnic diversity depends to a large extent on the significance attached to it by populations and states of the receiving countries’ (see also Gullestad 2001: 37). Day (1998:55) notes that the challenge related to accepting immigrants was no longer understood as a matter of preventing diversity from arriving to Canada, but as a problem of how to weld the newcomers into good Canadians²²². The seemingly conflictive objectives that politicians now sought to attain were on the one hand the accommodation of diversity and on the other hand uniting the population around ‘the nation’ as a collective project.

²²¹ In chapter 7.3 I discuss further how the understanding of Canadian identity as open and in the making, combined with a strong focus on merit when it comes to immigration, can produce sentiments among immigrants that Canadianness is something deserved or achieved.

²²² Although assimilation and educating immigrants had long been a concern, as evidenced in Woodworth’s *Strangers Within Our Gates* (1909)

While this situation was perhaps not new *per se*, the ‘diversity of the diversity’ was²²³. Moreover, the direction of the nation building project no longer seemed so obvious: The pressure from increasingly mobilized francophones in Quebec and increasingly assertive aboriginal people was making it evident that projecting nation building on a culturally monolithic Anglo-Canadian model was untenable (Leman 1999).

Canada has always been marked by rather clear dividing lines, Abu-Laban (2013) argues, between the indigenous and the settlers, English and French, immigrants and native-born, white and non-white. Janine Brodie (2002) notes that Canada therefore lacks a foundational myth, a story locating the origin of a nation. This is not a uniquely Canadian condition, but one it shares with a number of other settler countries. Instead, these countries try to invoke a common destiny, a destiny often expressed through metaphors, such as for example ‘the melting pot’ in the U.S. or the ‘mosaic’ in Canada (Stasiulis and Yuval-Davis 1995). Karen Pashby (2014: 10) makes the similar argument that ‘the notion that Canada’s unique national identity is built on a long history of pluralism and acceptance of cultural and religious diversity remains a core concept in the mosaic discourse.’ Ideas surrounding Canadian nationhood, then, are influenced by the impossibility of a homogenous society. Multiculturalism, sociologist Jade Boyd (2012) maintains, should therefore be understood as a component of Canada’s national narrative, given that diversity and the presence of an ‘Other’ always coloured the collective consciousness. Moreover, as sociologist Tariq Modood (2007: 47) has noted, in places where multiculturalism has been accepted as a state project it is usually integral to a larger nation-building project.

The Canadian policy of multiculturalism was brought forth by a concurrence of several processes, and should in particular be understood in the context of developments unfolding in the 1950s and 60s. In the years following the Second World War, widespread fear lingered that unresolved war-related tensions would divide the population and lead to new violence or even civil war, and this was a crucial reason why building Canadian unity became a political priority. Meanwhile, pro-independence sentiments were growing in Quebec. Francophones were mobilizing a strong resistance against what they experienced as anglophone domination, their

²²³ Although it should be noted that in this period the grand majority of Canadians were still from European Christian heritage, and that the diversity that the new immigration model would later produce was not yet obvious.

vision well captured in the slogan of Jean Lesage, then Prime Minister in Quebec: *Maîtres chez nous* (masters in our own house) (Abu-Laban 2013: 4). The post-war years also saw the emergence of a number of social and human rights movements, such as feminist, anti-racism and aboriginal movements, working to make visible and combat what sociologist John Porter (1965) had labelled the ‘vertical mosaic’, namely the overlap between ethnicity and social class in Canada. In general, this term described a situation in which the British were the privileged and other ethnic groups marginalized²²⁴.

Meanwhile, the influence from non-English, non-French and non-Aboriginal groups was also growing. Some scholars suggest that Canada is best understood as composed of three major forces, the first being aboriginal people, the second the colonizing (or ‘charter’) groups, and the third force being non-English, non-French, non-Aboriginal ethnic groups [e.g. immigrant groups] (Leman 1999, Moodley and Adam 2012, Li 2000). In 1961, the ‘third force’ represented almost 23% of the Canadian population according to a census (Li 2000). They had become an important voter group and the tendency that ethnic groups concentrated geographically in particular cities meant that mobilizing was easy and the cost of lobbying low. Therefore, according to Green and Green (1995: 1015), immigrant lobby groups came to play a central role in influencing policies, and on several occasions also managed to push through changes in immigration policies. Philosopher Will Kymlicka refers to this development as part of the process of democratic ‘citizenisation’, that is, of turning previously hierarchical relations into relationships of liberal democratic citizenship (2010: 100). The voices of third force groups increasingly occupied space in the public debate, in the sense that they were becoming active participants in the public debate, and not just topics to be discussed.

For the government, the worst immediate headache was the development in Quebec, where the sovereignist movement promoting the idea of an independent Quebec was gaining support rapidly (Ley 2007)²²⁵. In response to this situation - perceived as a crisis in Canadian national identity - the liberal minority government of Lester Pearson formed the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (the so-called ‘B&B Commission’) in 1963. The commission’s mandate was intended to be seen as accommodating the demands from French Quebecers, in its

²²⁴ The so-called *Anglostocracy*.

²²⁵ Notably the *Rassemblement pour l’Indépendance Nationale*, founded in 1960.

emphasis on Canada as consisting of not one but *two* cultures; English and French (Abu-Laban and Stasiulis 1992). However, policy-makers apparently had not foreseen how the projected image of Canada as bicultural would be received by so-called 'third force groups'. Ley (2007) writes that in the public hearings that were held, the conventional assimilation model of Anglo- and Franco-conformity was strongly challenged, in particular by groups of second and third generation Ukrainians (Abu-Laban and Stasiulis 1992)

The political solution to this dilemma was presented in 1971, when Prime Minister Trudeau announced the policy of 'multiculturalism within a bilingual framework', declaring that although '*there are two official languages, there is no national culture*' in Canada (Canada, House of Commons, 1971: 8545). Trudeau further stated that '*(...) no citizen or group of citizen is other than Canadian, and all should be treated fairly*' (ibid). This could be seen as addressing French-Quebeckers in particular²²⁶, however some analysts also interpreted the new policy as an electoral ploy designed to capture the increasingly important 'ethnic vote' (Abu-Laban and Stasiulis 1992: 366). Based on the B&B commission's recommendations, integration, not assimilation, would be the favoured way of weaving immigrants into the Canadian fabric. Although all the main parties embraced the multiculturalism policy, the Liberal party – which has held office for most of the 20th century - has remained most closely associated with it, and has generally been the favoured party of voters of non-European background²²⁷ (Blais 2005: 825). A twist of fate perhaps, the same year as the multiculturalism policy was pronounced, immigrants of non-European background outnumbered immigrants of European background for the very first time²²⁸.

The renewed Canadian nation-building project was to be governed by the idea of unity through diversity. In Hage's (1999) words, multiculturalism can be understood as a way of 'reframing diversity as a normalized part of social cohesion'. Quebeckers, anthropologist Richard Handler (1988) found, understood this new approach as based on a desire to '*domesticate internal diversity by rendering all ethnic claims equally relevant (...)*' (ibid: 125-126), in other words, as

²²⁶ According to Katharyne Mitchell multiculturalism allowed an 'uneasy truce' to be formed between the British and the French (2003: 391)

²²⁷ It should be noted that supporters of the Liberal party are also more likely to hold university education and to live in urban areas, both of which are typical characteristics of citizens of non-European origin in Canada (Blais et al 2002).

²²⁸ <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/immigration/>

a way to place Quebecers' claims for recognition along the same lines of any other ethnic group²²⁹. Thus sovereignists responded by accusing Canada of '*wanting to absorb the components of Québécois culture into the great Canadian totality*' (MAC 1976: 98-99, cited in Handler 1988); that is, of continuing along the line of supporting assimilation and trying to weaken the status of Quebecers (Leman 1999).

Significantly, Quebec eventually opted for a policy referred to as interculturalism as 'model for integration and management of ethnocultural diversity' (Bouchard 2011). In 1981, the principles for this policy were published in an action plan called *Autant de façons d'être Québécois*. A particular version of multiculturalism policy is necessary in Quebec, Bouchard (ibid: 441) argues, given that '*the francophone majority is itself a precarious minority that needs protection in order to ensure its survival and development in the North American environment and in the context of globalization*'. Thus, Helly (1994) writes, interculturalism places more emphasis on the acceptance of the French character of the culture and institutions of the province. It aims to uphold the supremacy of French in the language and culture and thus does not imply any intrinsic equality between cultural communities (Dewing 2009). The interculturalism policy, like the multiculturalism policy, has been much debated. However, this debate falls outside the scope of this thesis. For the informants in this study, it was primarily through the general emphasis on French language that the policy was noticeable whereas the federal multiculturalism policy was something they felt concerned with, in various ways.

Notwithstanding the feeling of injuriousness on the part of many Quebecers, the multiculturalism policy has anchored the Canadian nation-building project ever since. Yet, there exists no clearcut understanding of the term's meaning and no univocal view of the policy's intentions and implications. Dewing and Leman (2006) suggest that there are different layers of meanings inherent in the notion of multiculturalism (see also Berry, Kalin and Taylor 1977, Vertovec 1998): First, it is used descriptively about the demographic fact of co-existence of peoples from different ethno-cultural backgrounds. As Moodely and Adam (2012) note, one could argue that the policy of multiculturalism was merely reflecting and acknowledging the factual reality in Canada, and therefore not a matter of establishing anything fundamentally new.

²²⁹ It should be mentioned, as Dawson (1982) has pointed out, that French Canadians are not usually considered to be an ethnic group.

Second, it is used prescriptively, as an ideology celebrating diversity and seeking to maintain it. The ideology of multiculturalism rests on the premise that individuals have particular identities as members of ethnocultural communities, all the while sharing a collective identity as Canadians (Cameron and Berry 2008). Third, it refers to specific public policies, to the ‘management of diversity through formal initiatives on different levels of the state apparatus’ (Fleras and Kunz 2001: 7). That is, it includes governmental actions oriented at for example breaking down ‘discriminatory attitudes and cultural jealousies’, as the government stated in 1971²³⁰. Multiculturalism it is also used with reference to the process by which ethnic groups gather support to achieve their aspirations (Dewing and Leman 2006). Multiculturalism, in this view, represents a critical discourse that challenges, resists and transforms the distribution of cultural power in society (Fleras and Kunz 2001: 7). It functions as an inclusionary discourse that provides a framework within which ethnic minorities can pursue demands for equality (Abu Laban and Stasiulis 1992, Abu-Laban 2013, see also Tully 2000).

In general, the policy operates on two levels (Banting and Kymlicka 2010). First, there is a Multiculturalism Directorate (within the Department of Citizenship and Immigration) which funds various initiatives such as ethnocultural organisations, education programmes, academic research, immigrant integration services, multicultural festivals and so on. Its budget, Banting and Kymlicka (2010) write, is quite modest. Second, multiculturalism is a commitment for all departments when designing and implementing policies and programmes (2010: 50). This means that decisions taken by other branches of the federal government than the Department of Citizenship and Immigration are also supposed to adhere to the goals of the multiculturalism policy. The multicultural policy is usually seen as closely related to policies of integration and equity. In the following I will briefly examine this connection.

A two-way street of integration

Here you don't feel like an immigrant because everybody is an immigrant. Quebeckers are almost a minority. You don't feel that you are different. Everyone is an immigrant and you are just one more. That is Montreal.

Pilar.

²³⁰ Government of Canada (1971). Multicultural policy: Statement to house of commons, Ottawa

The developments of the 60s inspired a new way of conceptualizing Canada in political and popular thinking, namely the idea of Canadian society as essentially and unchangeably pluralist. With the multiculturalism policy, Canada would not only accept but *welcome* diversity. According to Kymlicka (2003) this development should be located in the larger context of a shift in most western democracies from valuing assimilation to valuing integration as the ideal relation between society and immigrants (see also Berry 2013). The idea of integration was a new way of thinking around ethnic diversity, since until then diversity had been perceived as inimical to national interests and as a threat to the national character and integrity (Leman 1999). Multiculturalism provided the model for achieving this inclusion, and has therefore been significant for the normative visions Canadians have of their society (Singh in Nelson and Nelson 2004: 445).

Some scholars (c.f. Ley 2007, Kymlicka 1998) argue that the intention of the Canadian multiculturalism policy was always to better integrate immigrants. The goal of integrating newcomers, then, is understood as a societal endeavour (Biles et al 2008). The integration process has been defined as a 'two-way street' connecting immigrant and society, that is, as an interactional process where the Canadian society in general as well as immigrants must adapt to each other (Frideres 2008). For example, institutional support that creates environments that enhances the 'warmth of the welcome' is essential for achieving successful integration, Reitz (1999) has argued. Welfare policies and labor market policies are thus seen as important 'bridge-building tools' to achieve this end, since integration is not merely seen as a matter of cultural adaptation. Rather, the process of integration is multidimensional and includes aspects of settlement experiences and participation that are for example economic (i.e. labor market integration), political/civic integration, and social integration into networks and spaces of the civic society (Kymlicka 2010:7). Consequently, individuals can be integrated in some ways, and not in others. Since the 1970s, the policy of integration has been to fund nonprofit organizations providing community-based settlement and integration services to immigrants.

However, it should be noted that the different dimensions of integration do not however carry the same political weight. According to Koning and Banting (in NOU 2011: 7), most of the integration and settlement programmes offered to immigrants are designed to facilitate economic

integration. Services include for example language training, counselling, employment services, and host programmes, often provided by NGOs funded by federal government institutions and programmes such as the Multiculturalism Program and the Foreign Credential Recognition Program (ibid). While the specific task of these organisations may be well defined, the ‘integration finish-line’ is not. First, it should be noted that integration in itself is not an unproblematic notion. Sociologists Joppke and Morawska (2003) have argued that much of the discussion around integration is premised on the idea that prior to the destabilizing arrival of immigrants, society was well bounded and cohesive, and natives in general experienced a high level of belonging. In this line of thought, differences and conflict among natives are disregarded; they are considered essentially the same (cf. Banton 2001), and immigrants are conceived of as different from this presumed sameness. The idea that Canadians actually have a shared set of values has been criticized by many, for example Parkin and Mendelsohn (2003) who argue that to the extent that some set of shared values exist in Canada, these tend to be shared by both native-born and immigrants.

A particularly problematic outcome of the idea of a domestic sameness versus an incoming diversity is that the notion of successful integration continues to be premised on immigrants assimilating to a certain set of norms or way of life. Integration, then, rather than a two-way process becomes in reality unilaterally the responsibility of the immigrant (Portes 2010). According to sociologist Peter S. Li (2003b) the notion of integration is often based on a narrow understanding that treats it ‘solely in terms of the degree to which immigrants converge to the average performance of native-born Canadians and their normative and behavioral standards’ (2003b: 11). Triadafiloupolos (2011) has argued that in recent years we have seen a renaissance of a ‘Schmittian liberalism’ in which multicultural accommodation is rejected in favor of an emphasis on full assimilation into liberal ways of life. The notion of integration, then, may work as a smokescreen concealing that the process is really one of conformity to state-imposed norms (see f.ex. Levitt 2004), and within this frame, cultural differences can be interpreted as failed integration. On the opposite side of the ledger, integration can be measured in terms (for example economic) that define it as successful, even in situations where immigrants themselves do not experience a feeling of belonging, or that they are recognized as a person in society, or where they lack a social network. Such insights have informed critical questions related to power

structures and integration, such as who is to decide who should integrate, in what ways and for which reasons. I will pick up some of the strands in this discussion below.

Political scientist Andrew Geddes (2003: 23) observes that integration is usually recognized in its absence, as social exclusion or disintegration, whereas less effort is invested into trying to define what is meant by an integrated society. Yet, questions of how to achieve the goals of integration, and questions related to the notion of integration as a mutual adaptation, are at the heart in many of the debates around the intentions and consequences of the multiculturalism policy. For example, critics of the policy claim that it is working against the goal of integration by encouraging particularism and by obscuring other differentiating factors. According to sociologist Elke Winter (2012: 49), since the 90s there has also been a tendency of introducing 'policies of integration with assimilationist undertones'. This development is by many critics linked to the emergence of neoliberal economy and politics, which I will discuss more at depth later in the chapter.

The vision of integration in the Canadian context is reflected in the most common symbolic metaphor through which the idea of Canada has been produced in official discourse; the mosaic, formed by pieces implicitly understood as different ethnocultural groups (Day 1998). The mosaic metaphor has its roots back to 1926, when Kate Foster's novel *Our Canadian Mosaic* was published. Here she dealt with the 'problem of diversity' that Canada must overcome (Day 1998). She evoked the metaphor of the mosaic as a way to unite and order diversity in a manner that had the 'capacity to endure', held together by the cement of 'good will and friendliness born of natural respect and confidence between all peoples within our borders' (Foster 1926, cited in Day 1998: 54). Thus, whereas Woodsworth (*Strangers Within Our Gates*, see chapter 3) had seen assimilation as the solution to diversity, for Foster the solution was to keep the pieces separate, ranged side by side, but incorporating even 'the humbles cube' (1926: 142). The mosaic metaphor, Abu-Laban (2013:3) writes, gained further popular purchase with the publication of John Murray Gibbons' *Canadian Mosaic: The Making of a Northern Nation* in 1938, in which the metaphor was evoked as positively contrasting Canadian nation-building from its southern neighbor's 'melting pot' vision of the nation.

The social Canadian

I saw on *mequieroir* that Canada has good public schools, a good public health care system - in Venezuela the public system is bad. You can go to a private clinic but it is very expensive. I don't think that is right. I know some people complain about the health care system here, but I think it is better, much better, to try to have a good public system. That is one reason why I wanted to come here²³¹

Daniel

Another central element in the notion of 'Canadianness' has to do with Canada's social politics. According to Janine Brodie (2002), Canadians' sense of shared identity and national community can to a large extent be captured in the notion of social citizenship; the idea that all citizens have social rights that should support greater equality and economic and social integration. The idea of social citizenship was in many ways conflated with the discourses of Canadian nationalism in the period after the Second World War, Brodie (2002) writes, since cultural and national projects and social policies were built up side by side. The most central social programs of the Canadian welfare state were consolidated in the 1960s²³², in a context where the cultural and symbolic infrastructure of a new nationalism was also constructed, through for example the establishment of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the Canadian Council to support art and sciences, the enactment of the Canadian Bill of Rights, the adoption of the flag, and so on. Significantly, this development also coincided with the recognition of Canada as an essentially pluralist society.

In this period the government's main priority was to erase sources of conflict, ensure solidarity and a stable economic market²³³. Solidarity and a stable economy were seen as preconditions for creating a collective Canadian identity. The rights associated with social citizenship were believed to foster solidarity by 'engaging all citizens in a collective project grounded in state-based assurance of citizen equality and social progress' (Brodie 2002: 378). Developing the infrastructures of the welfare state was crucial in this respect. A guiding idea behind social

²³¹ *mequieroir* is a website that compares common immigration destinations.

²³² Including unemployment insurance, family allowances, medical care, and the pension plan

²³³ The emergence of social citizenship is also understood as a reaction to the injustices caused by the capitalist market (see T.H. Marshall (1950): *Citizenship and Social Class*, in *Class, Citizenship and Social Development*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press)

programs such as unemployment support, the medicare system, and the pension plan, was that they would not only lead to an improvement of the wellbeing of everybody, but also make them embrace a particular vision of Canadian society (ibid). The social policies gathered Canadians 'from all backgrounds and walks of life under the same umbrella of a universal 'we,' – a single national community of fate', Brodie (ibid: 386) contends. The interweaving of social citizenship rights and appeals to national unity produced what she has called the nationalist myth of the Social Canadian.

Although the rationale behind the establishment of the social citizenship regime was to underwrite social stability and economic growth, it can also be interpreted as a way for the state to symbolize that it has a role to play in the strive for social justice (Jenson 1997). The welfare state, sociologist Yasemin Soysal (2011: 2) writes, evolved as an 'empowering project for the disadvantaged and excluded classes, for the good of the whole society'²³⁴, which was seen as a more reliable way of creating national loyalty, than simply appealing to people's feeling of national identity. In this perspective, Abu-Laban (2013) suggests that we should see the development of the welfare state, the increased population diversity, and the support for multiculturalism in Canada as closely inter-related. Another link between national identity and the Canadian welfare system, some have argued, is that it serves to distinguish Canadians from Americans (Kymlicka 2003). As such it also enables Canada to self-identify with socialdemocratic states (ibid)²³⁵.

Somewhat paradoxically, the multiculturalism policy embraced ethnicity as a strength and an asset in the very same periode as ethnicity was sought made irrelevant in immigration policies. This illustrates the complexity and changeability of meanings attached to diversity and ethnicity, not only with respect to the desirability (or not) of diversity per se, but also when it comes to how diversity is interpreted, constructed or sought managed, and in what contexts diversity is made

²³⁴ Parallelling the development in North-West Europe of the so-called Keynesian welfare state, described by Hemerijck (2006) as relying on '*employment-friendly macroeconomic policy, collective wage-bargaining, progressive taxation, social security coverage, and protective labor-market regulation*'.

²³⁵ Although popular discourse holds that Canadians typically define their Canadian identity as being 'not American', the influence of this powerful neighbor on culture, politics, economy etcetera is seldomly interpreted as a problem or a threat to Canadian identity and integrity.

relevant. Various forces have shaped the multiculturalism policy's history. In the following I will provide a brief overview of its 4 decades of existence.

Periods of multiculturalism

In its first decade, which Leman (1999) refers to as the 'formative period', the multiculturalism policy was primarily oriented towards celebrating cultural differences (Fleras and Kunz 2001). Geographer Audrey Kobayashi (2007) has described the period as focused on supporting the preservation of cultural diversity, particularly celebrating folkloric elements such as food, music, dance, clothing and so on²³⁶, - a '*custom-costume-cuisine multiculturalism*', to quote Fleras' (2009: 20)²³⁷. Cultures were generally understood as homogenous, bounded entities that could and should be preserved in their supposed 'authenticity' (Jakubowicz 2006: 252). Moreover, cultural diversity was celebrated as something intrinsically valuable, a 'goldmine of distinctiveness', as Day (1998) phrases it. Fleras (2009) refers to this period *ethnicity multiculturalism*. Social challenges related to pluralist society were understood as mainly rooted in prejudice and language difficulties; hence the solution proposed to these problems was education and improving cultural sensitivity.

This first version of the multicultural policy was soon accused of presenting an idyllic image of ethnic harmony and of not addressing real problems of inequality. Immigrants themselves, Moodley and Adam (2012: 428) note, were more concerned with economic integration and abolishing barriers to advancement, such as systemic discrimination. By the 1980s, the merit-based immigration model had begun to influence the ethnic makeup of Canada's population so that the 'third force' itself had become more ethnically diversified. Meanwhile, the problem of ethnic and racial discrimination was growing (Hyman et al 2011, Fleras 2014). The architects behind the initial multiculturalism policy had focused on language and culture as the main barriers to social and economic adaptation and success, and had not really considered factors such as systemic discrimination. Now, the climate was one of increased attention to equity and full participation and this led to a shift in the multiculturalism policy and discourse. Fleras (2009)

²³⁶ Kobayashi (1993) has labelled this period *symbolic multiculturalism*. She refers to the period preceding the adoption of the multiculturalism policy as *demographic multiculturalism*; the period in which society recognized itself as being multicultural.

²³⁷ Alibhai Brown (2000), describing the UK version, has called it the '3S model of multiculturalism' – *samosas, steel-drums and saris*.

refers to this second period as *equity multiculturalism*, a period when policies ensuring equal life chances were recognized as a necessary companion to the cultural policy²³⁸. The new approach to multiculturalism was to be 'colour-conscious' rather than 'colour-blind', to borrow Appiah and Gutman's (1998) term.

One outcome of this development was the Special Committee on Visible Minorities' report '*Equality Now!*' (1984), and the adoption of affirmative measures such as the Employment Equity Act of 1986, designed to respond to labor market inequalities experienced by visible minorities, first nation people, women and disabled²³⁹. Critics, however, saw the renewed policy of 'equitable' multiculturalism as simply a smokescreen covering-up underlying structures of power and hegemony. For example, sociologist Himani Bannerji (2000) has argued that imagining the Canadian state as multicultural works ideologically to obscure Canada as 'racist, sexist, and hierarchically class-based' (2000: 64). Parallell to the consensus-based multiculturalism policy, an alternative and more radical antiracism movement evolved underscoring the importance of institutional and power structures, current and past, to understand individual and group experiences (Moodley and Adam 2012). The debate around racial relations led the parliament to commend a report on the experiences of visible minorities; which became the above-mentioned *Equality Now!* report²⁴⁰. The Ministry of Multiculturalism, on their hand, included anti-racism in its main priorities (Moodley and Adam 2012).

The 90s was a period when themes such as society building, full economic, social and political participation, and inclusiveness were central. Fleras (2009) calls this *civic multiculturalism*, characterized by a soft approach to nation building for example through cultivating a sense of belonging, an active civic engagement on all levels of society, and a shared awareness of identity and national interest among Canadian citizens (Fleras: 2012: 311). A influential scholarly contribution from this period is philosopher Charles Taylor's *Multiculturalism and the Politics of Recognition* (1994). In the essay Taylor underlines the importance of identity, defined as 'a

²³⁸ Leman (1999) refers to the same period as the 'institutionalization period'

²³⁹ In the act (and as departmental standard) visible minorities are classified as 'persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour'. See: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/concepts/definitions/minority01-minorite01a-eng.htm>. Among the measures of the Act is the requirement that federally regulated employers assess the composition of their workforce in order to correct disadvantages faces by these groups (Castles and Miller 2003: 226).

²⁴⁰ With in turn paved the way for the Employment Equity Act (1986)

person's understanding of who they are, of their fundamental characteristics as a human being' (ibid: 25). Identity, self-understanding and self respect is developed in dialogical relations with others, Taylor maintains, and it is also constituted by cultural group membership (ibid: 25-26). Recognition is a 'vital human need' (ibid: 26) since identity is influenced by recognition. Lack of recognition can inflict harm on individuals, imprisoning them in 'a false, distorted or reduced mode of being' (ibid: 25). In Taylor's thinking, not to recognize cultural differences is a way of negating identity since it forces people into a 'homogenous mold that is untrue to them' (ibid: 43). He acknowledges that demands related to group particularity can conflict with the principle of non-discrimination, but in response to this contradiction he charts a middle course, outlining a liberalism that does not claim complete neutrality, but is 'hospitable' towards particularist claims, although not generally: each situation must be evaluated. With the idea that the state should protect languages, culture and practices Taylor sets himself apart from classical liberalism's preference for the 'neutral', procedural state. Taylor's ideas have been very influential in thinking around multiculturalism, but they have also been criticized on different accounts, including by anthropologists who see Taylor's notion of 'cultures' as outdated. I will return to these lines of critique later in the chapter.

Another important contribution from this period is philosopher Will Kymlicka's *Multicultural Citizenship* (1995). Kymlicka also set himself apart from classical liberalism's focus on individuals by arguing in favor of group-differentiated rights. However, he sees these as part of liberal thought. Group rights, Kymlicka argues, can be necessary to achieve freedom and equality. Like Taylor, Kymlicka understands culture as the main context for individual choices and also as decisive for the individual's self respect. Culture of origin is a basis resource for people, Kymlicka writes (ibid). When it comes to immigration²⁴¹, he notes that integrating into a new culture is not easy and that people may wish to keep some aspects of their culture. The rights that Kymlicka suggests can be extended to these groups include anti-discriminatory policies, exemption from certain rules on the basis of religion, funding of certain practices, education, and some forms of affirmative action. Kymlicka has published widely on the theme of

²⁴¹ In his view of multiculturalism Kymlicka distinguishes between indigenous people, national minorities and immigrants.

multiculturalism, particularly focusing on the link between multiculturalism and integration. He has also met diverse criticism that I will return to later.

At the turn of the millenium, the multiculturalism policy shifted slightly towards a so-called *integrative or inclusive multiculturalism*²⁴². The notion of inclusion is understood as going beyond the notion of integration in that it implies that while newcomers are being integrated, the rest of Canadian society is also changing to reflect the diversity of the whole. That is, it recognizes that the inclusion of newcomers into the existing alters the image as a whole, and therefore redefines what it means to be Canadian (Hyman et al 2011: 9). The concept is intended to better capture the complexity, the dynamic and the ever-changing relations between Canada and newcomers, or majority and minority.

Over the last decade, multiculturalism has been conditioned by political and economic trends often referred to as neoliberal. Before examining the consequences of this, I will turn for a moment to the scholarly debates that have surrounded the evolving policy, in order to clarify some common arguments and critiques.

Strands of critique: Does multiculturalism work?

Much ink has been spilled on the question of what the multiculturalism policy should do and what it is doing. Critique has largely been focused on Canadian experiences, but recently it has also found echo in a larger debate surrounding multiculturalism in Western countries. Several scholars have suggested that multiculturalism is in an era of decline, crisis or backlash, and some go as far as to contend that we are already living in a post-multicultural era (c.f. Brubaker 2001, Joppke 2004, Vertovec 2005). Debates around the multiculturalism policy have been particularly intense in the decade after 9/11, as fear of societal fragmentation and nascent fanaticism have coloured policy debates and public discourse.

²⁴² Audrey Kobayashi (1993) has subdivided the development of Canadian multiculturalism in a different way. Kobayashi refers to the period when multiculturalism was recognized as a demographic fact (i.e. in relation to the Bi-Bi Commission discussed on p 6) as *demographic multiculturalism*. The second phase, from the policy's implementation until the passing of the Multiculturalism Act, is referred to as *symbolic multiculturalism*. The period beginning with the Act is referred to as *structural multiculturalism*.

A view held by many critics of the multiculturalism policy is that it is divisive. It is argued that the policy serves to support and thus underscore cultural diversity in ways that reinforce boundaries rather than create interconnections, and produce isolated and inward-looking enclaves instead of unity (cf. Gregg 2006). Some claim that the multiculturalism policy has been naive and misguided, and that in spite of its good intentions it has contributed to atomization and ghettoization (c.f. Gregg 2006, Schlesinger 1992, see also Koopmans 2006), - ‘sleepwalking towards segregation’, to borrow the words of British multiculturalism critic Trevor Phillips (2005). A prominent critic of the Canadian multiculturalism policy, novelist Neil Bissoondath (1994), has questioned the utility of encouraging immigrants to see themselves as belonging to different ethnic groups claiming that this approach in fact leads immigrants to adopt a ‘psychology of separation’ from the mainstream culture²⁴³. Multiculturalism, in his view, has failed to unite the population around what is Canadian, a common ‘center’ (see also Gwyn 1995).

Arguing along similar lines, sociologist Reginald Bibby (1990) is concerned that within the multicultural framework there are no common goals or vision to pull people together and he is pessimistic with regards to the outcomes of a policy that encourages people to live differently, rather than insists on community cohesion. In his *Mosaic Madness* (1990) he argues that the multiculturalism policy has promoted cultural group solidarity at the expense of broader social participation. Another well-known critic, historian Jack Granatstein, suggests that the historical concern with multiculturalism, with its emphasis on separate identities, destroy Canadian history in the sense that there is little around which to build a common national spirit and pride (1998). He also argues that the policy has produced the idea among immigrants that Canada in fact has no culture or identity of its own (Leman 1999)²⁴⁴.

Other scholars are concerned that the policy of multiculturalism is merely symbolic and do not address real problems of exclusion and inequality. Through celebrating different cultures, ethnocultural minorities can be reinforced as ‘the Other’ vis-à-vis a ‘neutral’, dominant culture,

²⁴³ A similar vein of critique has been raised against the much-employed mosaic metaphor of Canada²⁴³, for example by Anwar (2014), who claims that this notion underlines the differences between cultures all the while tolerating a certain geographical segregation between groups, which engenders both physical, emotional and social distance between cultural groups (2014: 175)

²⁴⁴ The idea has also been put forth by native-born Canadians, for example sociologist Marshall McLuhan who famously stated that ‘Canada is the only country in the world that knows how to live without an identity’ (1967)

anthropologist Daniel A. Yon (2000) has argued. Bissoondath (1994) also maintains that in the effort to promote cultural understanding, cultural differences have been trivialized and only inoffensive and generally acceptable practices have been held up. The image presented is one of harmony and trifling differences that - critics argue - have led to the continuation of illiberal practices amongst immigrant groups, in particular with regards to women (c.f. Okin 1999). Instead of 'Canadianizing' newcomers the multiculturalism policy encourages groups to cling to static, 'frozen' cultures (Bissoondath 1994), which may include practices that are incompatible with the principles of liberal democracies. The focus on non-controversial, expressive aspects of culture also works to trivialize, neutralize and mask social and economic inequality, sociologist Kogila Moodley argues (1983: 326). It locks notions of what is normal and acceptable in racialized frames (Day 2000). By focusing on the differences that the 'third force' in embodies (at least in theory), their second-class status is entrenched (see f.ex. Li 2003, Bannerji 2000, Henry and Tator 2006). Multiculturalism, then, is seen as keeping certain groups in a dependent position vis-à-vis the dominant groups, by underscoring differences and thus implicitly their subordinate position (see f.ex. Li 2003a, Bannerji 2000, Ramirez and Taschereau 1988). It therefore contributes to define class issues in ethnic terms; culturalizing socioeconomic differences, Bannerji (2000) has argued.

Other significant aspects, such as class, age, ability and gender, are often omitted in multiculturalism discourses and policies, sociologist Val Colic-Peisker states (2011: 569). This, sociologist Karl Peter (1981: 65) contended in the early years of multiculturalism, makes multiculturalism little more than a new name for the old order, which is one of 'articulating Canada's national goals in terms of the interests of the political and economic elite of Ontario and Quebec'. Nearly two decades later, sociologist Carl James (1999: 201) argued along similar lines, claiming that multiculturalism in fact operates to conceal the fact that British and French ethnocultural identities remain dominant. Multiculturalism, James (1999) claimed, equates 'culture' with people who are not Canadian. The true purpose of multiculturalism in this perspective is assimilation and upholding existing power structures.

Yasmeen Abu-Laban and Christina Gabriel (2002) suggest that not only do the state support multiculturalism as ideology of diversity in order to hide inequalities, but also, through its

approach diversity is being commodified and marketed as trade-enhancing, – diversity is ‘being sold’ (ibid: 12). Multiculturalism, then, is understood as having little substance beyond being a political strategy motivated by the neo-liberal agenda of marketing ethnic diversity and attracting votes from minorities, (ibid, in Winter 2011: 14).

In his discussion of racisms in multicultural Canada, sociologist Augie Fleras argues that in spite of the constitutional values and multicultural principles, a ‘worrying gap prevails when aligning societal ideals with racialized realities’ (ibid: x). Racism still plays a major role in defining options and determining outcomes in Canada, he writes, and this leads him to ask whether multiculturalism could ever prove to be an anti-racist solution. Others, such as Kamal Dib (2006), have also suggested that the policy of multiculturalism may not be the most viable strategy for social integration and that policies centring on economic and educational integration would be more effective (see also Hansen and Pikkov 2008). In a similar vein, Bissoondath (1994) suggests that ethnicity should be removed from public policy. Instead, he argues, policies should be oriented towards combating racialism and should underline similarities rather than differences in order to draw immigrants into a binding social fabric²⁴⁵.

The critique against multiculturalism has been responded to by a number of scholars. John W. Berry (2013), a long-time researcher of intercultural relations, claims that critics tend to conflate ‘multiculturalism’ with ‘cultural diversity, and argues that multiculturalism is the necessary conjunction of the two elements it contains: The *cultural* component (support for the maintenance and development of cultural communities) and the *intercultural* component (promotion of intercultural contact and reducing barriers to such contact). Underscoring the combination of these two elements, he defines multiculturalism as the ‘joint value placed on cultural maintenance and equitable participation’ (2013: 666)²⁴⁶. The multiculturalism policy in Canada, he writes, was always oriented towards equity and social inclusion, as opposed to the European version that was

²⁴⁵ In an earlier critique, sociologist Howard Brotz (1980: 44) argued that the ‘business of the government [is] to protect the civil rights of individuals and to leave ethnicity and multiculturalism alone (...)’. With reference to the multiculturalism policy’s celebration of cultural diversity, Brotz argued that the unclear concept of culture often comes down to differences in tastes and life styles, which should not be a matter for the government.

²⁴⁶ While also noting that a policy of multiculturalism which is *not* accompanied by a policy aiming to reduce barriers to equitable participation is not a true policy of multiculturalism, but rather a policy of segregation (2013: 665)

proclaimed a failure by political leaders in Germany, France and Britain in 2011 (see Moodley and Adam 2012²⁴⁷).

In a critique of Bissoondath's 'Selling illusions', sociologist Benet Davetian (1994: 136) suggests that although the multiculturalism policy has not always led to exemplary integration, the situation without it would probably have been worse. When reflecting upon this we need to consider the policy's origin, he notes (ibid). Similarly, Kymlicka (1995) underscores the importance of special rights for minority groups basing his view partly on what he sees as the intrinsic value of cultural diversity and the notion that minority cultures will disappear if not protected (Kymlicka 1995). In a 2006 article he co-authored with political scientist Keith Banting, three different modes of multiculturalism are identified²⁴⁸: i) empowerment of indigenous people, ii) new forms of autonomy for sub-state national groups (such as the quebecois), and iii) new forms of multicultural citizenship for immigrant groups. This protection of ethnic groups' distinctiveness, he argues, is not inconsistent with their institutional integration (ibid: 14).

Multiculturalism, for Kymlicka, is above all about developing new models of democratic citizenship, to replace earlier undemocratic relations of hierarchy and exclusion. The multiculturalism policy works, he argues, because it seeks to overcome deeply entrenched inequalities and build a fairer society (2010). To sustain this view, he points to the many beneficial results that can be attributed the multicultural policy, such as the comparatively high level of acceptance and mutual identification among immigrants and native-born Canadians, the high degree of naturalization (immigrants becoming Canadian citizens), the high rates of inter-marriage, and the high level of immigrant participation in political life, both as voters, party members and candidates (1998, 2010, see also Bloemraad 2006). Multiculturalism, then, 'promotes integration and citizenship, both through its effects on attitudes, self-understanding and identity at the individual level, and through its effect on institutions at the social level', Kymlicka posits (2010: 7). In his view, much of the critique is off target since the existing policy is already aiming to correct inequalities. To turn away from multiculturalism, then, would be to abandon the

²⁴⁷ See also Castles and Miller (2009) on the development leading to this situation.

²⁴⁸ Distinguished by combinations of different policies related to for example land rights, cultural rights, self-government, representation, affirmative action, official status, funding for organisations, to mention a few.

idea of multiculturalism as citizenization (ibid: 103-104). Moreover, Kymlicka and Banting (2010: 60) state, the fact that Canada has officially defined itself as a multicultural country means that immigrants are a constituent part of the nation that citizens feel pride in. Moodely and Adam (2012) have a similar understanding of multiculturalism's role in integrating immigrants and, in clear contrast with Bissoondath's (1994) view, see the vision of Canada as multicultural as psychologically important for immigrants' self-concept as equals (2012: 434).

In spite of disagreements with regards to the outcome of the multiculturalism policy, few scholars have proposed to abandon it entirely. Rather, new directions are suggested, such as setting aside goals of a coherent identity and approach multiculturalism as an ongoing dialogical interaction (c.f. Day 2000, Young 2000, Parekh 2000, Fleras and Kunz 2001). Also, in recent years a new approach towards multiculturalism has emerged, labelled 'post-multiculturalism', associated with writers such as for example Alibhai-Brown (2000, 2004) and Hollinger (2006). Post-multiculturalists, Kymlicka (2010) writes, seek to 'overcome the perceived limits of naïve or misguided multiculturalism' (ibid: 98). Kymlicka himself is critical to this turn on the basis of their analysis of multiculturalism's failure, which he finds 'overstated and misdiagnosed' (ibid: 105). However, it can be argued that post-multiculturalism writers simply seek to come to terms with new aspects of contemporary societies. For example, Alibhai-Brown (2000), writing in British context, suggests the need for a collective re-imagining of national identity in ways that reflect today's globalized lives. Most recently within the post-multiculturalism framework, the term 'superdiversity' has been proposed (Vertovec 2006), meant to place emphasis on 'the fact that new conjunctions and interactions of variables that have arisen over the past decade surpass the ways (in public discourse, policy debates and academic literature) that we usually understand diversity' (Vertovec 2006: 2).

Proposed directions of multiculturalism have also been framed as anchored in two contrasting views of integration, i) integration with regards to an 'immutable core' and ii) integration with regards to a 'dynamic nucleus' (Metropolis 2003). The first approach implies assimilation to common values, language and culture, often understood as the benchmarks of integration (Li 2003, 328). However, in this approach the relationship between diversity and integration is not interrogated, Li argues (in Wong 2008), whereas the second approach represents an interactive

pluralism in which the core is dynamic and evolving over time (Wong 2008). This implies 'ongoing discussion, negotiation, critical collective reflection, and a re-examination of what Canada is in terms of identity and how it works in terms of social processes' (ibid: 19). The dynamic nucleus approach, Wong (ibid) argues, is what could make Canadian multiculturalism viable over time.

The arguments resumed in this part represent critical reflections concerning the outcome of the multiculturalism policy, in particular with regards to integration and social cohesion. In the following I will briefly examine a different body of criticism, one that has to do with the ways that ideas about diversity are produced and become dominant, and the forces that drive this process.

Conjuring differences?

There is one thing that is negative. I think that... well, it is difficult, when you apply for a job online, there are some questions regarding 'visible minority'. They ask you to tick off whether you belong to a visible minority. And, I was not prepared for this kind of question, whether you are Hispanic or black or white or Amerindian. So I felt that... it lets them classify you, and many times I am worried to say that I am a Hispano. I try not to answer. I chose not to answer, because it is not obligatory. But I can say that the times that I have ticked off Hispanic I have never been called back.

Luis²⁴⁹

For some critical voices the crucial problem with multiculturalism is not whether or not it works as a way of managing diversity. Multiculturalism, it is argued, does not manage diversity, it *produces* a specific kind of diversity; conjuring differences, as Richard Day (1998) put it. This line of critique concerns the fundamental assumptions of the multiculturalism policy. Colic-Peisker (2011: 569) notes that multiculturalism policies are premised on culture and ethnicity as primary axis of differentiation²⁵⁰. The policy is seen as naturalizing and essentializing ethnic identity, underscoring differences that may be imagined or real, based on superficial distinctions such as skin color and other features, to borrow Peter S. Li's words (2000). In this view, multiculturalism reduces people's identities to ethnicity and culture, a process anthropologist

²⁴⁹ He is referring to questions that the Employment Equity Act obliges many employers to ask.

²⁵⁰ In an article focusing on the rather similar Australian context of official multiculturalism.

Ghassan Hage (1998), in his critique of Australian multiculturalism, refers to as 'ethnic caging'. It obliges people into a group-based 'ethnic' belonging that many might be uncomfortable with, Colic-Peisker argues (2011). Culture, used in this sense, is cast as a right-bearing entity over and against human individuals, Rapport (in Amit 2002) contends. Instead, he argues, individuals should have *'the right to resist and opt out of the norms and expectations of particular social and cultural groupings and chart their own course'*.

Richard Day (1998) points out that while much effort has been invested into mapping and managing Canadian diversity, little effort has been made to analyze the means through which diversity is produced as an objective fact (1998: 46). The scholars who have been most concerned with this dimension often see the primacy given to presumed cultural differences as working to conceal other societal divisions that could be more challenging to the state. Multiculturalism, then, could be seen as a way of disciplining the population, in a Foucauldian sense (Riikonen and Dervin 2012). The debates concerning differences as 'ethnicization' or 'culturalization' are therefore often closely related to reflections on power and representation.

Much critical examinations of multiculturalism have evolved around the question of who constructs and who is being constructed with regards to the multicultural subject, influenced by the insights of post-colonial theory, one of which was the understanding of identity as constructed, and not as natural expressions of an invariable essence (cf Hall 1992). Anthropologist Evelyn I. Legaré (1995: 347) has argued that the multiculturalism discourse *'shares many similarities with nineteenth and early twentieth century constructions of race, in that 'culture' is invoked to signify ethnic identities as Other than the normatively defined Canadian identity'*. 'Culture', in this perspective, serves as a means to construct problematic Others. The multiculturalism discourse can therefore be analyzed as a narrative with an authorized subject and a vantage point, such as for example, Sara Ahmed's (2000) deconstruction of the multiculturalism discourse to uncover its underlying (white, liberal-democratic) 'We' who must come to terms with the differences of the strangers and newcomers, the 'Others'.

Ways of classifying can serve as tools for the governing of populations, we are reminded by Richard Day (2000), who in his book *Multiculturalism and the History of Canadian Diversity*

locates the Canadian multiculturalism in a historical development of Western states seeking to classify their citizens in order to govern them. Writing from a radical leftist angle, he claims that state-led multiculturalism serves to undermine the possibility of radical critique of the capitalist nation-state, seeking to restrain the transformative potential of subaltern political movements. Similarly, if we follow philosopher Judith Butler's (1993: 220) Foucault-inspired approach to subject formation²⁵¹, subjects are produced by and within relations of power, and systematic structures of exclusion, disempowerment, abjection, deauthorization and erasure (McLaren 2002). Regulatory power such as the state holds the power to produce the subject it then seeks to control (Butler 1993: 220). In our case, the subjects are thus constructed as ethno-culturally diverse; and the multiculturalism policy represents the state's forming of this subject through regulatory and normative means.

Multiculturalism as the 'management' of diversity, Sara Ahmed (2000) notes, implies that diversity is a force that needs to be contained by policies so as not to get out of control (Ahmed, in Bauder 2012). The multiculturalism policy, Day (2000: 2) agrees, is not only premised on the presence of diversity but on the *problem* of diversity. Drawing on Foucault, Day (1998: 43) states that once diversity has been framed as a problem, it can become a field of governing operations. Multiculturalism, in this sense, represent 'state-sponsored attempts to structure the possible field of action of problematic Others' (1998: 44, drawing on Foucault 1982: 221). That is, difference and the *salience* of difference are produced by states thereby constructing a 'problem of diversity' that needs to be solved. Multiculturalism, then, 'operates as a fundamental institutional and conceptual tool giving the state an enhanced ability to *control* difference (Asad 1990, in Mitchell 2003). Asad (1973, see also Said 1978) claims that by measuring, categorizing, representing and thereby supposedly 'knowing' others, the objects of that knowledge becomes the subjects of new forms of power. Therefore it might be that the perceived problem of diversity is what in fact creates diversity, historian Joan Scott (1992) has suggested. For example, it is often assumed that people are discriminated against because they are different, but according to Scott it is rather the other way around: differences and the salience of different identities are produced by discrimination, as part of a process that establishes the

²⁵¹ Note that her writing is primarily about gender, not ethnicity.

superiority/typicality/universality of some in terms of the atypicality/inferiority of others (Scott 1992: 15, in Day 1998: 48).

Drawing on these perspectives, one could argue that practices such as for example the demographic censuses also contribute to producing and quantifying ethnic diversity. Every five years Canadian voters are asked to indicate for example ethnic or racial belonging, religious affiliation, and mother tongue use on the population census card accompanying the election card²⁵². In a similar but more critical vein, Himani Bannerji (1996: 105) refers to multicultural ethnicities in Canada as ‘officially constructed identities’. She locates the emergence of multiculturalism in a history of difference ‘measured or constructed in terms of distance from civilizing European cultures’ (ibid: 117). Bannerji (2000) refers to this as ‘multiculturalism from above’ and argues that it is based on the idea of a (Anglophone, white) ‘cultural core group’ at the center of the Canadian social body, and peripheral Others occupying the margins (Bannerji, in Chazan et al 2011). Multiculturalism and diversity present themselves as neutral and value-free, she claims (2000), and this discourse lets the subjects who create and benefit from it to remain hidden. Jeffery’s (2002, in Bauder 2012) makes the similar claim that multiculturalism represents a form of ‘managing’ race relations in a way that is acceptable to the dominant groups.

Likewise, multiculturalism should be understood as part of a broader narrative of liberalism, geographer Katharyne Mitchell (2003) points out. Multiculturalism, in this perspective, serves to ‘perform’ the liberal state as a tolerant and unified state in spite of differences within the population. Pluralism is encouraged but only insofar as it does not conflict with the liberalist framework (c.f Appiah 1994). Liberally oriented works in political science and philosophy, such as the influential writings by Taylor and Kymlicka, have contributed to shaping the discourse based on the primordial presence of a (problematic) ethnocultural diversity, according to Day (1998: 43). Taylor’s ideas, Day claims, are caught in the tendency of understanding ethnocultural diversity as something ‘natural and problematic’, evidenced for example through his recommendation that we ‘not only let them survive, but acknowledge their *worth*’ (Taylor 1992: 64, cited in Day 1998: 47). Philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah (2005) has also criticized

²⁵² The data is then supplemented with data from large scale data bases such as the Ethnic Diversity Survey, the Landed Immigrant Data System, and the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada (Ley 2007). The ethnicity-based self-identification produces the Canadian ‘cense of self’, Jedwab (2008) humoristically suggests.

Taylor on the grounds of his presupposition of conceptions of collective identities (ibid: 156) and for failing to recognize the constructed and shifting nature of identity. In Appiah's view, the essentialist conception of culture implicit in the multiculturalism paradigm can have undemocratic consequences in the sense that it may allow social groups to inflict on individual autonomy and personal dimensions of identity.

Political theorist Seyla Benhabib (2002) has also put forth a critique of multicultural theorists on the basis of their tendency to maintain the distinctiveness of cultures, by '*classifying and naming groups and then in developing a normative theory on the basis of classificatory taxonomies*' (ibid: 18), which she sees as problematic both in a democratic sense and because it is epistemologically reductionist. Her critique is especially directed at Kymlicka, whom she claims treats cultures as a 'given' (ibid 4-5). Instead she proposes a social constructionist view of cultures as 'contested creations of meanings' (2002: x). Multiculturalism theory has also been subject to feminist critique, for example by Susan Muller Okin (1999), who argued that most cultures are suffused with gendered practices and ideologies that disadvantage women relative to men²⁵³. Okin warned that when claims are made in the name of a cultural group, it is important to examine who will benefit from them. In Okin's view it will usually be the most powerful men in the group. Pashby et al (2014) notes that '*in addition, representations of multiculturalism lack critical attention to intersections of race, gender, and nationhood that can serve to reinforce gender inequality*' (ibid: 5). Finally, over the last decade or so an analytical framework referred to as intersectionality has gained foothold, emphasizing the ways that systems of oppression and discrimination are interconnected and cannot be studied separately. With regards to multiculturalism, this perspective seeks to reveal the intersecting inequalities of for example ethnicity/culture, class, gender and/or sexuality (for example Yuval-Davis 2011, Hill-Collins 1991). Working against multiple disadvantages can sometimes imply conflict, for example, between womens' rights and cultural group rights (Walsh 2012).

Over the last couple of decades, many of the strands of critique described so far has overlapped with a largely empirically based critique from theorists of globalization who also challenged

²⁵³ A claim that has been criticized for being Western-centric in its view of other cultures as per definition patriarchal.

ideas cultures as fixed, coherent, bounded and rooted. Instead, they proposed more dynamic understandings of identity, culture, time and place, for example as porous, negotiated and continuously evolving. Many scholars have pointed to the inadequacy of conceiving culture as bounded (see for example Abu-Lughod 1991, Gupta and Ferguson 1997) and of thinking with stable categories in a world in which ‘nothing is fixed, given [or] certain’ (Lash and Urry 1994:10). This frame has also compelled the recognition that people may have multiple origins and composite identities (Rouse 1991). Identity, including ethnic identity, is understood as open-ended projects involving a great deal of creativity. Flowing from this, many individuals cannot or will not pigeonhole themselves into any specific ethnic group, but negotiate multiple identities in a framework of global connectivity.

In social theory, ‘culture’ is an unsolved puzzle, surrounded by perpetual disagreement about its content, not to mention its ontology²⁵⁴. Anthropologist Terence Turner (1993: 411- 412) writes with regards to how multiculturalists use the notion of culture:

From an anthropological standpoint, this move ... is fraught with dangers both theoretical and practical. It risks essentializing the idea of culture as the property of an ethnic group or race; it risks reifying cultures as separate identities by overemphasizing their boundedness and mutual distinctness; it risks overemphasizing the internal homogeneity of cultures in terms that potentially legitimizes repressive demands for communal conformity; and by treating cultures as badges of group identity; it tends to fetishize them in ways that put them beyond the realm of critical analysis - and thus for anthropology.

Meanwhile, the concept has gained currency in other domains (popular, activist, media, politics, and other), even to the extent of having become a ‘ubiquitous synonym for identity’, to quote Benhabib (2002). As anthropologist and historian James Clifford (2013: 29) has pointed out, in the early twentyfirst century we have seen a proliferation of cultures and identities. Multiculturalism is increasingly hybrid, Banting and Kymlicka (2010) state, and its conception of diversity has broadened. In the next part, I will examine these claims and discuss how this new

²⁵⁴ Anthropologists in particular have stressed the need for understandings of ‘culture’ that did not serve to reify it. Writing has been extensive on this theme (see f.ex. Amit-Talai 1995, Asad 1990, Vertovec 1996, Bauman 1999) and I will not go deeper into it here.

diversity is conceptualized both as possibility and threat, towards the backdrop of underlying neoliberal currents²⁵⁵.

Social cohesion, or 'diversity without divisiveness'

In the last decade, social cohesion and cultural accommodation have become key themes in the discourse and debates around multiculturalism and diversity (Joshee and Johnson 2007, Joshee 2009). The concept of social cohesion is often used by social scientists with reference to concerns regarding migrants multiple belongings, which are often understood as something potentially negative for the receiving society (e.g. Jedwab 2005). Social cohesion, Griffith (2013) argues, is also articulated as a core goal of present immigration reforms, which will be discussed below. Triadafilopoulos and Smith (in Triadafilopoulos 2013: 2) note that in contemporary parlance, social cohesion is used with reference to the 'ongoing process of community formation', and skilled immigrants are posited as good migrants not only because of their labor contribution but also because they are seen as less likely to impair on social cohesion. Sociologist Ellie Vasta (2013) locates the discussion around social cohesion in a broader debate concerning the perceived troublesome relationship between ethnic/religious identities versus national identities, understood as rooted in immigrants' lack of a sense of belonging. Especially in the aftermath of 9/11, concern has been rising that diversity is corroding social cohesion and debates have been sparked by or influenced by fear of radicalisation, terrorism, crime, urban riots, balkanization, and so on²⁵⁶. The view that accommodation of cultural diversity has gone too far is commonly expressed. The situation has fuelled the view that valorization of ethnic ties can lead to isolation and marginalization of certain groups in ways that may threaten the basis of the liberal democracy (see also de Haas 2005). The present use of the concept of social cohesion should be read against this backdrop, but also as a signal of a desire to control differences, Vasta (2013: 198) argues²⁵⁷. She maintains that within immigration discourses, 'social cohesion is usually concerned with social order and ensuring that immigrants and ethnic minorities integrate into the dominant destination culture'. This corresponds well with Elke Winter's (2012: 49) observation that recent Canadian integration policies have 'assimilationist undertones'.

²⁵⁵ I wish to underline that I do not understand neoliberalism as a singular phenomenon, although the space here does not allow for elaborate discussions of the many processes that could be included under the neoliberal heading.

²⁵⁶ In Canada, the 9/11 fears were 'brought home' with the arrest of 18 members of an alleged terrorist ring with ties to Al Qaeda, in Toronto in 2006.

²⁵⁷ Vasta (2013) also provides a brief overview of classical sociological theories of social cohesion.

Those opposing the multiculturalism policy often do it by pointing to ‘non-integrating problematic groups’ (Colic-Peisker 2011, Vasta 2007). Multiculturalism is blamed for allowing immigrants to live ‘parallel lives’, and in particular Muslims are accused of tribalism and self-segregation²⁵⁸. Young and especially second-generation immigrants have particularly been put in the limelight (Day 2000), through debates related to fear of radicalization, so-called ‘hostile differences’ and social separation. In the debates these young individuals are typically posited, often through simplistic arguments and poor analysis, as a ‘problem to be solved’. The perception that ethnocultural diversity is menacing social cohesion has triggered several disconcerting public debates over the last decade, especially in Quebec, placing the condition of multiculturalism at the front stage²⁵⁹.

Although some of the participants in these debates have expressed rather extreme and racist views of immigrants – Moslems in particular – these do not appear to be representative of the general views of Canadians²⁶⁰. Opinion polls such as Focus Canada (2006) and Angus Reid (2010) indicate rather that a majority of Canadians have a positive view of immigrants and of the multiculturalism policy (Hyman et al 2011). It is clear, however, that the multiculturalism policy sails in other waters than before. In this part I will look at some important factors confluencing in these new waters, namely the economic situation, the fear of radicalisation and social fragmentation, and the dominating neoliberally charged discourse and politics.

In general, the idea of immigrants/immigration framed as a potential threat produces and is produced by two main narratives; one depicting immigrants as unwilling to adapt to Canadian society, and another depicting immigrants as a burden to the welfare system. An important context in this regard is the economic situation that has deteriorated for many people, a situation aggravated by accompanying cuts in public services. This should not only be seen as linked to the

²⁵⁸ Whereas, as Phillips (2006) observes, white self-segregation into certain neighborhoods, is rarely regarded as problematic.

²⁵⁹ Notably the ‘reasonable accommodations debate’ (2007) and the controversy around the Quebec Charter of Values proposed by the governing Parti Quebecois in 2013.

²⁶⁰ Although it did have an impact on Quebec politics in the 2007 election campaign, in which all three main parties (PLQ, PQ and ADQ) made a point out of denouncing ‘excessive’ multiculturalism (Banting and Kymlicka 2010) and where the right-wing populist party ADQ, favouring restrictions on immigration, gained a significant number of seats in parliament.

economic recession periods in 2007-2009 and at present, but as related to a larger restructuration of the economy that has placed immigrants in a more fragile situation. This development has happened since the end of the cold war when global capitalism could go global for real, integrating markets, production chains, and communication technologies. The new, post-Fordist organization of production²⁶¹ is described by Sassen (1990) as having created informal, ‘secondary’ sectors in the economy; with positions that native-born workers are unlikely to want and that are often occupied by immigrants (Sassen 1990, see also Piore 1979, Portes and Bach 1985). The international competition and relocation of many industries have placed great strain on especially the manufacturing sector in Canada, in which many, especially newly arrived immigrants, have been employed and where numerous positions have been lost (Fong 2009). In addition, periods of economic recession made it even more difficult for newcomers to find work, which, Picot (2008) argues, has led to a racialization of poverty worsened by cuts in social programs (see also Hyman et al 2011).

Many researchers have found that racism and ethnic prejudice still work as workforce barriers in Canada (see f.ex. Boyd, 1992, Hall and Sadouzai 2010, Li 1998, Reitz and Bannerjee 2007, Reitz et al 2009, Green 2006, Oreopoulos 2011) in a context where multiculturalism as a demographic fact has become an ever-more visible reality²⁶². Discrimination also plays a role when it comes to labour market queuing, the likelihood of obtaining relevant employment and experiences of glass ceilings (Fong 2009). For example, an extensive quantitative study by economist Philip Oreopoulos (2011) showed that immigrants (or rather, individuals with foreign-sounding names) are much less likely to be called for interviews than candidates with English or French names. Likewise, foreign credentials are associated with a penalty to their market value, according to sociologist Peter S. Li (2001). Immigrants are often underemployed with regards to their education level, and it is recognized that Canada has a significant problem of ‘brain waste’ when it comes to immigrants and the labor market (Wanner 2001s). Meanwhile there has been an increase of immigration precisely from countries where Canadian employers typically discount credentials and work experience (Biles et al 2008). For example, the industrialization of Asian

²⁶¹ i.e. the vertically integrated global economic system that Harvey (1989) calls *flexible accumulation*.

²⁶² According to Malenfant and Bélanger (2005), one of five Canadians will belong to so-called visible minorities in 1917. In certain areas, such as the metropolitan area of Toronto, visible minorities will represent more than half of the total population. See: <http://publications.gc.ca/collections/Collection/Statcan/91-541-X/91-541-XIE2005001.pdf>

nations has turned some of them into the biggest source countries for skilled immigration to Canada²⁶³.

Several studies show that the development related to immigrants' earnings and economic success has been negative over the last couple of decades²⁶⁴ (Picot and Hou 2003, Pendakur and Pendakur 1998, 2002, Reitz 2007, and Statistics Canada 2007). This situation coalesces with an underrepresentation of immigrants in political, administrative, economic, cultural and media institutions, according to the United Nations Mission on contemporary racism (2004), which means that the goal of the creating equality is far from achieved. In the years following the financial crises of 2008, studies have shown that immigrants with five years or less residence were almost 7 times as likely to lose her or his job as other workers (Roshier et al 2012). The vulnerability of these immigrants resembles that of other recent entrants, such as young workers (Barras and Shields 2013).

Reitz et al (2009) claim that it is largely social and economic inequality and experiences of discrimination that strengthen ethnic ties at the cost of feelings of belonging in the Canadian society. In an earlier article, sociologist Jeffrey G. Reitz (2005: 412) wrote that 'the correlation between ethnic or racial status and economic success over extended periods of time is bound to become divisive and to affect intergroup relations'. Such situations tend to yield social constructions of specific groups as 'deserving' or 'undeserving' in terms of civic, political, and economic rights, Jørgensen and Thomsen (2013) have argued²⁶⁵. When immigrants face difficulties in the labor market, sentiments that they represent liabilities tend to gain foothold, and this in turn could lead to demands for reductions in social programs and other support for immigrants, - a social sentiment Jørgensen and Thomsen (2013: [1]) refers to as *welfare chauvinism* (see also Banting 2010). However, a study by economists Michael Baker and Dwayne Benjamin (1995), based on the 1986 and 1991 Statistics Canada surveys of consumer finances, found that immigrants were actually less likely than natives to use social services such

²⁶³ The five top source countries for immigration to Canada are China, Phillipines, India, Pakistan and the U.S. (source: Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration, 2013)

²⁶⁴ A new study by Hou and Picot (2014) indicates that the poverty rate has improved recently, a finding seen as related to new criterias for immigrant selection. Ferrel et al (2014) also refer to studies that suggests that economic outcomes of immigrants appear likely to improve (2014: 8)

²⁶⁵ Drawing on Schneider and Ingram 1997, 2005

as employment insurance and social assistance (1995: 671, see also Reitz 1995). Javdani and Pendakur (2011) have also shown that immigrants generally pay more in taxes than they receive in public benefits (see also OECD 2013, Hiebert 2006). Several scholars state that there is no evidence that immigration, ethnic diversity and multiculturalism is actually weakening the Canadian welfare state (Abu-Laban (2013: 2, Banting 2005, Banting and Kymlicka 2006).

Similarly, in spite of claims to the contrary, there is no significant deterioration in social cohesion with regards to immigration, economists and statistician Ferrer, Picot et Riddell (2014: 17) argue. While in Europe anti-immigrant sentiments have seen an upsurge, evidenced by the growth of anti-immigration political parties and recent large-scale rallying against immigration²⁶⁶, in Canada a number of surveys indicate that most Canadians have a positive view of immigration (Reitz 2004, Ferrer et al 2014) and very few argue in favor of reducing the number of immigrants (Reitz 2004, 2011). In contrast with other western countries little concern has been voiced over immigrants 'stealing jobs' (Ferrer et al 2014). The policy narratives, as described in chapter 4, has continued to construct immigrants as 'needed' but also underlines the effort put into getting the 'right kind of immigrants' that will easily be absorbed by the labor market and become tax payers. Also, due to the point system, the average immigrant has a higher level of education than the average Canadian²⁶⁷, a situation that gives the argument of the immigrant-as-liability a weaker hold. The government has responded to the negative development when it comes to the economic outcome for immigrants by trying to tailor the immigration intake to labor market needs even better (discussed in chapter 4), but it has not suggested to reduce numbers of immigrants. This approach sends a message to the Canadian population that immigration is beneficial and desired. Immigration, then, is politicized as a positive development in Canada.

Far more heated debates have concerned Canada's policies when it comes to accommodating differences and immigrants' alleged unwillingness to adapt and integrate. Interlocutors have expressed concerns ranging from immigrants not adhering to common or 'Canadian' values to fear of homegrown terrorism. Debates have especially focused on the integration of religious

²⁶⁶ F.ex. the Pegida marches in Dresden, Germany, in December 2014

²⁶⁷ See for example Statistics Canada. *Educational Portrait of Canada, Census 2006*. Ottawa, Statistics Canada, 2008

minorities and themes that have been particularly central are for example gender, language skills, and the perception that (especially religious) communities seek separateness and not integration. In Quebec, public debates on these issues have been particularly salient, not least in the 22 televised open microphone public hearings on ‘accommodations related to cultural differences’ (by the *Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences*, chaired by sociologist Gerard Bouchard and philosopher Charles Taylor) in 2007/2008. Lately, in 2013, the debates over a proposed controversial charter of values affirming the values of State secularism and religious neutrality (including the prohibition of public sector employees from wearing ‘conspicuous’ religious symbols) evoked many of the same themes, though it should be noted that the proposal was met with massive public protest and ultimately cost the government its position in power.

The perceived threat is also closely related to migrants’ transnationalism (e.g. migrants’ continued close contact with their countries of origin) seen as representing potential conflicting loyalties. Current debates around multiculturalism can be said to spin around the question whether simultaneous dual attachment to ethnocultural groups and to the larger society is possible (Jedwab 2005). This point is often underscored by scholars writing within the transnational perspective or paradigm; that attachments are not mutually exclusive and that many migrants construct belonging in more than one society (see f.ex. Basch et al 1994, Rouse 1995). Migrants, it is argued, can participate in various familial, social, economic, religious, political and cultural processes that extend across borders all the while becoming part of the places they settle (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007). Transnationalism and integration, contrary to claims put forth in debates, are not contradictory processes (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004), indeed, some scholars argue rather that they can positively affect each other (de Haas 2005, Granovetter 1995).

Nevertheless, the new popular and political scepticism with regards to transnational practices echoes previous understandings of such practices as suspicious and disloyal. Cross-border contact is not new, several scholars notes, migrants stayed connected with their countries of origin also before, but the extent and frequency has increased massively over the last couple of decades (c.f. Morawska 2001, Vertovec 2003, Smith 2002, and Foner 2000, 2005). In an article from 1995, Glick Schiller et al describe how migrants’ contact with country of origin has traditionally been

seen as suspicious and discouraged on the basis of national loyalty (1995: 51)²⁶⁸. Today's transnational identities should be placed within the frame of the post-cold war political development, Guarnizo and Smith (1998) argue, since the new international relations provided a context in which transnationalism could be tolerated, and - especially in the initial enthusiasm over globalization - even celebrated. After the fall of the wall migrants' transnational identity and 'bifocality' (dual frames of reference) could come 'out of the closet', as Vertovec (2009) puts it, and even be legitimized, through arrangements such as dual citizenships, overseas parliamentary representation and extraterritorial extensions of homeland political parties (Levitt 2001). Levitt et al (2003) also note that transnational practices became more widely accepted as the spread of global culture reduced the differences between here and there. In the Canadian context, sociologist Alan Simmons has argued that the multiculturalism concept has been too Canada-focused and that it should aim to include also transnational practices and belongings.

However, over the last years there has been a backlash to the positive view of transnational practices and identities. In Canada, debates over meanings ascribed to citizenship and national loyalty flared up in 2006, in the wake Israel's attacks on Lebanon, an event led to the evacuation of 15.000 Canadian citizen of Lebanese origin²⁶⁹. In the debate, the term 'Canadians of convenience' was coined²⁷⁰ to describe immigrants who obtain Canadian citizenship and the advantages of a second passport, and then move back to their country of origin, after fulfilling the residency requirements. The debates spun around the value of citizenship and of citizenship as a commitment (as opposed to a convenience)²⁷¹.

The ado about commitment was perhaps exaggerated if one accepts the findings of a recent book based on a survey with more than 40,000 Canadians participating²⁷² which claims that ethnic attachment does not contradict or diminish attachment to Canada (Reitz et al 2009, see also Kalin and Berry 1995). Nevertheless, contemporary politics seem to work on the premise that cohesion

²⁶⁸ Within the frame of critique raised against methodological nationalism, these connections are also seen as discounted by the master narrative of the nation (Glick Schiller et al 2005).

²⁶⁹ And costing around 94\$ Canadian dollars, according to CBC (<http://www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2006/11/24/lebanon-cost.html>)

²⁷⁰ Popularized by conservative MP Garth Turner.

²⁷¹ Following the debate, amendments were made to the Canadian Citizenship Act, which included limiting the possibility to confer of citizenship to one generation.

²⁷² I.e. the *Ethnic Diversity Survey 2002*, realized by Statistics Canada.

is under a pressure that is coming from immigrants' lack of identification with Canada. Since the 1990s the social cohesion concept has gained ground in the political discourse, referring broadly to a 'sense of commitment, and desire [and] capacity to live together in some harmony' (Jenson 1998: 5). The present conservative government (in power since 2006) underlines the multiculturalism policy's role in creating cohesion, Joshee et al (2010) argue, yet this should be seen in the light of their politic's ideological source in the neoliberal currents that influence how citizens and their responsibilities and entitlements are understood. Neoliberal multiculturalism, Joshee (2009) argues, focuses on social cohesion as a 'corrective measure that can help increase social solidarity and 'restore faith' in the institutions of government' (2009: 99). The multiculturalism discourse of the Harper government spins around the concept of social cohesion while implicitly and explicitly communicating the view that diversity is divisive if it is not controlled²⁷³. Diversity is understood as having potentially balkanizing effects on society; that is, it is framed as a risk rather than a strength (Pashby et al 2014). Thus, the goal of multiculturalism is to create social cohesion, but social cohesion should be predicated on *solidarity*, rather than social equality. Political scientist Jane Jenson (1998), citing a 1997 government policy document concerning social cohesion, notes that there is no longer any mention of inequality or the role of the state in addressing inequality, rather, the appeal is made to communities to be charitable towards their members, and to individuals to show a greater willingness to sacrifice. This is in line with the neoliberal view that problems as well as solutions belong in the private sphere (Day 1998) and should be solved through hard work at the individual, not the systemic, level.

In recent years, several scholars have argued that neoliberalism is recalibrating the relationship between individuals/groups and the state in a way that affects the perception of diversity. This is happening in several ways. First, as mentioned above, diversity is reframed as belonging in the private sphere (Joshee 2009: 106). Second, anthropologist Ilana Gershon (2011) argues, neoliberalism is premised on people embracing the so-called neoliberal subject/agency and assuming responsibility for their own future as well as understanding freedom as primarily a matter of freedom of choice (and freedom of choice as empowerment - Brodie (2007). Gershon

²⁷³ Expressed for example as 'We cannot ignore what kind of consequences there are to allowing small minorities of extremists from whatever background to depart from the broad consensus of liberal democratic values and to embrace extremism (...)', as conservative Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, Jason Kenney, said in a 2009 speech (<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/media/speeches/2009/2009-03-18.asp>)

describes the development as involving a shift away from a liberal vision of people as ‘owning themselves as though they were property’ towards a neoliberal vision of people as ‘owning themselves as though they were a business’²⁷⁴. This entails seeing individuals as bundles of usable traits, or as ‘collections of assets that must be continually invested in, nurtured, managed and developed’ (Martin 2000: 582, in Gershon 2011: 539). It follows from this orientation that individuals hold the main responsibility for their own futures and also their own failures (Brown 2003), which serves to alleviate the state from responsibilities. This view also affects the discourse around integration. Griffith (2013) notes that instead of the two-way vision of integration, neoliberals embrace a one-way path where immigrants are expected to adapt and change to meet expectations and value systems of the host society.

According to Joshee (2009: 106) ‘*diversity is being reframed in ways that stress that those groups identified as diverse are themselves the problem*’. At the same time, ethnicity is emphasized as the most significant site of differentiation, while class, for example, rarely figures in the discourse. By appealing to solidarity and charity, the government is moving the issue of integration and social cohesion away from the social policy sphere and into the private and voluntary sphere of society. Social cohesion, Soysal (2011: 5) argues, is turned into the charge of increasingly ‘moralized and incentivized individual citizens’. The development echoes changes that are also observed with regards to integration policies in European countries, - the ‘integration new style’, as Jørgensen and Thomsen calls it (2013: 5). Describing the Danish situation, the authors point out three main objectives of the present integration policy. First, it seeks to restrict access of newcomers as a way to cope with integration challenges. Second, it underscores economic self-sufficiency through labor market integration, and third, it underscores individual responsibility with respect to the integration process.

The link between integration and labor markets is not only enforced differently in today’s political discourse and policies, it is also interpreted in different ways than before. Soysal (2011) points to the new meaning of ‘work’ and ‘worker’ to trace the changes in the ideas about the welfare state and equity, arguing that in today’s working life flexibility, risk and precariousness have become defining elements, and are framed as something individuals must be prepared to

²⁷⁴ See also chapter 3 in this thesis.

face. Risk, criminologist Pat O'Malley (1996) suggests, is now seen as a necessary component of opportunity and achievement. Work remains a central element in the welfare state model, but while it used to be understood as 'a socially organized condition', now it tends to be seen as 'an individual positioning in the labor market' (Soysal 2011: 5). In this perspective, systemic inequality is obliterated; factors and conditions beyond the individual's influence that may work against this (ethnic discrimination, for example) are down-played, and it becomes the responsibility of each individual to ensure his or her 'employability'. Work is presented as the main avenue to go in the fight against social exclusion, but at the same time working conditions are being hollowed out. (ibid: 7). The pressing concern seems to be whether or not people are employed, not whether they are 'badly employed', Soysal concludes (ibid: 4, 9). The tendency that integration and achieving equality is increasingly perceived as the responsibility of the individual, then, should be interpreted within this larger frame.

A lot of recent writings about the contemporary political discourse of multiculturalism, diversity and national identity have focused on its alleged underlying neoliberal agenda. Joshee (2009) points out that the previously dominating liberal social justice discourse²⁷⁵ is being overshadowed by a strong dominance of neoliberalism across all levels of government. On the federal level, she notes, there is also an increasing prevalence of neoconservatism. In the following I will elaborate on this.

Neoliberalism and the new patriotic nationalism

According to Griffith (2013), multiculturalism is presently being reconfigured toward a neoliberal orientation and designed to fit more closely with neoliberal changes in the immigration policy. The shift towards a neoliberal governing logic has many consequences, including a perception of multiculturalism as a potential source of division (Jenson 1998), but also as a potential economic asset (Fleras and Elliot 1996). As discussed above, the notion of Canada as multicultural has traditionally been closely linked to the development social welfare state (Abu-Laban 2013). This 'social' form of multiculturalism requires an activist state, Kymlicka (2013) notes. Root et al (2014: 6) describe this activist state as one that '*willingly invests public resources in nonprofit organisations that engage in immigrant settlement service and cultural*

²⁷⁵ Emphasizing the importance of the state in creating a caring and just society and redressing unequal distribution (Pashby et al 2014)

heritage expression, which give voice to underrepresented groups', However, in recent years neo-liberalism has reversed this by introducing the logic of the market into the welfare sector and by privatizing services and deregulating the labor market (Brodie 2002, see also Esping-Andersen 2002). The idea of social cohesion has been decoupled from the idea of social justice, Soysal (2011: 5) writes. Social programs are no longer presented as central to building solidarity, but as something draining the economy (Brodie 2002: 387). Inequality, then, is addressed in the framework of charity (Bernard 1999). Neoliberal multiculturalism, Root et al (2014: 6) argue, rejects the idea of two-way street integration in favour of a one-way street integration process '*in which the newcomers are solely responsible for making adaptations to fit into the receiving society's system of established values and institutions'*. Under the umbrella of austerity measures, there have been significant cuts in social programs, including as employment insurance and old age security, but also public and informative institutions like CBC, Library and Archives Canada and several research institutes have suffered reductions, and there has been a rewriting of the terms for funding for many organizations and NGOs (Abu-Laban 2013: 7). Also, funding to settlement agencies and programs has been deeply cut and the terms of funding has been changed from stable core funding to short-term, contract-based financing (Barrass and Shields 2013). This development has not happened without resistance from the population though. Since the notion of social citizenship has been intertwined with the notions of Canadian identity and society, the development today implies that a central part of what has been conceived of as Canadianness has been extracted (Brodie 2010: 388-389). What we see instead is the government trying to reinvent ideas of Canadian society and identity all the while evacuating the idea of social citizenship that has been a central part of it (ibid).

Katharyne Mitchell (2003) describes how processes of globalization and neoliberalism produce new dynamics between the state and citizens as evidenced in national, public systems of education. Examining multicultural education in England, USA and Canada she argues that there has been a shift away from aiming to form tolerant, 'multicultural selves' towards a new politically defined imperative to create 'strategic cosmopolitans'. She describes the 'multicultural self' as able to work with and through difference and conditioned to believe in the positive advantages of diversity in constructing and unifying the nation. In contrast, the 'strategic cosmopolitan' is motivated by understandings of global competitiveness and the necessity to

strategically adapt to rapidly shifting personal and national contexts (2003: 387-388). In this respect, Kymlicka (2013: 112) notes that '*[N]eoliberal multiculturalism for immigrants affirms - even valorizes - ethnic immigrant entrepreneurship, strategic cosmopolitanism, and transnational commercial linkages and remittances but silences debates on economic redistribution, racial inequality, unemployment, economic restructuring, and labor rights*'. Though the economic benefits of immigration has always been a central element in the political discourse, the recognition of these benefits has now been narrowed (Root et al 2014). For example, successful economic integration, traditionally measured over whole lives, even several generations, has now become a matter of time spans of five to ten years (ibid: p. 13).²⁷⁶

Since the Conservative government came into office in 2006, another clear tendency has been the emergence of what Abu-Laban calls a 'patriotic neo-liberal citizenship' (2013: 2). This has particularly been visible through the shift in the symbolism used to connote Canada, including a new emphasis on Canada's military history and the country's historical ties to Britain (Moodley and Adam 2012, Winter 2014)²⁷⁷. The renovation of the symbolic infrastructure has included for example the reinstatement of the term 'royal' in the names of military branches, replacing quebecois painter Alfred Pellan's work in the lobby of the Department of Foreign Affairs with a portrait of Queen Elisabeth, renaming buildings and bridges after veterans of the First World War, the rebranding and refocusing of the Museum of Civilization (the country's largest museum) into the Museum of Canadian History, and an expensive celebration of the anniversary of the War of 1812²⁷⁸, all part of an effort to reshape national symbols into placing a greater emphasis on Canada's past military achievements and the monarchy (Pashby et al 2014). The PM's goal of promoting Canada's history and fostering patriotism was explicitly stated in his *Here for Canada* electoral platform. The initiatives – or the build-up of Canada's 'new and muscular identity' as Pashby et al (2014) call it - are also part of a build-up before the 150th anniversary of the Confederation in 2017.

²⁷⁶ In McDonald's (2014: 25) words, immigration authorities have turned 'a portfolio once seen as an instrument of nation building into [...] a gigantic manpower agency (...)'

²⁷⁷ And, as Pashby et al note; underlining the contribution of great men at the expense of those of women and minorities (2014: 7).

²⁷⁸ Costing \$30 million, according to Winter (2014)

The government has also made amendments to the Canadian Citizenship Act that tighten the requirements to become a Canadian citizen²⁷⁹, raise the pass mark for the citizenship exam²⁸⁰ and enables the government to revoke Canadian citizenship from naturalized, dual citizens. Hamaz and Vasta (2009: 4) see this as a part of a new tendency that dual citizenships are cast as an obstacle to integration, based on the idea that feelings of belonging in one society are incompatible with such ‘dual loyalties’²⁸¹. According to this line of thought diversity and solidarity become mutually exclusive, although this is a false dichotomy, Parekh (2008) writes. The bill C-24 was intended to address the questions of divided loyalties and so-called convenient attachments by trying to ‘increase the value’ of Canadian citizenship (Chapnick 2011b). As part of this project, citizenship materials have been reissued through for example the study guide “*Discover Canada. The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship*” (first published in 2010). Compared to the previous study guide (*A look at Canada*) the new guide places a greater emphasis on Canada’s early British colonial history (including for example several images of the British Queen) and on Anglo-Saxon traditions (Pashby et al 2014: 16). For example, Canada’s war-related history is granted several pages, whereas Canada’s history of social justice movements is barely mentioned. The image of Canada as committed to international development and peacekeeping has also been downplayed compared to the previous edition. Similarly, readers learn a great deal about Canada’s economy, national symbols and voting system, while there is almost no mention of Canada’s public education and medicare system. According to Pashby et al (2014: 2), there has been a shift towards neoconservatism that ‘*recovers the imperial roots of Canadian citizenship ideals while covering up the strong story of equity, diversity, and civic action*’²⁸². Since its reedition, the failure rate of citizenship exams has increased significantly. Citizenship has become something to be merited through effort, a view that has been criticized by those who support the idea of citizenship as a human right²⁸³. The shifts in content when it comes to citizenship exams reflect political visions and priorities, Soysal (2011) states, as the objective of citizenship exams and of related integration programs is to establish certain values as common.

²⁷⁹ For example by raising residency requirements from 3 to 4 (out of 6 years) and by introducing mandatory language tests (Banting and Kymlicka 2010). In the same move, the processing fees were also tripled.

²⁸⁰ The government refers to act (the Bill C-24) as the ‘Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act’ (Fleras 2015: 393)

²⁸¹ See also the concern with ‘Canadians of convenience’, discussed on page 34 and transnationalism page 35-36.

²⁸² The authors also note that citizenship has always been a tool to reinforce hierarchies (2014: 4). In this regard they cite Isin and Wood (1999) who have described citizenship as the strongest expression of an imperialist practice.

²⁸³ There are also scholars who argue in favor of post-national citizenship (see f.ex. Fleras 2015) but I will not go into that debate here.

For example, in the guide social action is constructed as individual behaviors rather than working for systemic change, Pashby et al (2014) claim. Winter (2014: 143) notes that the present government's approach to citizenship promotes a culturally circumscribed meaning of Canadianness going beyond the merely civic areas. It has been argued that the new act seeks to transform citizenship into a reward for good behaviour rather than a tool for integration (Adams, Macklin and Omidvar 2014). As such, it follows the same logic that prescribes the individual as the main responsible for social cohesion (Soysal 2011).

'Diversity as identity' and the public embrace

Notwithstanding the changing agenda of multiculturalism policies and the widespread feeling of insecurity produced by the economic and political situation, multiculturalism does not seem to lose popularity in Canada (Kymlicka 2010: 105). Likewise, there is continued solid support for a high level of immigration among Canadians, Ferrer et al (2014) contend (see also Jedwab 2008, CIC 2004)²⁸⁴. There are structural, historical and political reasons for this situation, Moodley and Adams (2012) note, making Canada different from Europe. Even after some European leaders abandoned the notion of multiculturalism (Joppke 2004, Hamaz and Vasta 2009), declaring that it has served to separate and segregate rather than integrate²⁸⁵, the support for the multiculturalism policy among Canadians does not appear to wane (Kymlicka 2012, Berry 2013, Jedwab 2003, Adams 2007a, Hiebert 2006), and the support stems from governments, the public, as well as the business community (Ferrer et al 2014: [1], Hiebert 2006, Adams 2007b, Reitz 2009). Moreover, the situation has prevailed in spite of the economic slowdown. As Ley (2007) note, there has been no variation in immigration intake in spite of transitions between Liberal and Conservative governments the last 15 years. Rather, there has been a steady increase in target numbers in this period. Even in recession years, public debates, electoral campaigns or editorials have rarely centered on whether or not to let many immigrants in, though questions of how to achieve integration and how far to go in accommodation have been debated. Perhaps paradoxically then, various surveys realized over the first decade of the millennium indicate that although the population is in favor of receiving high numbers of immigrants, they are simultaneously more worried than before over immigrant integration (Jedwab 2008: 212).

²⁸⁴ For comparison with numbers from Europe, see International Social Survey 2003 and World Values Survey 2000.

²⁸⁵ See *Edmonton Journal*, Feb 11, 2011. Likewise, the Council of Europe declared in 2008 that multiculturalism leads to 'communal segregation and mutual incomprehension' (2008:10)

Nevertheless, the notion of multiculturalism continues to be widely embraced by most Canadians (Ley 2007). This attitude towards multiculturalism is well exemplified in a study by pollster Adams (2007b), who over a decade asked Canadians to rank those aspects of Canada that gave them the greatest sense of pride and found that multiculturalism always figured in the top ten²⁸⁶. Another quantitative study by Cameron and Berry's (2008) indicates that 'being proud of our diversity' should be seen as the core of Canadian identity and that the celebration of pluralism is an integral part of who Canadians believe they are. Statistical data supports these views, for example the Pew Research Center Study from 2002 in which 81% agreed that multiculturalism had contributed positively to the Canadian identity²⁸⁷, or the General Social Survey from 2003 that showed that 84% of recent immigrants, and 85% of Canadian-born, report feeling a 'strong sense of belonging to Canada' (Statistics Canada 2003).

Scholars have sought to identify the reasons for this untypical situation. Some have pointed to Canada's identity as settler country, arguing that this explains why immigration debates rarely concern the volume of immigration or the fact of being an immigration country (Jedwab 2008, Triadafilopoulos 2012). Moodley and Adam (2012) suggest that one of the reasons is the English-French dualism; the particular status of Quebec and French-Canadians representing one of the two 'founding nations' which makes Canada 'uniquely suited for pluralism' (Jaenen 1981: 81). When it comes to identity and attachment, the primary divide is not between Canadians and newcomers, Banting and Kymlicka (2010: 54) note, but between English-Canadians, Quebecois and First Nations. As discussed earlier in the chapter, the existence of Quebec and Canada's tripartite historical character means that there is no 'natural self-group' to which Canada might return, no idea of a 'home and land of a homogenous kind' (Moodley and Adam 2012: 434, see also Cameron and Berry 2008: 28) that could establish Canadian identity as a monolithic entity. The support for multiculturalism, then, could be seen as partly rooted in the lack of an imaginable alternative.

²⁸⁶ Yet curiously, as Banting and Kymlicka (2010: 51) note, apart from knowing that the federal government has an official multiculturalism policy, most Canadians do not know how the multiculturalism policy actually works.

²⁸⁷ Similar findings were made in a 2002 study by Environics, Focus Canada

Another explanation for the general positive attitudes towards multiculturalism, Moodley and Adams (2012) argue, is the immigrant selection system (discussed in chapter 4) which creams off the best qualified professionals among the candidates and seeks to admit only those expected to represent an economic benefit to Canada. Due to this system, immigrants typically have a high level of education, for example, half of those holding a PhD degree in Canada are foreign-born (Fitzpatrick 2008). Skilled immigrants, Jørgensen and Thomsen (2013: 9) hold, are often constructed as ‘good migrants’ in the sense that they represent solutions to labor market challenges, and presumably ‘contribute more than they cost’ since they contribute to the welfare system by paying high taxes and making little use of social benefits. According to Banting and Kymlicka (2006), in the Canadian case this perception is largely true; there is no evidence that immigration, ethnic diversity and multiculturalism weakens the welfare state, rather evidence supports the idea that immigrants contribute to the Canadian economy and the welfare state (see also Abu-Laban 2009, Li 2003a, *Report from the Economic Council* 1991). A side effect of this is that immigrants are more likely to be perceived as assets than liabilities for Canada (Reitz 2009), which works to produce support for Canada’s high level of immigration.

Jedwab (2008) also note that the results of opinion polls have the effect of influencing people’s opinions, so that polls revealing that Canadians view immigration positively also serves to strengthen this perception. Opinion polls, Jedwab argues, produce ‘support for immigration’ as a fact which can then be communicated for example in public education, and that can also serve as a means for authorities seeking to attract immigrants by promoting Canada as a welcoming place (2008: [211]). Support for immigration, then, can be said to produce future support for immigration.

Finally, a crucial factor is that around 20% of Canadians are foreign-born immigrants (50% in certain city ridings in Toronto and Vancouver). All political parties vie for the ‘immigrant vote’ (Moodley and Adam 2012) and turning away from multiculturalism would represent a great political cost. Multiculturalism is seen as a ‘safe issue’ for all parties to support, to the extent that criticism has been levelled that support for the multiculturalism policy is little more than an electoral strategy (Abu-Laban and Stasiulis 1992). Yet, different parties invest different meanings into the concept, and as discussed above, the actual policies related to multiculturalism are by no

means politically neutral. The development with regards to the public embrace of multiculturalism therefore remains an open question, especially if Brodie's (2002) claim that the policy is being decoupled from the notion of social equity holds true.

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In this chapter I have presented, contextualized and discussed Canadian multiculturalism policy as a discourse of national identity, and thus as an important part of the landscape in which my informants' negotiations of belonging took place. I have argued that the policy influences dominant ideas related such as for example national identity, national belonging, integration and social equity. The policy can be said to promote certain understandings and imaginations of the relationship between Canada and its members. I have therefore discussed in-depth some diverging views on the multiculturalism policy's effects and not least, its underlying premises. I suggest, rather, that we approach the multiculturalism policy as a contested field of ideas concerning ways of belonging and possible homes. The contingency and multiplicity of such ideas implies that migrants' experiences and strategies unfold in everchanging contexts. Moreover, as the last of the empirical chapters will convey, my informants carved out different ways to realize their quests for belonging.

This chapter concludes part II of the thesis. In the following part, I present and discuss my ethnography, drawing on the theories, concepts and ideas presented so far.

PART III



Some of the places where I met Guadalupe

Part III presents and discusses my ethnography. It comprises 3 empirical chapters; one that deals with narratives related to making the decision to migrate, one that concerns the period preceding the actual spatial relocation, and one that deals with my informants first few post-migration years. The narratives are presented somewhat differently in each of these chapters, which is in part related to analytical strategy, in part related to the way the fieldwork unfolded. For example, the narratives in chapter 8 and 9 are retrospective accounts told to me when the informants were relatively new immigrants in Montreal. In these early narratives, especially those concerning the decision, certain recurrent themes or shared tropes emerged that I decided to pursue and the analysis is organized around these. Chapter 10, on the other hand, explores my informants' negotiations of belonging over time and across contexts; the stories presented here are in reality collages of statements made in different encounters. These narratives present various dimensions of home-making and experiences and trajectories of integration anchoring these in the contexts and circumstances that were experienced as relevant. In order to bring forth these processes and ensure the ideosyncrasy of the different stories, the narratives of different informants are analysed separately.

In the final chapter of Part III I bring the threads together and reflect more broadly on themes and questions the ethnography yields.

8. Narratives of Decisions.

Personal narratives and shared tropes

My mother is sitting across me by the kitchen table. Looking at me with the suffering eyes of a mother. And then she says: I would have never thought that my daughter would become a person who would do a thing like that.

Guadalupe

Guadalupe pulls her cardigan tighter and smiles a little as she tells me about this kitchen table moment that took place during her visit to Venezuela a few weeks ago. There is a draught of cold winter air coming through the cracked window frames of the bohemian café in the Mile End where she proposed we meet. More than two years have passed since Guadalupe did 'that': Since she left Venezuela to begin a new life in Montreal. Yet, as her mother suggests, it was not there that it began; Guadalupe 'had become' someone who would migrate, and contrary to expectations.

When I first met Guadalupe, she had lived in Montreal for 6 months and was going through her first Canadian winter. She was early for our appointment and the café I had proposed for our first meeting turned out to be closed for renovation. She was waiting for me on its stairs, wearing a long duvet coat and warm winter boots, and tiny snowflakes got caught in her curly hair. We decided to go to a nearby bistro. Guadalupe began by telling me that she comes from a big city in the center of Venezuela. She lived there all her life, and her parents and four younger brothers are still living there. After completing her education, she worked as an ICT analyst and consultant for six years. - *Compared to many of those I studied with, I was lucky, she says, because I did not have to move to another city to find a job.*

T: - *How come you decided to go to Montreal, did you already know of someone who had migrated there?*

G: - *I got a lot of information from my father. He is a businessman and he often cooperates with Chinese suppliers. Some of these migrated to Canada, and they told him how easy it was. My father mentioned this to me. Maybe you... He gave me this idea and it swirled in my head for about five years.*

T: - *And why was that?*

She hesitates before answering.

- - -

This chapter presents my informants' narratives of the beginning of their migration trajectories. It discusses experiences, sentiments and circumstances that they included in the stories of why and how they came to make the decision to migrate, and anchors these in contexts and events that in various ways were significant. A central argument in the chapter is that the narratives of the decision to migrate concern sentiments of belonging and ideas of self in several ways, for example in that they presented Venezuela as having become an 'impossible home'. By framing the country's problem as rooted in culture and mentality, the narrator could disassociate herself or himself from Venezuela while simultaneously invoking a belonging in Canada.

The narratives explored in this chapter were all collected in the first round of interviews that I conducted. At this point most of the informants had lived relatively short time in Montreal. The question '*why did you decide to migrate?*' was simply meant as a natural way to commence interviews; it was something I would ask the informants to establish some facts and start the conversation. However, narratives related to this question soon imposed themselves as important in the research, because the statements, comments and anecdotes that my informants weaved into them were so rich with reflections around for example identity, values and life quality. Moreover, the narratives came to comprise a big part of the first round of interviews. The obvious urge to explain and justify could perhaps also be linked to the fact that emigration of the present scale is a very new phenomena in Venezuela. The comment of Guadalupe's mother above should also be read in this frame. It was not only that she had not expected Guadalupe to migrate; she had not expected Venezuela to become a country that people would leave in massive numbers.

As argued elsewhere, I believe that analyzing migrants' personal narratives allows us to see migration as an individual undertaking and achievement, without disregarding that migration inevitably takes place in variously restrictive contexts. The narratives presented in this chapter exemplify this. When answering the 'why' question, a distinction was typically made between the more immediate reason behind the decision to migrate, which could be a specific event (an incident of violence, the loss of a job, a seminar about migration), or the security situation in general, and the 'deeper' reasons, which were anchored in ideas related to self, personal aspirations and values that served to explain why they had 'become someone' who'd chose to migrate. Migration, in this sense, was seen as a solution to a sense of disemplacement with regards to common values and lifestyles and a lack of a sense of belonging. Hoey (2005) has written that the better way of life that migrants seek often embeds existential and moral concerns, with the expectation that through migration these will be, in some ways, resolved. This insight, I believe, contributes to shed useful light on the narratives presented here.

Faist (in Audebert and Doraï 2010: 83) writes that '*[t]he dynamics of migration cannot be understood without considering the life-worlds of persons, the social and symbolic ties they entertain into regions of origin, destination and onward mobility*'. The informants in this study presented the decision to migrate as a sort of *prise de conscience* of the sacrifices and gains involved, based on reflections around what kind of life they desired and the order of importance of various types of attachments. The decision was never narrated as spontaneous or circumstantial. Indeed, I had it pointed out a number of times that migrating had been the most important decision in my informants' lives, one that had been considered and planned very carefully. The thesis takes the view that narratives of the origin of the idea of migration and of the period before actual relocation, are crucial for the understanding of trajectories and aspirations of migration. In this regard, Benson (2010a: 13) suggests that decisions to migrate and experiences of life as a migrant should be '*understood within the context of the imaginings that drive migration and influence expectations for post-migration life*'. These ideas, she writes, not only inspire the act of migration but also frame post-migration choices. On the other hand, the migration experiences can also be seen to influence which ideas that become central in migrants'

retrospective narrative accounts. This duality has informed discussion in this chapter and the ones that follow.

Narratives allow for common themes to be distilled and explored on a more general level. In my informants' narratives, there were certain recurrent themes that stood out and that somehow allowed for an exploration of the relationship between collective and personal stories. For example, a common narrative trope was Venezuela presented as having become a country where it was no longer possible to lead a meaningful life; as a place where normal social relations had been 'lost', and where the situation was so grave that it had no foreseeable solution. With regards to this, migration was presented as a way to recuperate an everyday normality. As noted in chapter 1, circumstances such as such violence, corruption, instability, and social divisions, however significant, are often overlooked in studies of skilled migrants. The ethnography presented here therefore also seeks to contribute to nuancing the presentation of skilled migrants as privileged travellers.

Finally, another important theme in the narratives was social class. My informants' presentations of Venezuela, and their narrative emplacement of themselves in this landscape, were largely articulated through the trope of class. In relation to this, certain qualities were evoked that were cast as part of a middle class ethos of hard work, diligence, perseverance, and honesty. Interestingly, these very qualities are also prominent in the call to desired skilled migrants from the Canadian migration regime. By drawing on class, these narratives thus locate the narrator as 'at home' in Canada, although the meanings they lent such ideas varied and they eventually acted on them in different ways.

In order to structure the discussions in a way that illuminates these themes, the chapter is organized around some of the recurrent narrative themes and tropes. I will begin by discussing narratives where the informants presented the differences between Venezuela 'then and now'. While situating my informants' interpretations of contemporary Venezuela, they also foreshadow many of the themes that will come up in the subsequent discussion.

Lost homes: Venezuela then and now

There is no longer a respect for the other. People don't value you as a person, you don't matter to them. It's like... let's say you and I live in the same building. On Sunday I put my radio on very loud. You are my neighbour, you've worked all week and you need to rest. So you come and knock on my door: Guadalupe, I need to rest, could you lower the volume? But I say: This is my house, I do whatever I feel like. Now, my duty out of respect for you would be to say, of course, I'm sorry, I'll lower it. Or better, to be considerate of my neighbours. That has been lost there [*allà se perdiò eso*]. And when you've lost the valuation of the other, what is there left?

Guadalupe

Narratives of how the idea of migration had take shape often made reference to a better past that had preceded the present hardship in Venezuela. The narratives typically emphasized the contrast between a peaceful and secure past, and an instable and hopeless present and future. They included anecdotes from everyday life, reflections on personal experiences, and childhood memories that were connected in a way that not only made migration make sense, but presented it as necessary.

As I described earlier in the thesis, I met Daniel for the first time in a busy, noisy food court in a big shopping mall, during his one-hour lunch break. He expertly guided our choice between the Korean, Lebanese, Thai, Sushi and Healthy food counters. Sitting down, chop sticks in hand; he explained the trajectory of life that had brought him to Montreal.

I went to do a postgraduate course in Belgium. I lived in Belgium for one year. When I was in Belgium I saw that.. Belgium does not have a high immigration, like Canada. I saw that I wouldn't be able to stay legally. And I knew that I did not want to return to Venezuela. I could not see my future there. I wanted a better place to live, with more possibilities, and a safer place. I began to search the net to find out about my options and Canada came up. It seemed to me to be the easiest. And especially since Quebec has its own, independent of the federal government, and since I had learnt French it would be easier still. And with my professional field and education.

Daniel applied, together with his girlfriend, while still in Belgium. A little less than a year later they both obtained their visas. In the meantime they had spent a few months in Venezuela *'working, saving, preparing'*. They left Caracas for a new life in Montreal as newly weds.

- So, why was it impossible to imagine a future in Venezuela? I ask. He shakes his head, sighs:

It was a slow deterioration, slow but constant. I remember that until I was 10, no, 15, I had not heard of such problems, this violence. Attacks, robberies. But there is no particular moment where you can say, here, this is when it changed. It's been happening slowly. When the politics are bad and the economy, then poverty increases, and these things proliferate. Now I would describe it as chaos. Everyone do as they please.

It becomes clear as our conversation proceeds that when Daniel speaks of what was lost in the first of the citations, he is referring to the feeling of security, to peaceful, respectful interpersonal relations, to predictability. He remembers when things were different, he says. In the memories of his childhood and youth, the streets are safe, the shops have what you need, and people are polite and friendly towards each other. Though he does not remember exactly, he is quite sure he never knew of anyone who had ever been assaulted or kidnapped. As opposed to now, when 'everyone' has been a victim of crime. Migrating, he explains, was an attempt to regain this stable and 'normal' environment, in which he could make plans and predictions about the future and decide his own way forward.

The situation in Venezuela was so bad. My mother supported me because she knew that I made a choice to feel safe and that the idea of leaving was to thrive. Our goal here in Montreal was simply to find stable work, both of us, and start a real life.

Daniel's story is typical. In many of the narratives, the birth of the idea of migrating was traced back to a childhood when daily life was safe and the future promising. The present situation is thrown into negative relief against a backdrop of memories of a society where calm and stability reigned: As kids they played outside in the streets (versus: today no responsible parent let their kids play outside for fear of kidnapping). When they went to school, the ethos was that hard work gets you far (versus: today you get nowhere unless you support the party in power). When they were young, they would meet their friends for drinks in a bar (versus: crime and violence are

forcing people to simply stay at home). As it turned out, the efforts they put into studying and working did not yield the quality of life that they had anticipated, on the contrary, it was experienced as being hollowed out every day. No one could predict where the country was heading. Life tomorrow and for the years to come simply could not be imagined in such circumstances.

In the summer of 2009, I interviewed Luis, a young computer engineer, who had arrived in Montreal 2 months earlier. He told me:

It is not only a question of politics, but also about values, for Venezuelans. Because if people are courageous and want changes, they have to do something. But they are either in favour of the politics, or they do nothing. They stay calm, and think, what can we do, is there hope for the future? What is my future? Those who are like me they decide that, OK, it's over, I have to leave right away, because I cannot remain here for the rest of my life looking for a solution. Because what can I do with this situation?

Luis saw the development in Venezuela as spiralling downwards, and felt that he had to leave before his freedom was taken away from him:

Things got worse and worse. I tried changing job, changing city, changing people, changing security door. But I did not want to continue the next 10-15 active years of my life living like that, under the bar. I thought, what I still have is my freedom, but they are going to take that away from me. I definitely need to find out how to get out of here. I saw that there was going to be held a conference about the migration programme of Canada, organised by some migration lawyers, so I went there. They compared numbers. In 2005 there were 70 persons killed in Toronto, I think. In Caracas, 70 people are killed between Friday afternoon and Monday morning every week. I said, OK, *me voy* [I'm leaving]. I prefer leaving everything I have, for my freedom, my safety.

In many ways his story is typical. Stories often pointed out just how far the deterioration in Venezuela had come, and juxtaposed the expectations and living conditions they had started out with what they ended up having. Though memories can be idealized and are most certainly fragmented, I believe that these recollections of the past are indispensable as keys to understanding why living in Venezuela became unendurable to them; why change became

necessary and eventually urgent. The stories also point us towards some of the important trail marks of their respective journeys, such as for example 'life quality', 'home', 'security', 'civism', 'values'. Luis, for example, claims that society's 'fundamental values' have been lost:

I was a good, respectful citizen. And through my travels I have understood that everyone have to contribute to make things work. I tried to do my part, but I saw that not everyone was trying to do theirs. It's like... you are waiting in line, and then somebody comes and stands in front of you, and you can say nothing, because there will be an argument. There is no respect. Fundamental values in society, such as not disturbing others, respecting other people's property, greeting each other... These values are lost.

Another dimension of these narratives is that they were often imbued with bitterness and a sense of undeserved loss, and emphasized the efforts they had invested into for example being good students, dedicated workers, and responsible citizens. Thus, they were implicitly stating that while they had done their part, the country had not. And, along the same lines, that the people of the professional middle class were being sacrificed in spite of their toil. – *Everyone who has a brain and the possibility is leaving*, I was told by Mariela, a board member of an Association for Venezuelans in Montreal. The bitterness was at once directed towards the political and ideological developments in Venezuela that have made them (the middle class) the symbols of inequality, self-interest and un-due privilege. But it was also deeply personal; experienced as an exclusion from the place that ought to be (and used to be) home. There was a wide gap between their self-presentations as responsible individuals cultivating values such as good work moral and good citizenship, as Luis's statement above exemplifies, and the perception of them conveyed by the political propaganda and the dominant public discourse. For example, a clear emphasis was placed on the idea that hard work - not privilege - had brought them where they were. Guadalupe, for example, gave me an example:

There were people who, when I walked in the street and they for example saw my handbag, would look at me and say, ah, look at her bag, how expensive, and they would roll their eyes. But I could buy this handbag because I worked, I did not steal it. I struggled through years of university studies and now I work hard, and I bought this handbag because I wanted it.

Such narratives present Venezuela as a place where hard work is no longer recognized and the role of the middle class denied. In contrast, the evoked work ethic is understood as recognized, even celebrated, in Canada. Interestingly, in the narratives, Venezuela's negative development is articulated as a matter of social relations. While Venezuela's economic problems are explained as failed politics, the sense of hopelessness is understood as related to a deteriorated 'mentality' or 'cultural problem', which was the term that several of my informants employed. This development was often articulated with reference to mundane but symbolic ways of conduct, as we saw in Guadalupe's example about inconsiderate neighbours above.

- *Do you see people leaving their waste in the streets here?* Daniel exclaimed rhetorically. - *No! It's clean here. In Venezuela, people do this* [pretends to drop his napkin on the floor]. According to him, a big part of Venezuela's problem is the lack of a collective conscience, of the notion that everyone is responsible for everything, as he mentioned in the longer narrative presented earlier. In many ways, these narratives are paradoxical given the socialist orientation of the government and the Bolivarian revolution's emphasis on key values such as solidarity, equality, cooperation, and community empowerment. However, several of my informants insisted that the problematic development in Venezuela was deeper rooted and not merely a consequence of the Chavez regime. Things did not begin to go bad with Chavez, it was argued, rather he was seen as a symptom of a process that was already unfolding. I will return to these issues below. Meanwhile, it should be noted that the Venezuelan government has steadily employed a somewhat reversed version of the narratives above, blaming the country's difficult and unstable situation in part on the selfishness, irresponsibility and lack of solidarity of *la oposición* (the opposition).

Narratives of the situation in Venezuela were inextricably linked with these narratives of a 'good past', of a social environment that had lost. It was sometimes difficult to grasp precisely which periods they were referring to, since their childhoods and younger years unfolded in somewhat different periods. But often they would be referring to the 70s and 80s, which are generally seen as years of economic growth and political stability²⁸⁸. However, historians also point at destabilizing forces of this period, for example corruption and social inequality. With regards to

²⁸⁸ Especially the 70s, when oil had made Venezuela the richest country in Latin America (Hausman and Rodriguez 2013)

the level of crime and violence, it is commonly agreed that the development since then has been negative. For example, UNOCD statistics show that the problem of violence has been increasing steadily since the mid-90s²⁸⁹. According to these statistics, Venezuela has had second worst homicide rate in the world in recent years; only surpassed by Honduras.

While there is evidently a distinction between lived experience and abstract, general historical narratives, there could also be elements of idealized youth memories playing in. Memories of the past greatness of homelands often emerge in cases where there has been a great change, as we have seen recently with regards to the post-communist nostalgia in Eastern Europe (see f.ex. Todorova and Gille 2012). Such narratives are also associated with diasporas, where they often serve to uphold a sense of past as well as future belonging to a homeland, or idea of homeland (see f.ex. Gold and Paine, in Gold 1984, and Bruland 2015) The descriptions of what was 'lost' in Venezuela's in some ways echo such narratives, although Venezuelan emigration is not usually understood as diaspora, neither by migrants nor scholars, and although few of my informants imagined a future return.

The past was particularly present in the minds of those who were no longer young. For some, narratives of Venezuela were narratives of the loss of a sense of belonging that they used to have, a belonging that seemed unavailable to young Venezuelans today. That was the case of Eva and her husband, Eduardo, who had migrated to Montreal 3 years earlier. Both were retired university professors and they knew Montreal prior to migration after having spent a sabbatical period here some years earlier. Eva and Eduardo had qualified for migration mainly because they came with their three children, all young adults. Now the family lived in a neat terrace house in a newly developed residential area just east of the city centre. It was late spring when we met, and the young, frail trees outside the living room window had fresh green leaves. The house was a hub and the hours we spend around the table talking were frequently punctuated by the coming and going of their children.

²⁸⁹http://www.unodc.org/documents/gsh/pdfs/2014_GLOBAL_HOMICIDE_BOOK_web.pdf

Eva and Eduardo spoke of Venezuela with a mix of love and sadness, and during our conversation they often came back to what a great country it used to be. Eduardo:

When we were young and had the children we dreamt that they would grow up in a country that continued to develop, with its values. With its limitations too, but with its grandness [*grandeza*]. Unfortunately forces came into play that we could not control.

Like several of my other informants, they pointed out that Venezuela used to be a country that received migrants, not one that expelled its people. - *People came from many countries to settle there because it was a good country to live in*, Eva said, a comment that corresponds with official migration numbers (see also chapter 1). Venezuelans did not emigrate, she noted; although many spent time abroad studying, including them:

Eduardo and I were postgraduate students in France for 4 years when we were young, but we never thought about staying there. It never occurred to us. In spite of how well we were there, in spite of the great experience it was, we wanted to go home to Venezuela, we wanted to use our education there. We had possibilities back home, we saw our future there. Many in our generation studied abroad but they all came back and gave the country what they had to give. Oh, they could describe to you a beautiful Venezuela, one that we enjoyed. But for our children, Venezuela is synonymous with conflict and crisis and problems.

Although this past is viewed through the prism of the present, Eva underlined that she did not mean to pretend that Venezuela ever was an idyll without any significant problems to resolve. There were poverty and inequality, she explained, but people were not divided by violence and political and social hostility. Eva and Eduardo's stories of Venezuela 'back then' depicted a certain feeling of unity *malgré tout* in the social as well as the urban landscape:

When we were young we used to go everywhere, we used to travel around the city by public transport, with no problems, going to parties in other parts of the city, in suburbs, in poor neighbourhoods. Now the insecurity has parcelled the city into areas where you are more or less safe, and other areas where you would not even consider entering.

Eduardo told me that when he was young, being a *caraqueno* - an inhabitant of the city of Caracas - was a significant part of his identity. -*We were inhabitants of the whole city*, he said. Since then, violence has restrained people's mobility and transformed parts of the city into danger zones in which they are reduced to vulnerable prey.

We became inhabitants of just a very small part of the city, an enclave, a part of it in which we felt more or less secure. The rest of the city became a threat. I no longer felt it was mine. That has happened in many cities in Latin America; people who live in the city do not feel that it belongs to them. They do not have a city identity anymore.

Eduardo's story narrates a belonging that had been devoured by these changes, it describes a place that was once so familiar but that had become unrecognizable. The description of Caracas as parcelled into enclaves finds a resonance in descriptions of a development that has happened in many cities in Latin America, where fear of violence has translated into a tendency toward growing spatial segregation and the construction of protected, privatized residential enclaves for the wealthier part of the population (see for example Harrison Conwill 2011, Caldeira 1996).

Beyond nostalgia, this development also coloured the future that their children represented. Eva says that they are sorry that their children never knew the Caracas that was theirs. Their children's Caracas consisted of a limited number of neighbourhoods in which they could move more or less unguarded. The rest of the city was simply inaccessible because of the insecurity. Public places had ceased to be public and the few areas in which one felt safe seemed to be always narrowing in.

The parks! We used to hang out with other young people in the parks at night. The young today cannot do that. Parks have become dangerous. This development is sad because the young they loose... affection... attachment. Roots. That is what is happening with the younger generation. And it is sad because it is a part of the cultural identity. Who is going to love this country? Who is going to respond for it?

Descriptions of the Venezuelan society of today as chaotic and dangerous were present in all the migration stories. The descriptions spanned various themes, such as violence, corruption and instability, but at the core of all this was a perception that social relations have altered; that they have become characterized by distrust, hostility, and indifference. Several even claimed that

Venezuelans no longer treat each other as 'persons', such as Guadalupe above. They claimed that there was a growing attitude towards one's fellow citizens as extraneous and disposable. Even ordinary everyday life social interaction was often experienced as balancing on the brink of conflict. For example, I was told many anecdotes of violence in which someone was killed because of minor disagreements in otherwise completely customary situations, such as the corner store employee that was shot dead because he did not have small change.

Guadalupe's example about neighbour relations may seem undramatic on the surface, but what she is describing is a society where she feels that people act like insulate particulars. Respect was a theme that surfaced in numerous stories: respect for other human beings, respect for rules, respect for the environment, respect for democracy. Narratives presented the social ambience and environment as characterized by frustration, tension, fear and hostility. Noely, a Venezuelan friend of Guadalupe, described the ambience:

You don't dare to protest anymore. You don't dare to talk to people you don't know. If someone slips in front of you in the line, or if someone drives carelessly and make a dent in your car, you don't say anything. You just let it pass and tries to get away from the situation. Because you never know who's carrying a gun.

However, on other occasions informants would describe Venezuelans as 'typical Caribbean' in the sense of being relaxed and cheerful, open and sociable. Daniel, for example, himself a cheerful and joking person, spoke warmly of the joyfulness and humour of Venezuelans. - *People there like to be social, they like to talk, and have parties. And the music...* Similar descriptions occurred regularly in conversations. Andrés, a young political scientist who had already lived in Montreal for several years when we first met, commented that '*in Canada you have 911, in Venezuela you have neighbours*'. The contrast between these descriptions and the many examples of indifference or hostility is palpable. In the narratives, the sociability, humour and joy of life of Venezuelans are presented as typical, not to say essential, whereas the present social tensions, aggressiveness and distance are perceived as 'untypical', as a sort of collective mental *impasse*. Thus, a central theme in the narratives was that social relations have deteriorated, that a previous peaceful 'normality' has been lost, and that they felt alienated with regards to this development.

Mariela had heard many stories of that kind. She is a central figure in a Venezuelan association in Montreal and therefore remains partly immersed in the ambience of the country she left 11 years ago. A long time *immigrée*, Mariela preferred to speak French with me. Her fluency in this language and her European looks does not give away her Latin American origin. Indeed, like several of my informants²⁹⁰, she is herself a child of immigrants²⁹¹. Through her engagement in the association, she is in close contact with many of the newcomers who arrive, sometimes even accommodating them until they have found a place of their own. Mariela describes Venezuelans as depressed and demoralized, and says that they feel that it is no longer the country they knew.

My own mother immigrated to Venezuela when she was 15 and she tells me that the goodness, the sweetness, the sympathetic ways of the Venezuelans, is gone. Venezuelans are divided. There are those who say we just have to stick it out, but they are very hardened, very bitter.

Mariela herself migrated several years before most of my informants and before the 1999 elections that granted Chavez his power. According to her, the social malaise was already present at the time when she decided to leave. She says that she felt uncomfortable with the mentality of people even back then, although the tensions were not as strong as they are today.

The easy life that people want... The easy money. The politicians' lack of moral, it is nothing new. The cult of money, no matter where it comes from. If you have money all is perfect. Whether you stole them, whether you got them through corruption, whether you are a crook, that is not important. The important thing is to have money. This bothered me enormously and I did not want my children to grow up in such an environment.

What Mariela says resonates with what many other informants stated, namely that Hugo Chavez' regime was not the cause of the deterioration, but rather an engine that sped it up. Chavez and his politics were generally seen as dangerously undemocratic and damaging to the country, yet few perceived him as the real cause of the problem. On the contrary, it was often pointed out that were it not for the more profound social problems, there would have been no Chavez. Daniel, for example, said:

²⁹⁰ See methodology chapter.

²⁹¹ In her case from Spain. Several others had parents or grandparents from France, Italy and Germany.

It's true, Chavez is half-crazy but he is just a symptom of a deeper problem. If he would resign tomorrow, the problem would still remain, because it is a cultural problem, a problem of mentality.

The problems that rid Venezuela were perceived to be so grave that it would take years to restore normality. Most of my informants did not believe that they would live to witness any significant improvement and this conclusion had played an important role in their decision to migrate; their own lives were limited in time. Mariela explained:

Those who have the means and the education and the mind to understand what is happening, leave. They see that this is not possible, that it is going to explode, and they leave. Some say it is for political reasons that people leave. We say it is not only that.

I will return to the narratives of Venezuela's 'cultural problem' further below, but first I will discuss narratives of the political division in Venezuela and the country's problem of violence and crime. In these narratives, the situation in Venezuela was presented as chaotic and as characterized by a collapse in ordered social interaction. Importantly, people of the middle class were often presented as the counterweight to this development. Jacobson (2006), in a study from Argentina, points at a similar anxiety about chaos, lawlessness, peripherality and "Third Worldism" that rid the middle class there. She argues that in this context her middle class informants were concerned with producing themselves as "First World" actors. The narrated opposition between the 'chaotic' Venezuela and the 'well-ordered' Canada could be read in the light of such ideas, and as serving to locate the informants as better at home in Canada.

The situation in Venezuela has driven the number of people leaving the country to an unprecedented level. Narratives of a present exodus form part of the landscape in which migration decisions are taken, and particularly central is the unexpected acceleration of these processes. Eva:

We went on vacation to Canada together with our daughter who was going to visit her boyfriend in Toronto. The trip was very close to being cancelled, because we were going to leave on a Monday, and on the Thursday before there was the coup d'état against Chavez and the airport remained closed until Sunday. At that time we didn't think about

migrating yet. We were thinking about maybe buying a new car. When we migrated, we were the first among our friends. Two years later, all of them had left the country.

Among the many moments of mourning that migration had involved, the feeling of not being able to transmit such attachments was a particularly painful one for migrants with children. Eva:

The thing that makes me saddest is that my children will not have the same attachment to Venezuela. Little by little they will get used to the society here, and loose the roots they had. Maybe they will come to see Venezuela as something negative and not want to go there. That is the greatest pain for us, because for us the country is so precious. It is a very beautiful country. It is painful to see our children become citizens of a different place. It is not what we would have wanted for them.

Political divisions

An indisputable characteristic of Venezuela the last couple of decades is the political polarisation that split the Venezuelan population into *chavistas* (adherents of Hugo Chavez) and others.

Scholars' interpretations of why the divide has become so deep diverge. Some claim that Chavez' project of a more equal economic redistribution frightened the better-off part of the population and made them cling firmer to their privileges (cf. Garcia Guadilla in Ellner and Salas 2006). For some, the cleavage represents a re-politicisation of an already entrenched class divide (cf. Cannon 2002)²⁹². Others have suggested that Chavez intentionally adopted policies to polarize Venezuela because it was electorally beneficial to him and that divisions were not merely reflecting a 'former, class-based societal polarization' but in fact were part of a political strategy (Corrales and Penfold-Becerra 2011: 67). It is beyond the scope of the present study to discuss these respective interpretations, but since I will rely on my informants' points of view here, it should be underlined that these views represent their subjective understandings.

According to most of my informants, their middle class belonging made them political targets, and they claimed to me treated with contempt by media as well as in the street. This ambience

²⁹² Cannon (2008) also point at race as an important subtext with regards to this divide. This, he argues, has its roots in the colonial era during which the white, Eurocentric settler elite cemented its dominance. The migrants interviewed here to a great extent - but not entirely - conformed to the race/class picture, which I will return to in chapter 10.

augmented the sense of alienation, though mostly the boundaries would be played out subtly. Guadalupe, for example, tells me:

Sometimes, in the regular supermarkets, you cannot find sugar, or coffee, so there are these provision centres (*centros de abastecimiento*) that the government has, that are nothing, but you have to go there because you need coffee, or you need food for your baby, or something like that. So you are waiting in line, and then those who are in the line and who know that you are not with the government start to be sarcastic and go '*Oh, look at that, she has to stand in line just like us humble ones [nosotros humildes]*'. And they glare at you.

The division is made even more plain by the fact that individuals subscribing to different political views do not live lives isolated from each other, and in some cases the division cut through families, circles of friends, workplaces and neighbourhoods. According to Eva, politics have caused a rupture in social relations in Venezuela; the polarisation turning every conversation into a potential heated argument:

There used to be political differences before too, but not so serious. People could exchange views, and go and vote as they wanted, but they did not become enemies, like now. Now there is no confidence. And so every interaction is superficial.

The consequence of this, Eduardo added, is that many people become discouraged and even begin to avoid sociability. In this ambience, loose talk was replaced with auto-censorship, openness with keeping oneself to oneself. Eva explained:

You have to be constantly on guard about what you are saying, always try to predict how the other will react if you say this or that. Anything can be interpreted as a political statement. We never saw that before in Venezuela.

Eduardo continued:

You can no longer talk about anything without it becoming political. The only things you can talk about are how your day has been, about the beach, about this or that party. It has created a superficiality that we have never experienced before. For me, one of the great joys of life has been when friends gathered together and exchanged freely. But in these situations you began to have...

not mistrust, but the type of disagreement that make the conversation unpleasant, aggressive. And then you don't really feel like meeting up anymore because each time you do you end up feeling bad. It is strange and uncomfortable, and you think, I cannot spend the rest of my productive years living in a situation like that...

The feeling of living under censorship was also contrasted with Canada and other Western countries democratic liberty of free exchange. Moreover, in this climate of political polarization, migration was inevitably understood as a political statement. Not surprisingly, Chavez adherents tend to see emigration as an act of abandon or betrayal, for example, the Second Consul of the Venezuelan consulate in Montreal, whom I interviewed during my fieldwork, described recent emigrants as 'misled' and 'unpatriotic'. She stated that:

From the point of view of Venezuela it [*the emigration*] is both good and bad. It is unfortunate that the money disappears out of the country. Many of the ones who leave are well educated. But after all it is better for the country that these people leave [*mejor que se vayan*] because these people only complain and criticize anyways. It is good that they leave so that they can see that things are not necessarily good in other places either. They create unrest in the country by always criticising. And then later they can return and contribute to improving the country.

She also described migration as a 'fashion' among privileged people, and that many of them are 'dreamers' who will eventually realize that 'the grass is not greener in Canada'.

Negative views of migration also sometimes affected my informants' family relations. For example, Eva's parents were strongly in favour of Chavez and thus could not understand why she had wanted to leave Venezuela. Eva:

According to them, the country is experiencing its best moments. So my mother and father protested. They said, you are abandoning us and we are getting old. I told them, *You abandoned me when you continued to vote for a president that is mad!*

Family relations were affected in various ways. For example, Miguel, who migrated to Montreal with his girlfriend Ana, told me that his brother is 'with the government' and that this played in on their communication:

I get along well with my brother, but... when it comes to the government and politics and these things, we talk very little about that. I imagine that we are... That it is a theme that could make us uncomfortable. We have had conversations about politics before, 2-3 e-mails. But then we let it lie.

In other cases divisions cut through families so profoundly that social occasions that would normally unite family members, such as birthday parties, had become impossible to organise.

Eva:

It is very hard. Especially for families that have become separated. Separated by distance, because family members are leaving. And separated politically.

Although most of my informants were supported by family and friends in their decision to migrate, some had friends who reacted negatively upon hearing about their plans to migrate, accusing them of 'abandoning the ship' instead of staying and fighting. Michelle, a former journalist, told me that when her plans of migrating became known, she was accused of abandoning her country:

You feel like a traitor because, you know, they'd say that 'if all the good people leave we surrender the country to disaster'. But they've had to leave too. Because either you change and begin to work for the government, or else you find yourself in an extremely difficult situation.

She added somewhat ironically that perhaps the decision to migrate meant that she was unpatriotic or maybe 'just selfish'. Most of my informants, however, brushed off such accusations or countered them. Victor, who used to work for Venezuela's main oil company, told me that when he and his wife decided to migrate after he had been laid off in relation to the PDVSA strike²⁹³, some of their friends accused them of being morally irresponsible.

But those same people do nothing! They have this mentality of *facilismo*²⁹⁴; they think that everything, every service, can be bought, and that they do not have to make an effort themselves.

²⁹³ Petroleos de Venezuela S.A. The strike is described in chapter 1.

²⁹⁴ e.g. wanting something without having to make an effort

Several of my informants had kept their decision to migrate an absolute secret until the last minute, even for close family members and friends. One claimed that this was because he would have been sure to lose his job, but mostly the declared reasons were that they did not want to jeopardize everyday social relations. Political views sometimes also posed a direct threat to one's livelihood or career. Politics had allegedly been the cause of the loss of employment for several of my informants. One of them said it was because of having participated in anti-Chavez actions. Another informant claimed that it had been a matter of him simply not being part of the *chavista* movement and that he had been dismissed to make place for others that were 'loyal'. Felix, a young electrical engineer, told me:

In 2005, I was working for a state company. One day they called and said, "you don't work here anymore". It was a good job, my first after finishing my studies. I had worked there for 5 years and I had really done my best. I asked why, had I done something wrong, were they not satisfied with my work? They said no, nothing wrong, your work is perfect – but you don't work here anymore. Here is your letter of resignation; we wrote it for you, you just have to sign it. Here is the money, in two weeks you don't punch in anymore. I got really frustrated. I said to myself, politics weigh far too much in this country. So I decided to emigrate.

A few of my informants had had connections to the PDVSA strike in 2002. Victor, for example, is very discreet when he tells me how he was fired from his job with telecommunications for PDVSA. He doesn't want me to record our conversation and is among the very few who insists on anonymity. He tells me that he had never for a moment considered migration until he was suddenly put out of work and blacklisted. In December 2002 he took part in the strike²⁹⁵, though he did not consider himself politically active. In January, all the workers who had participated (an impressive near 20.000) were fired with immediate effect, and their names were published (*page up, page down*) in the newspaper. Potential new employees were warned against offering them jobs. *-We were many who left the country, he tells me. -What else could we do?*

Victor's story holds many similarities with that of Pilar. Pilar and her husband both worked as engineers in Maracaibo until moving to Canada. She tells me:

²⁹⁵ See chapter 1.

We visited Canada in 2001 (...) but at that time Venezuela was stable; we lived a good life, we had a new house and our children went to a good school. Then, in 2002, there was the oil strike, and 20.000 workers were fired overnight. My husband worked for a branch of PDVSA. Everything changed. The government told the private sector not to employ those who had been fired. There was no job security. You have a job today but perhaps not tomorrow. Crime rose, the inflation was terrible. The quality of life was deteriorating very fast. We started asking ourselves, what do we do? We have three children, should we stay and hope it will change, or should we look for new horizons?

The political situation was narrated as hard and hopeless, and as excluding them from society. They felt that the regime in power disqualified their belonging by representing them as the counter forces of the Bolivarian revolution, and as acting only based on the desire to hold onto privileged positions. - *It does not matter how hard you work, they will never recognize you*, as Guadalupe put it. Such sentiment of making useless efforts will be explored further below, and set against the idea of Canada as a place where effort would be rewarded. In the following I will move on to discussing Venezuela's situation as regards crime and violence, which were often narrated as more immediate triggers of decision to migrate.

Narratives of violence

My sister was widowed 45 years old, with two children. Her husband was attacked, killed. I was there when it happened. After that I thought, no, I don't want this for my sons. I don't want to live in a place where I could experience again what I am experiencing now. That you are with a group of people, happy, and then someone comes and wants to take something you have, and doesn't even think before he shoots and kills. No, I thought, this is not a life.

Pilar

Once I was walking in the street and suddenly a guy grabbed for my necklace. By reflex I tried to push his hand away, and I got a knife up against my throat. Those things stay with you forever, Turid. It is not a life. It disgusts you. You spend all your energy on that, instead of doing other things. How can you fight against such violence? The lack of food is different, you always find some way to get it. But someone pointing at you with a gun, that makes you powerless.

Guadalupe

As noted earlier, Venezuela was presented as chaotic; as a place where normal social relations and respect had collapsed. Stories of violence were perhaps most striking in this regard, and indeed, the level of violence in Venezuela had seen a massive increase according to statistics²⁹⁶. Violence was an ever-present theme in our conversations; in numerous narratives of traumatizing experiences they had had, in the retelling of incidents they had read about in online newspapers or stories they had heard from family back home, in statistics, or in Youtube-videos they would sometimes forward to me. Central in these narratives was the notion that the violence was meaningless, that it hit innocent victims for nothing, and that the judicial system was paralyzed. This situation meant that human lives were worth nothing. However, the situation was narrated as part of a wider problem, namely that social relations in general had deteriorated. Thus, beyond narratives expressing trauma, they were narratives of Venezuela's alleged 'cultural problem', as we have already seen in for example Daniel and Guadalupe's narratives. By 'cultural problem' they referred to the ways that people behave towards each other, the social climate, the respect for rules, the civism, etcetera. Social relations were sometimes presented as damaged beyond any near-future repair, as we saw in Daniel's narrative earlier in the thesis. The situation was seen as having spiralled downwards for more than a decade for many and complex reasons, as seen in the narratives contrasting Venezuela before and now. Violence was seen as the most extreme expression of this 'cultural problem'. Although the explosive combination of poverty, poor education, and easy access to arms and drugs was seen as an important cause, the deeper roots of the problem were traced further. Venezuela was presented as a country in which innocent individuals could be executed in the streets, where criminals went unpunished and the police were corrupted or even implicated in the acts. The judicial system was described as not functioning, and the government was seen as profiting politically from the situation. Luis, for example, said:

Some youngsters are selling drugs on the street corner and the police do nothing because they are accomplices. And worse, imagine you have a bakery, you are the owner, and you don't want anything to happen to your bakery. So you pay the police. When you close at 21hrs a policeman comes to guard your bakery. Instead of looking after the population they accept money to look after business people (...) I think, Turid, that the government is playing on this crime. You

²⁹⁶ See for example: http://www.unodc.org/documents/gsh/pdfs/2014_GLOBAL_HOMICIDE_BOOK_web.pdf

understand? It serves them to have this terror. I mean, not that they pay robbers to rob, but by turning a blind eye. It serves them that people are so worried about what might happen to them, that they [the government] can do as they like.

Guadalupe has several times mentioned to me how anxious she used to be all the time when she lived in Barquecemento. Even after 3 years in Montreal, it happens that the old fear sometimes re-emerges. I experience it once, as we walk on the sidewalk of a badly lit industrial backstreet late at night when suddenly three police cars rushed passed us with flashing lights. An exercise, I thought, this dead street must be a perfect place for them to practice. But Guadalupe had been very startled and remained shaky for several minutes after. The incident had taken her back to the streets of Barquicimeto:

When you walk down the street you check behind you, always. You check your bag, your cell phone, all the time. Walk fast, check around you. Remember when we met the first time and I was listening to music in my earphones? You couldn't do that in my city. If you're wearing earphones they'll come immediately: Give me your phone, I have a knife. And you would not hear them coming.

When she had managed to brush off the feeling of fear that she claims is obsolete here in Montreal (she has often described to me the victorious feeling of walking home late at night, after partying with friends, but with 'no fear whatsoever, only common-sense prudence'), she told me about the time when her car was stolen:

I had been celebrating my brother's birthday in his house. It was 11 p.m., my brother accompanied me to the car in front of the house. While I unlocked the car, two persons came up. "Give me the car". Pointing at me with a gun. I handed them the keys. Quickly, just go, take it. How can anyone just take the right to say I want this car, so I take it? With what right do they point at me, another human being, with a gun? And if I don't give them what they want, they will kill me, take my life from me. With what right?

The narratives of violence were stories of attacks, robberies, kidnappings, and killings. Central in the stories was how this insecurity had restricted their mobility, their social lives, and had also affected the ways they related towards unknown others. The impossibility of living in such a hostile social climate often came up. Along with lingering traumas, the stories also contained a

great deal of anger towards those who violated and society that closed its eyes. The state, here, can be seen as presented as either incapable of control or as operating as 'a gang', in Rodger's (2006) sense, meaning that it exercises violence only on the part of certain population groups. Violence had become an everyday reality; so common that the ones who had not yet been victims considered themselves lucky to have left before the unavoidable happened. Eva and Eduardo were among my very few informants that had not been victims of violence. Eva:

Sometimes we just didn't think. We would be driving with the car windows open, like in the old time. People would shout at us: You are crazy! Close your windows, you'll get robbed! Everyone in my family has been robbed. All my sisters and there are five of us. They have been robbed of their car, robbed in their house. Pointed at with a gun. My parents, my sisters, my aunts. Everyone. Except us. So we thought, let's go before it happens to us.

As I will elaborate on in the next chapter, Montreal, in contrast, was presented as calm and peaceful, so much so that one of my informants referred to his carefree way of behaving as his 'Montreal mode'. This was Felix, who had told me that his new life had made him loosen his guards so much that he forgot to switch back to his 'Caracas mode' when he was there for a visit. This, he told me, had brought him into a very dangerous situation:

My friend was driving me home, it was late. As he stopped for a red light, a car drove up and stopped in front of ours. A guy jumped out, he was waving a gun, and yelling that we should give him our car. But my friend started shouting and making a fuss, and then the guy just beat it. It was madness, we might as well have been shot. But my friend had seen a badge on the guys jacket, the badge that the police wear. There and then I had been completely calm, just hoping that the pain of the bullet wouldn't be too bad. But when I got home and sat down to think, that I could have lost my life... I felt sick.

Felix admitted that they had taken a big risk being out so late, and he blamed it on his 'Montreal mode' and the fact of the rare opportunity to go out with his friend. He said he would have never done something like that (staying out late) while he was still living in Caracas. The tension in the relations between strangers has led to a change in people's relationship to place and perceptions of their surroundings, which is what Felix refers to with his 'Montreal mode'. Similarly, Eva

described their children's relationship to Caracas as being in a large part expressed through sets of practical survival skills:

Our children have been prepared for robberies. They have been instructed on what to do and not if they are threatened, if someone points a gun at them. Not to shout, not to run, not to resist. They know how to minimize risk as they move from one place to another. They have developed a very sharp sense of observation when it comes to anything or any individual that could be dangerous. And, for example, they carry a cheap cell phone in their pocket, that they will give up if they are robbed. To protect their real one. Can you imagine!

Eduardo added:

How sad it is to see your children develop defence mechanisms to control their security! Eva and I lived in a Venezuela that was a great country. Our children have not lived in that Venezuela.

As Felix' story exemplifies, when migrants go home for visits, they sometimes have to readapt to the old, habitualized strategies related to minimizing risk. Ana, whom I had interviewed together with her boyfriend Miguel, for example, explained to me the choreography involved when she goes to her mother's house by car:

When we go there, I call her exactly one minute before we arrive, and she goes down and opens the gate at the right moment. It's all synchronized, for security reasons, so that we don't have to wait outside in the street, and she doesn't have to wait with an open gate, because that would be dangerous.

A new trend for the wealthy, and increasingly also the middle-class, is to engage bodyguards, Eduardo told me. These are especially employed to guard the children, who are targets of kidnapping. Eva:

Our son went to a school with kids from rich families. They all had lifeguards. It was crazy. When his friends came over to our house, their lifeguards were waiting outside, with their hands like this [she imitates: hand on the gun]. My son did not have a lifeguard. I thought that if something happens and there is shooting, my boy could get caught in the middle and that would be even more dangerous. Today all his friends, these boys, are outside the country. Their parents are still

in Venezuela, but they have sent their children out. They send them off to study at some university abroad, at least 4-5 years, so they can be at peace, knowing that their children are not in Venezuela.

The narratives present a Venezuela that has changed from friend to enemy. Even how to understand and deal with the high crime rate has become a hot and politicised topic; views diverge according to one's political standpoints. Where my informants typically saw direct connections between that situation and the way the country is governed, the *chavistas* tended to interpret it as being out of the government's hands and even a work of anti-chavistas. Eva told me about a friend of hers, a *chavista*, whose daughter was kidnapped by two men with big guns, threatening to kill her.

She cried and cried on the telephone, until the girl was returned. She lost some neurons. But do you know what she said when she called to tell me what had happened? She said, Oh, but remember, you were also robbed when you were in Paris. It is true that my wallet was stolen when I was in Paris. But no one ever pointed at me with a gun, my life was never in danger. Can you imagine that even such a palpable thing like one's security becomes a politicized view. Even the statistics, they claim it is exaggerated and tendentious, as if they don't want to see the danger. But then how can it be that everybody we know have been victims of crime?

In the light of these stories, the occasional mentions of family members, friends or acquaintances that did not want to migrate became intriguing. Several of my informants had siblings or friends who were simply 'not interested' in migration, or rather, for whom the loss and sacrifice was not worth it. For some, then, migration represented a greater sacrifice and risk than staying in Venezuela. Luis explained to me:

People have their house, their car, their kids are in school. I mean, a small part of the population, the ones that could have migrated. But they think that if they migrate to Canada they will have to go back to studying again, to start all over, while in Venezuela they work as doctor or engineer or... so they don't want to leave their comfort zone. They don't want to sacrifice the time it would take to build all that up again.

In Luis' opinion, people are attached to their 'comfort zone', and do not want to leave this. He elaborated:

I think that the difficult thing is to make the decision, to break with one's comfort zone, one's living standard. Make the huge step and start from zero. I think that is the biggest hindrance. I know people who are in a good position to come here but... they just conform with what they have there.

It is possible, several of my informants claimed, to 'construct a shell', to 'live in a bubble', and to adjust your life and habits to minimize the risk of violence. For these individuals, knowing what they had, in spite of insecurity and social and political tension, seemed a better situation than leaving everything familiar and starting all over, far, perhaps alone, in new surroundings and a new language. This also illustrates that attachments carry different weight and that the decision to migrate was not as self-evident as narratives of the 'impossibility' of living in Venezuela would often have it. 'Constructing a shell' was described as the option for those who were 'too attached' to Venezuela to want to migrate. For example, I asked Guadalupe how her brothers, who have chosen to stay in Venezuela, endure living in this climate of violence. She answered:

You know the story of the frog? If you put hot water in a kettle, and then put a frog in it, it will jump right out. The frog is not stupid. But if you put the frog in a kettle with cold water, and then you heat it little by little, the frog gets used to it and stays until the water is boiling. He doesn't feel when it is time to get out so he ends up boiled.

One year after the first round of interviews, I participated in the Venezuelan association's annual sugar shack outing and at the table I ended up sitting vis-à-vis a couple who had arrived in Montreal very recently. The conversation around the long table was joyful and loud, but soon it turned to a story someone had read in the newspaper about a taxi driver in Caracas who had been robbed and killed. This, in turn, led to other similar anecdotes about the meaningless violence. A woman turned to me and said that the tensed ambience in the streets of Caracas has become unbearable, to which the newcomers objected and argued that it is rather the case that emigrants are just no longer used to it, and when they visit they feel an exaggerated fear. - *Me, when I lived there, I took my precautions, but I did not walk around in constant fear*, the man said.

Thus, even the undeniably high level of violence turned out to be multifaceted and open to different interpretations. For the migrants in this study, violence was an important migration

trigger; for others, who could not or would not leave, a liveable life could be achieved through adopting new habits and practices that reduced risk. The impression that people tend to act like the frog in Guadalupe's story sometimes triggered frustrated attempts at 'waking them up'. One informant's description of a video she posted on Facebook could be read in this frame. The video was the song *Rotten Town*²⁹⁷ by Venezuelan rapper oneChot, who was shot in the head in 2012. He survived, and the video can be described as strong and bloody commentary of the violence in Venezuela.

I posted this video by oneChot on Facebook. And I wrote in my comment:
See, this is how much you are worth for your fellow citizens!

Lis

A migrant mind: Migration as a quest for home

As noted earlier, many of my informants established a clear link between the decision to migrate and their identity and personal orientations. A central idea in their narratives was that they had not identified with the culture and mentality (emic concepts) in Venezuela. In this part I will present and discuss some of these narratives.

I first met Ana and Miguel in a noisy pub in downtown Montreal. They were among the first informants I interviewed, and I did not yet have an idea of themes that would be recurrent in interviews, and the questions in my interview guide seemed to spread out in all directions. When I asked why they had decided to migrate, Ana told me that she had always been oriented towards abroad and wanted more freedom to be different:

Since I was a child I felt different. I was not attached to Venezuela, even as a child. I was never attached to the country, only to my family. I was always like an extraterrestrial. I was like that in school too, I never kept with one gang, I was a little bit with everyone. In that sense I was always an outsider.

As a child, Ana lived in Spain for 3 years. Her orientation towards abroad is not, however, directed at Europe, but towards Asian cultures. - *Where did that interest come from?* I ask.

²⁹⁷ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OgB6t-d_-o0

When I was little I had a Chinese friend. In her house there were Chinese furniture, and decorations on the wall. The symbols; yin and yang. I liked that so much! Then when I was a teenager I saw Karate Kid, in the movies [*she smiles shyly*]. I got interested in karate, and persuaded my parents to let me take karate classes. I trained karate for a few years. And then Miguel began looking for an aikido dojo, I don't remember why. We were neighbours at that time, not a couple. After a while I started training with them.

This practice has been an important element in her life ever since, and she mentions that her ties to her old aikido teacher in Venezuela remain very strong. Her passion for Japanese culture goes well with her passion for nature and the environment, she continues. One of her aspirations when migrating was to change her career to something that would fit better with this passion, and Montreal seemed like a good place to realize this ambition.

Coupled with her desire to live a different kind of life in another place, was the feeling of not belonging in Venezuela. Migration, for Ana, also represented an escape from what she experienced as narrow sets of social norms and conventions, and these, one could argue, were produced in the intersection of gender, class and Venezuelan mainstream culture. She explains that she did not identify with common ways of socializing:

I felt like a stranger in my own country. My life habits are not the life habits of Venezuela. I like sports and outdoor activities, hiking, biking. I don't like noise, I don't like parties, discotheques. I don't drink, I rarely eat meat. Venezuelans like to party and have barbecues, eat meat, drink beer. If you don't, it is interpreted badly. 'Why on earth don't you drink? - But you have to eat meat!'

Several of my informants described Venezuela as very conformist and as a place where being different or diverging from mainstream culture was difficult and charged. This was something that made some of them feel alienated. In this sense, Mariela's feelings echoed those of Ana:

I did not want to stay there. But here [in Montreal], I wanted to stay. I thought if I am going to live somewhere else, it is here. From the very beginning I felt I had a place here. It may sound strange for you when I say this, but I feel more at ease here than in my own country.

Guadalupe expressed similar sentiments. She is the only one in her family to have migrated, but she expects that her younger brothers or nieces and nephews will eventually come to Montreal to study and possibly immigrate. They see it as an opportunity that she is here; - *I am a window for them*, she says. For her, having opportunities and freedom to develop and grow, professionally and personally, was fundamental in the decision. The attraction of Canada and Montreal was in part a matter of having many possible trajectories to choose between.

Here [*in Quebec*] you can start studying no matter your age. You can decide to change career. You have choices. In Venezuela, when you are older, to start studying again is... very shameful.

Although she has never seriously considered changing career, she identifies with this attitude towards human life: the continued possibility of changing and growing. She says it is important for her to have ambitions, to set goals and try to reach them.

Like Ana, Guadalupe also felt that she needed greater freedom:

I felt that Barquicimeto had become very little. Like a box. I needed more... life. More life. More possibilities. I had this idea of migrating for 5 years. It buzzed in my head until at last I decided that, let's go [*ya vamos*].

These lines also exemplify that in the narratives of the beginnings, the idea of migrating was often described as having been present in the mind of the migrant for a long time - often for years - before the actual move was made. It should be noted that the possibility of migration might of course also contribute to inspire ideas of belonging somewhere else (see for example Dawson and Johnson, in Cairns 2003: 121). Although my informants maintained having invested time and effort in qualifying for migration, the possibility of legal migration had nevertheless been within reach. For Felix, the idea was born when he was an exchange student in Vancouver in 2000, ten years before migrating to Montreal:

I got an idea of what it was; this culture, this lifestyle, the people, the standard. I felt well there. So I knew I liked it.

Ana, on the other hand, claimed that she had 'always' wanted to live abroad. The feeling she

described of not belonging, or belonging somewhere else, was interpreted as something that had always been inherent in her and this feeling somehow represented a first grain of detachment. In this sense, migration transcends the wish to escape insecurity and other hardship. It becomes a matter of residing in a place that is imagined as better aligned with one's values, or where one's identity is best mediated (Rapport and Dawson 1998). An excerpt from the interview with Eva and Eduardo also exemplifies this:

T: Did you ever consider other destinations than here?

Ed: No, we thought a bit about France because of the language, but no, we pushed that aside because...

Ev: -France, yes, I would have liked that, since we lived there when we were young and it is a country I like a lot. We like the European culture, but...

Ed: -We knew it would be difficult. Economically.

Ev: Yes, we knew what the reality is in Europe. When it comes to work, discrimination and so on, so it was not the best choice. So, when we compared with...

Ed: -The Canadian values.

Ev: -the qualities that Canada represents when it comes to human rights, equality... Values. And in addition, Montreal has a European culture...

Ed: -And because they speak French. I could not imagine living in Toronto, for example.

Orientations towards the 'outside' was experienced and expressed differently. As we have seen, some of the informants claimed that they had always wanted to live abroad, or that they did not identify with the general culture in Venezuela. Some wanted to escape social pressure or the lack of freedom to be different; while others said they desired more opportunities to develop and advance personally and professionally, or they wanted to live in a place where the organization and social practices of society better matched their personal values and orientations. The lack of identification or attachment was weaved into their migration stories in various ways, which also produced different basis for justifying migration. Locating the decision to migrate in one's own personality gave the decision a different - and perhaps less debatable - legitimacy, than if the decision had been presented as a reaction to contemporary hardships. It thus served to explain why they, unlike others, had not - and could not have - chosen to stay and endure. The interweaving of identity and readiness for new attachments also served as an explanation of why they had had an easier time integrating and adapting to Montreal than certain others had, as I

shall return to later. Finally, it also served to explain why they could not imagine ever moving back. In Ana words:

If you leave because of politics or security, then you will probably want to go back if things ever improve. You are still attached. And then it is harder to integrate here. But that was not my case. I didn't feel at home in the culture. That is something deeper. I always wanted to leave.

On the one hand, being mentally orientated towards abroad was presented as a central driver in the decision to migrate. On the other hand, it was also presented as a sort of prerequisite. For example, Guadalupe had underlined that you must have a certain mindset to realize and 'succeed' or find happiness through migration. Luis also had a clear opinion in this regard:

Migration must come from the inside. It is a very big change to handle. It cannot be based on wanting to leave simply because of insecurity. You have to realize that you leave everything you know, and your family, and your language. It is a big change. I am where I am now because it came from the inside. That is why I made all this effort and ended up where I am now. Not everyone has the capability of migrating.

The capability of migrating, then, was somehow associated with the courage to enter into the unknown, with motivations that are deeper the immediate security situation, with goal-mindedness and the will to hard work. He puts his 'being where he is now' down to his own efforts and ability to engage with the unfamiliar. The orientation towards the 'outside' often had roots in previous experiences of travels or longer stays abroad. All of the migrants I interviewed had previously travelled abroad. Many had travelled in Europe. Some had done post-graduate or other studies outside Venezuela, some had stayed abroad as children for a year or more with their parents, others had travelled through work. Various experiences of 'elsewhere' had shaped the idea that they would be better at home abroad, and filled it with substantive content. The experiences influenced not only the decision, but also the way migration was imagined and prepared beforehand, and - as I will discuss later - the way it was realized and interpreted after arriving. Experiences from stays abroad also served as a confirmation that what they were

enduring in Venezuela was not 'normal'²⁹⁸. The logic, Ana explained, was that *'perhaps I am the outsider in Venezuela, but Venezuela is an outsider in the world'*.

The decision to migrate also, of course, includes deciding *where* to migrate. While Canada and Australia might have been the only Western alternatives for my informants, they had also had the option of going somewhere closer, to another Latin American country (as many Venezuelan indeed choose to do). Interestingly, some of my informants claimed that the Venezuelans who choose Canada are not the 'same Venezuelans' as those who migrate to other countries in South and Central America. For this reason, Luis suggested that it would be interesting for me to do a comparative study with for example Panama:

If you interview those who have gone to Panama, for example, you will meet those who are just disagreeing with Chavez. As soon as he is gone they will go back.

In contrast, Venezuelans in Canada (or in Europe) were sometimes described as people who did not feel 'culturally at home' in Venezuela. Those who come to Canada, I was told, are those who identify with the mentality they expect to find here. They feel (or expect to feel) more at home here than in their natal society, such as for example Ana, who had once claimed that 'she was Canadian before she came here'. Daniel said:

In my case I can tell you that when I lived in Venezuela I never identified with the general culture of the country. I identify more with the culture here in Canada than the one there. But that is only my case. And that doesn't mean I don't miss things there. I lived many years there, I knew many places, many people. You can't just wipe that out.

These narratives could be described as narratives of emplacement in the sense that they articulate ideas of belonging to a particular place, on the basis of certain real or imagined qualities of that place. At the same time, they also narrate 'displacement' and even exclusion from a place where they would otherwise expect to belong (cf Farrer 2010). The dis-belonging was often articulated through a critique of what is understood as hegemonic norms and values in Venezuela. Daniel's narrative serves as an illustration of this. Our second encounter was marked by the recent

²⁹⁸ 'Normal' here was the term my informants used.

death of his mother, the only family he had left in Venezuela. - *It is somehow the end of my last direct attachment to Venezuela*, he said. He had to deal with a lot of practical issues, including selling her apartment, his childhood home. Now he described himself as 'boiling with frustration' over the difficulties and unpredictability of the process of selling the apartment, due to what he calls the 'irresponsibility' of Venezuelans; the widespread practice of not following rules, and the lack of transparency and accountability. He attributed this mentality to the widespread corruption and the lack of education. Later in our conversation he sought to nuance what he had meant:

It is not that I reject the culture, only certain elements. It is related to my personality, I always preferred order and was annoyed by disorder.

The idea of Canada as a well-functioning bureaucracy compared to Venezuela was expressed in different ways, for example in Guadalupe's narrative of her first bank experiences in Montreal:

In Venezuela, to get a credit card, you have to bring a whole suitcase of documents. After three months they give you an answer. And maybe they say no, it didn't go through. After three months. Here [in Montreal] I opened a bank account and was told that I could come and pick up my credit card a few days later. But it's the *same* process! What can it be? It's a mentality! The mentality of Venezuelans is to slow things down, to always slow down processes.

Narratives the the 'lifestyle' or 'general culture' in Venezuela that they had not identified with, contained a range of examples, including Daniel's comment about garbage simply thrown in the streets, Ana's comment of people speaking too loud, Luis' comment about people's unhealthy habits, Guadalupe's comment about the lack of respect for queues, and other informants' descriptions of dangerous driving, indifference towards neighbours, slow bureaucratic procedures, lack of respect for the environment and historical sites, and so on. For Felix for example, what he related as the unreliability of Venezuelans, was hard to accept:

(...) it does not matter if someone comes half an hour late for an appointment. It does not matter if you have to wait. That is very common in Venezuela, I grew up with it, but I never liked it.

The lack of respect that Guadalupe referred to in an earlier citation was also a recurrent theme and understood as reflecting the loss of 'good social norms', but also as reflecting a culture of *facilismo*. By this term they meant 'wanting something without doing an (honest) effort to obtain it' and this attitude was seen as widespread in Venezuela and present in all the social classes. *Facilismo* was seen as something deeply rooted in the culture, and sometimes explained as stemming from the oil boom years during which 'money came easily'. *Facilismo* was also seen as at the root of the present chaos. Claudia, a friend of Guadalupe who came to visit, commented:

Venezuelans *like* chaos and lawlessness. And it gets worse and worse. Before, Venezuelans used to look at the Columbians as scoundrels and criminals. Now it is the other way around.

As noted, many informants had commented upon the low tolerance for difference in Venezuela, and this situation was often juxtaposed with the acceptance, even celebration, of diversity in Montreal. Indeed, Montreal's embrace of diversity was often presented as symbolising it being a developed society, as opposed to the 'obsolete' attitudes in Venezuela. Luis, for example, explained that in Venezuela as opposed to Montreal it would be impossible to arrange a Gay Pride Parade. In these narratives, the narrator also posited himself or herself as equipped with the open-minded, 'cosmopolitan' attitudes that were associated with Canada (or the Western world). The narratives in this sense underlined their value-based belonging in Canada while underlining their sense of strangeness in Venezuela. At the same time - as I will expand on below - the narratives also articulated class belonging.

Some of my female informants mentioned the social pressure on women as one reason why they did not feel at home in Venezuela²⁹⁹. Ana explains:

There the women use a lot of make-up, they arrange their hair, and always look good and beautiful. If you don't use make-up they think you are sick. They say, put on just a little at least, just some lipstick. But I don't like it. It is not my culture, not my habits. It made me feel like I am not from there. And I thought, if I am to feel like a stranger I'll rather go to a foreign country and be a stranger there.

²⁹⁹ This has also been studied by Naomi Lee (2009).

Ana's conclusion here echoes with Philip Larkin's poem *The importance of elsewhere*, as discussed by Rapport (2009). In the poem the narrator contrasts the feeling of being a stranger abroad to the feeling of being a stranger at home, and finds that strangeness makes more sense abroad, where he is expected or supposed to feel strange. In Ana's view, this 'legitimate' strangeness represented a better starting point for constructing belonging, than the feeling of alienation she felt in Venezuela.

The feeling of alienation from narrowly defined gender roles appeared to be diminishing after migrating. Mariela laughingly told me that she can spot the newcomers by their manicure and hairdo:

In Venezuela the social pressure on women is enormous. The women are very coquette, very feminine. If you don't fit into that form, you will get strange looks. It's manicure and pedicure every week, hairdresser every week. If something is in fashion, everyone must have it. And now with cosmetic surgery, it is crazy. All the women fix their ears, their nose, their eyes, their behind, not to mention the breasts! It's true, I don't know anyone who hasn't had an operation. We laugh sometimes, when we see a Venezuelan here with false nails. We go, oh look, she must have just arrived! Surely she will change when she no longer feels the pressure.

Relieved of expectations, pressure and regards, she described herself as enjoying not having to do the efforts of sporting a flawless appearance. Going back to Venezuela was, however, often experienced as a sort of clash of visions of what it is to be a woman. Several commented that they would frequently receive negative or teasing comments on their looks during visits there, for example, Mariela told me that her old friends back in Caracas simply could not understand how she, who was now living in a first world country, could be so unkempt:

And the family, they reproach you, because we are not groomed enough, well-dressed enough, that we are out of fashion. My sister is the same, she says 'before we can visit our friends you need to go to the hairdresser. And your nails have to be arranged'. She says I look like a tramp.

Her friends refused to believe that in a developed country like Canada, women could look like that. At the same time, Mariela suspected that there was also a sort of hidden pride in the comments; since Venezuela is a prime and proud producer of Miss Universe winners, and there is

a close association between female beauty and female Venezuelan identity. So, the underlying message, she commented, could be that 'maybe Canada is better in every other way, but we still have the most beautiful women'.

The pressure on women did not only concern looks. Some female informants told me that they experienced a greater freedom to choose their lifestyle and life course in Montreal. While in Venezuela some of them had felt a strong pressure to follow a certain life course. Lis, a visiting friend of Guadalupe, for example, told me:

I am a bit of an outsider because I am in my thirties and I am not married and I don't have children. I've stopped going to weddings. I am sick of all the questions about my situation. That is why I have always wanted to live outside Venezuela, I don't identify with the ways of thinking there.

The problems associated with the 'mentality', 'irresponsibility, or 'narrow-mindedness' also came up in relation to other aspects that some mentioned as important to them, such as the environment, healthy living and architectural heritage. Among the first things Ana mentioned as having pleased her in Montreal were the organized recycling and the network of bike paths. Her concern with green consumption points to her love of nature and desire to live in harmony with the environment. This in turn is connected with her interest in Asian, mostly Japanese, physical and contemplative practices to obtain balance and wellbeing.

For Felix, respect for the environment also extends to architecture and historical sites. He claimed that Venezuelans do not care about conserving carriers of history, such as old buildings or objects, and that this in a sense stands to show how short-term interests outweighs the concern for collective heritage. He said:

In Quebec, a house that is 150 years old will be turned into a museum. In Venezuela, they will tear it down and build a 40 stories high-rise in place. They don't care about conserving things from the past.

These views might also be interpreted within the frame of social class. As noted in the introduction chapter, I approach class identity as individually interpreted and negotiated with regards to multiple stratification systems. Taking my informants' empirical understanding of themselves as middleclass as starting point, I will look at how class belonging was articulated and also how 'unmarked' value sets, orientations and ideas about personal qualities worked to locate them with regards to class in various contexts.

Lo que yo merezco (what I deserve). Class identity and the notion of merit.

As previously underlined, the present wave of emigration from Venezuela should be understood in relation to socio-economic stratification in Venezuela. My informants were all well educated professionals from the middle class; indeed, this was why they had had the opportunity to migrate to Montreal. Class is an important source of identification in Venezuela (cf. Cannon 2009), and my informants were very explicit and unambiguous about their class belonging, compared to what is common for example in Europe (cf. Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst 2001). Nevertheless, informal, popular modes of class constructions, such as the once explored here, have to a little degree been studied (Lee 2009).

The most obvious link between class and migration was, of course, opportunity. The poor, I was told, cannot afford migration and rarely have the level of education and work experience required by migrant-receiving countries such as Canada. The very rich, on the other hand, cannot emigrate without leaving behind their fortune, since money cannot easily be taken out of the country³⁰⁰. Daniel, as we saw in the interview excerpt presented earlier, described middle class belonging as the strongest characteristic of Venezuelan migration. Similarly, Eva stated:

Colombians come here because they don't have work. People who never had anything. In the case of Venezuelans, it is the middle class, the professionals, who have been expelled. And the elite. The high executives, the leaders of the oil companies, electricity companies, phone companies. And from the universities. So you will find that they are different that other Latin-Americans. Venezuelans who have come had a status, and a social position that made it easier for them to migrate. Therefore you will meet different opinions, because many had to start again,

³⁰⁰ Due to the restrictions in money export it would implicate using illegal methods and what my informants referred to as various '*trucos*' [tricks]. It is possible (and common) to do it with smaller amounts - as good as all my informants had had to do that - but not with large sums.

at zero. These people quit jobs in order to emigrate. Work was not the problem, or income. But in this situation you chose between life [la vida] or your economic status.

My informants were in general explicit and unreserved with regards to their class belonging. With regards to this, many also emphasized that while they were not poor, neither had they been born into rich families. Insisting on the latter was, I suggest, a way to underline that - as opposed to those born rich - they had had to study and work hard; and implicitly, that what they had achieved had not come easily. The centrality of effort and work ethic was obvious in these narratives. Guadalupe, for example, said:

You make an effort and work, but at the end of the month you have nothing left. It is difficult to set aside money unless you come from a rich family and have support [espalda]. But we who are from the middle class are from the middle class. We studied, we work all day, but still it's difficult.

Profession was also usually included in their self-presentations. Before migrating most of my informants said they had held jobs they found challenging and interesting. Most of them came to Montreal, not only with the hope of finding work, but with a clear goal of continuing their professional careers or, in some cases, embarking on a new. Ana and Miguel, for example, had clear and well-researched plans for studying and changing careers after migrating. This project was seen as long-term and presented as 'realistic' and 'well-planned' in the sense that they were aware that they would have to start out lower on the ladder and would adopt strategies in consequence.

In Immigration Canada's terminology, they were classified as economic class immigrants (see chapter 6). Their immigration is expected to be economically advantageous for Canada, but it is an unfitting label when it comes to describing their own reasons to migrate. Economically they had little to gain from migrating. My informants had all enjoyed a better material living standard and a higher social status in Venezuela, than they did afterwards as immigrants in Montreal. Eva, for example, once exclaimed laughingly that Venezuelans have to learn how to clean their own bathrooms after migration. In this perspective some speculated that for reasons related to class and economy, migration was perhaps more difficult for Venezuelans. For example, Eva told me:

I was told that it seems as if it costs more for Venezuelans [to leave]. This person had met Colombians, Cubans, who did not want to have anything to do with Cuba, but they came under different circumstances. These are people who have struggled but who have nothing in their home country. For them it was glory to leave.

Most of my informants left well-paid jobs when they migrated. They knew that a lowered standard was part of the choice they made, although some hoped or expected that the process of getting back to a comparable level would go relatively fast. Nevertheless, finding an acceptable job was often the biggest frustration. Eva:

It is hard when you are middle class to lower your status. And accept to start at the bottom. One thing that Venezuelans have is pride. It is difficult for them to accept work below their competencies. I have met immigrants from other places, who were as qualified as the Venezuelan immigrants, for example a woman from Columbia who was cleaning at night. Another one from Brasil who was tending tables at a restaurant. But Venezuelans don't accept that, they refuse.

When considering migration, economy had entered into the equation mainly through the fear of losing everything were they to stay in Venezuela or in relation to economic obligations towards parents who would remain in Venezuela. Ana, for example, says she had to make sure that her sister could assist her mother for some time, before she could make the decision to leave. In general, migration was perceived as a sacrifice when it came to material comfort, career, status and privileges. Moreover, the decision to migrate implied that while their applications were being processed, they would have to live very modestly in order to save up for the period without income that would most likely follow migration. The economic sacrifices began, then, before the actual migration and continued onwards.

It was often repeated to me that Venezuelan migrants, '*unlike other Latin-American migrants*', are not driven out of their country by economic pressure. Daniel, for example, commented this in the narrative presented earlier. However, some of my informants said that they had seen their economic future in Venezuela as not very promising, and although they described their daily life as one in which they had enjoyed a satisfactory level of material comfort, they were also experiencing increased living costs and difficulties setting aside money. Several noted how they

had had to work long days for a salary that in the end did not stretch to anything beyond the essentials.

People work so long days in Venezuela. The salaries are bad, so they work longer days. We worked all the time. And did not buy unnecessary stuff. And yet, it was almost impossible to save up.

Some of my informants said that they had migrated with a desire to improve their economical independence, but none had left to escape poverty. In the course of my fieldwork, there was, however, a change with regards to this. Migrants who arrived towards the end of my fieldwork described massive inflation, shortages of goods and foods, and growing black markets. Neither class privilege nor work effort could shelter them from these growing economic problems.

At times, a certain bitterness and frustration came to the surface, particularly when we talked about the fact that so many highly educated Venezuelans leave. As discussed above, this was partly an effect of what they claimed was an expulsion of the middle class.

The poor don't realize that the middle class are the ones who can give them work, that can help them move forwards [*salir adelante*]. They attack them. But it is not them who pay for the politics. And what are they going to do if they put an end to the middle class? Where are they going to find work?

Their middle class identity made them targets of violence, targets of propaganda, as well as consignees of disapproving regards and mocking comments on the street, as seen for example in Guadalupe's narrative of her experiences in the queues. The feeling of unfairness with regards to this was strong. On the one hand they got neither the respect nor the compensation they deserved for their efforts, on the other hand, what they had was deemed undeserved. The issue of having worked hard, having made sacrifices and earned their money in an honest way came up frequently. Through these narratives they differentiated themselves from those who had been born to riches, those had made their fortune through corruption or crime, as well as people who living off the state. The latter was in general very negatively perceived, a view that was sometimes modified later when related to own economic survival and autonomy in Montreal.

Luis:

I will not apply for welfare money because I feel capable of finding a job without help from the government. Personally I feel that to come here [to Montreal] and ask for help - I know migrants who have done that, and who were not honest. But then, if I don't find work I will have to do it... And then maybe later I will think that it is not so bad because I will pay it back tenfold when I begin to pay taxes.

On our first encounter Felix was also very clear that he did not want to end up receiving social welfare money, that that was not something he could accept. However, a few years later he admitted that for a period he had 'had no choice', which had changed his view of receiving economic support from the state³⁰¹.

The political change (eg. the Chavez regime) meant that politics were weaved into the country's social stratification in different and more overt ways than before. In the view of many of my informants, politics extended into areas that had previously not been politicized. In general, the view was that politics weights disproportionately much and that it interferes in matters where it should not, such as employment. They described a situation in which high positions were distributed with regards to political affiliation, rather than experience and expertise. For the university-educated middle class, such practices were particularly hard to swallow. Guadalupe:

Normally, in other countries, politicians are super educated [*super preparados*]. And representatives must be exemplary; they have to demonstrate their good qualities. But when the representatives are there because of power, because of cheating. And they are not the best persons... then what can you expect to find in the street?

Narratives also articulated an awareness of the destructive effect that the brain drain has on the country and consequently also on their family and friends there. This awareness, I have suggested, could also be seen as influential in the narratives of the 'impossibility' of living in Venezuela, and could be read as reflecting sometimes mixed feelings related to 'leaving the ship'. They understood the brain drain as a negative spiral in the sense that the exodus of professionals has a discouraging effect on the professionals that are left and thus triggers further migration. Therefore, their choice to emigrate was a decision that contributed to damaging the future of the

³⁰¹ I will discuss narratives related to post-migration economic situations and identity further in chapter 10.

country, which produced very contradictory emotions. Mariela, for example, once told me how proud she is of the performance of the young Venezuelan immigrants in Quebec; several of them having excelled in school competitions. However, this pride is always mixed with a feeling of sadness for Venezuela:

When I see them, it breaks my heart. These children... many of them are brilliant, they have won prizes of excellence. One was even elected among the 50 best students in Quebec and was invited to visit the parliament. They are young and so intelligent. But they are here. Quebec won.

Expertise can be rebuilt, of course, but according to most of my informants that was not what was happening. Some claimed that president Chavez was showering oil money over the poor part of the population in exchange for their political loyalty and votes. This, it was argued, works to relieve them of their immediate economic stress, but does not give them motivation to study or work. Guadalupe:

The government tell poor people that it is bad to have money, that the middle class is bad. But I worked for my money, I worked hard to reach my goals, and I spent my money wisely. This should motivate people. 'If Guadalupe could do it, then I can also do it, in my own way'. But they only show you bitterness and contempt.

It was also said that the poor are being deceived and unknowingly kept submissive and dependent. Since they do not learn to manage their own future, they remain stuck in poverty. Noely, Guadalupe's friend, said:

Thirty years ago they established grants [*becas*], a kind of social benefits without any expectations to the receiver. This lead to a mentality of '*give me, give me*'. People think, I am so poor that I deserve money. But nobody think about creating workplaces. Because of the oil, one does not have to endeavour. Venezuela has everything to make it the best country in the world. But look what's happened.

The underlying logic of some of these narratives was that education and hard work can somehow solve the poverty problem, which is of course a highly debatable proposition. I will not go into that here, but rather approach the statements as reflecting value sets, norms and individual

qualities that they associated with 'getting somewhere in life', and that were simultaneously understood as disqualifying them in the present regime. Significantly, certain of these narrative themes, for example related to work ethic, independence and determination, mirrored the invitation that the Canadian immigration regime extend to skilled workers, and thus also served to locate them as belonging in Canada³⁰².

At the same time, the poor were also often presented as innocent victims and as having a certain naïveté, often associated with lack of education, which placed them in a vulnerable position with regards to political exploitation. Guadalupe, for example, said:

Had he [Chavez] been truly interested in improving the destiny of the poor, he would have given them the means and motivation to get out of poverty.

In her view, unconditional money transfers from the government to the poor were providing them with 'a house, but not with the means to keep it'. Noely, who was planning to migrate to Montreal, even claimed that the uncritical channelling of oil money into the pockets of the poor combined with paroles of the *chavista* movement, has led to an appreciation and pride related to being poor. The poor in Venezuela are being told that it is (morally) good to be poor and bad to be rich, she said.

Instead of creating work places or offering them education or promoting the benefice of developing oneself, of studying and working, they are being told that it is good to stay at home, good to be poor, that they should in fact be proud to be poor. And then they are given some money, a minimum to survive.

Poor people, then, end up living on the premise that their right to money rests on their situation as poor. One consequence, Noely argued, is that the very concept of deserving something has been distorted and no longer has any connection with the effort you do, or at all with your actions. This critique was also directed at people who had become wealthy in illicit ways, as well as those who simply live off inherited riches. Luis, for example, said:

³⁰² I will discuss this more in-depth in the next chapter.

I have nothing against socialism, but I think that those who make an effort should have more rights than those who do not make an effort.

While 'working for what you have' was a common narrative trope, which served to locate them as deserving of their relative wealth and privilege, it also served as a critique against the upper class and against the so-called '*culture of facilismo*' [eg. easy way out]. Some also made a connection between *facilismo* and lack of education. The culture of *facilismo* is in many ways the antipode of the culture of hard work in order to achieve. This culture of hard work was in itself understood as achieved, since Venezuelans were described as having a 'natural' penchant for laziness. Noely, for example, said:

Venezuela never cultivated a culture of hard work. It was never necessary because the natural conditions in the country are so favourable, you have everything you need right there, you do not have to strive.

Even the indigenous did not have to work hard, she claimed, because of the very generous Venezuelan nature. This set them apart from indigenous people in harsher environments.

Think of the Aztecs, what they left us of incredible constructions! In Venezuela there is nothing.

The corrosive effect of *facilismo*, then, represented a critique that was lobbed at all classes, including the middle classes. It can also be seen as related to what Luis had referred to as the 'comfort zone', representing the reticence towards stepping out of the familiar and easy. In that sense, the fact of their successfully realized migration projects was also a demonstration of their disassociation with *facilismo*. Migration was also narrated within this discourse; as key to a kind of life that my informants felt they 'merited'. For example, Daniel commented that he had decided to migrate because he wanted to live 'the way he wanted and the way he deserved'. In Venezuela, he also explained, merit was decoupled from effort, and was now distributed according to political affiliation. This meant that not only were people no longer free to say what they think, but they were also disqualified from truly influencing their life trajectories. In contrast, Canada represented the place where their 'middle class ethic' was recognized. In Montreal they would

start out lower on the ladder, but there they had the hope of improvement and progress. This idea that the effort and sacrifice would be 'worth something', was important to all.

The emphasis on effort, motivation, diligence, and so on, that these narratives express, located the narrator as belonging to the middle class, not only in economic terms, but through possessing qualities associated with this class. Being middle class was represented as having worked for what one has, and also as being educated, responsible, law-abiding and so on. I suggest, however, that there were more to these narratives. The personal qualities that my informants evoked corresponded to the ones that the Canadian migration regime demands from skilled migrants; qualities such as responsibility, flexibility, resilience, goal-orientation, self-sufficiency, perseverance, order, individualism and discipline, as seen in chapter 6. My informants' emphasis on these can therefore also be understood as a way of presenting themselves as individuals who would 'fit' with Canadian ways and values, and who would manage to live up to the expectations to skilled migrants. At the time of these narratives, when life after migration was barely commenced, it was perhaps particularly important to present themselves to others and to themselves as being equipped with this capacity to succeed with their integration.

Lo que me queda de vida a mi (the rest of my life) - migration and life projects

Several migration researchers have noted that young adults, such as the majority of my informants, are more likely than others to opt for migration (Amit and Olwig 2011). One important reason is that they have the '*least invested in terms of jobs and careers at home*' and at the same time, more time to regain their '*migration investment*' (Martin 2007, in Amit and Olwig 2011). This was a recurrent theme in the narratives. The narratives described a future that had been lost; a downward spiralling movement that had no foreseeable end. Reflections about the gravity of problems in Venezuela contrasted with 'the rest of my productive life', or just 'the rest of my life', was a topic I came to expect to emerge sooner or later in interviews. It was generally thought that the problems that ridd Venezuela would take years to overcome. Eva, for example, said:

We saw that at least for the next 10-15 years it will be very hard to live in Venezuela, hard to study, to develop, to work.

Migration, then, was not a temporary solution while waiting for a regime change; it was long-term and binding. Thus, moving to Montreal was not simply a matter of switching something for something presumably better, it implied seeing one's future laid out ahead, going in a direction. As mentioned, migration was often spoken of as a project, which was conceived, planned and then executed, based on ideas of what they wanted out of life. This consideration was often articulated through a calculation: the time it will take to restore normality in Venezuela - since the problems are believed to transcend the actual political situation - minus the rest of my life.

- *What if everything changed in Venezuela? Would you consider going back?* I asked Miguel.

That would be a miracle. It is just not probable. Even optimistically speaking it would take at least 20 years. I will be old. When I retire, I'll rather go to Florida, with a Canadian citizenship.

Migration, then, was conceived of as a one-directional movement; it represented the rest of one's life. The decision, in this sense, was existential and total, encompassing every aspect of life. It involved reflections such as what is a good life for me, and for my family? Where and how do I wish to bring up my children? In what kind of society do I want to invest my productive efforts? What do I sacrifice if I migrate? Through these considerations, important elements in life were indexed and the gaps identified. Reflections of this kind sometimes continued even after applying. During the drawn-out formal process of migrating, they had time to both rethink and hesitate. However, even if most of my informants claimed that after migrating there was 'no way they could go back' [*no hay vuelta atras*], few had hesitated once the application was submitted. The idea that there was 'no way back' was frequently reiterated. Felix, for example, said:

If I went back I would have to start all over. I sold everything I owned. I brought all my savings here and have been living off them for a year. And you lose touch with people after so much time. To go back would be to go back to zero.

Guadalupe made similar reflections:

I could not go back. What would I do there? How would I find the energy to start again from zero?

For those who have children, the future was not just their own. Michelle, who had wondered if she 'lacked patriotism', said the concern for her daughters had been decisive:

I thought, this situation is not going to be resolved any time soon. If it does resolve, it is going to take many years. The country is already in such a bad shape, that before it recuperates I will be old and my daughters will have lost the best years of their lives. I couldn't accept that.

Eva and Eduardo, now both in their 50s, had migrated with their 3 children, aged between 17 and 25 at the time, as well as their granddaughter who happened to be born in the course of the application process. For them, migration had above all been about their children's future.

Eduardo:

Had it only been the two of us, we would probably not have done it. It is different to leave your home country when you have lived there for over 50 years. From that point of view you might say that we sacrificed ourselves a bit. It is not the same to migrate when you are 50 as when you are 20. We needed to think about it carefully.

What they sacrificed was most importantly the closeness to their family, but also post-retirement work opportunities, such as teaching at the university on contract-basis. Nevertheless, they believed that in Montreal they would have good possibilities of 'recycling' themselves, even having a second career. Since the decision was so fundamental, it was important for Eva and Eduardo that the children also agreed. Therefore they had had a series of what they call 'family councils' before reaching a final decision:

We asked them to think about it thoroughly, and to write down a list of the advantages and disadvantages of migration to them, because it had to be a clear decision and a decision made in consensus. We knew that if one of them preferred to stay, we would not leave. We explained to them what a great responsibility it was, and that it was not going to be our decision as parents. Everyone had to agree because once we'd come here [to Montreal] there was *no vuelta atras* [no way back]. The pros and contras were personal, and some things were a drawback for me but an advantage for the children. But everyone made a conscious choice.

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In this chapter I have discussed my informants' narratives of why and how they came to make the decision to migrate. One aim of the chapter has been to bring forth the complexity of drivers behind decisions to migrate and I have sought to do that by focusing on dimensions that emerged as significant for my informants. Some of these, I suggest, have been poorly explored with regards to skilled migrants, who are often presented as motivated by work opportunities and prospects of material amelioration. For example, the chapter has explored narratives of insecurity, which, I argue, is to a large extent a neglected theme with regards to studies of skilled migrants. As such, the chapter seeks to challenge artificial analytical distinctions between categories of migrants.

Moreover, the chapter has focused on narratives of the decision through the lens of identity and self-understanding, and approached these as part of larger, ongoing stories of self. In this regard, narratives of the situation in Venezuela should be understood as articulating disemplacement and exclusion with regards to what is narratively presented as hegemonic norms and ways of conduct in Venezuela, and by the same token, as expressing their identification with lifestyles and values they perceived as 'Canadian'. The self-presentations through which they ascribed themselves certain 'middle class qualities' should similarly be seen in the context of the qualities of the ideal migrants sought after by the Canadian migration system. The chapter suggests that the narratives served the purpose of 'emplacing' the narrator in Canada and lending legitimacy to their expectations of attachment.

I have pointed out certain themes that I will develop further in the following chapters, notably with regards to the nature and quality of attachments and to ideas of oneself as belonging elsewhere. The notion of 'classed' values related to work ethic, discipline, determination and so on will also be explored more in-depth in the remaining two empirical chapters, in particular through narratives that present migration as a personal undertaking and achievement.

9. The Migration Project. Narratives of the pre-migration period.

In this interim, for a couple of years, you have this insecurity. Because you prepare for leaving without knowing if you will. The decisions you make while you are there, you make them thinking that you are leaving, but there is always this doubt. If the answer is no, you will feel like you have lost these years of your life, because your life is already a function of the decision to migrate. You are already detaching yourself from the country
[despegándote del país]

Eduardo

Introduction

The screening process of the skilled migration program (described in detail in chapter 6) created what Eduardo above refers to as an 'interim'. The website of Immigration Canada presented the process of immigrating as skilled worker as a straightforward five-step procedure. However, this apparent simplicity concealed a paradox inherent in the process, namely that the extensive verification of each applicant meant that the processing time were very long. For my informants, it was on average 2-3 years, and processing times increased constantly during the time of my fieldwork. Thus, although the decision to migrate was taken, the actual border-crossing was still far away. At the same time, as Eduardo notes, life was in some ways already a function of the decision to migrate. Social relations, family ties, economic priorities, career decisions, time use, home maintenance, etcetera, were influenced by and negotiated in the light of the upcoming departure. - *It destabilizes you emotionally*, Eva commented, *because in many ways you are neither here nor there* [ni estas aca, ni estas alli]

This chapter discusses the narratives of the period that I refer to as the pre-migration period. As mentioned earlier, I suggest that imaginings, plans and preparations that were formed in this period are key to understanding migrants experiences of life after migration, and also shed

important light on the place of migration in the migrants' larger life projects. I approach the narratives by focusing on what they relate with regards to for example how post-migration life was planned and prepared for, which sources that informed and influenced their imaginations of their future lives in Montreal, and how their decisions to leave were received by their closed ones. But I also focus on the *telling*, by approaching the accounts as identity narratives. Narratives in this perspective are about presenting oneself to others as well as to oneself, in certain ways and for certain purposes that are shifting and context-related. This brings in the question why the events are presented in this specific way; why the self is presented in this specific way, in this specific moment. It is important then to keep in mind for example that the narratives of this chapter were collected after the migrant had gone through the migration process and had been admitted. The events lead up to an outcome that was desired, and this influences the interpretation of them in retrospect. Another example in relation to this is the way the practical handling of the application process was narrated, which, I argue, is particularly interesting when seen as identity work. These narratives, I suggest, served to construct and posit the informants as reflections of the migrant invited to Canada by the skilled worker program. The practical handling provided a good setting in which one could present oneself as corresponding to exigencies. Interestingly, it was framed in ways that gave associations to professionalism and management, referred to for example as the 'migration project'. Success depended on the handling, as a comment from Luis' exemplifies:

You have to make migration the most important project of your life. It is a decision for life, it is not like changing house or changing car. It is a life project that must have first priority. You cannot make excuses and say that you will do it tomorrow or in a year. That you are too busy at work to make the application. You have to concentrate your energy and do everything.

The 'migration project' narratives can be seen as the empiric counterpart of the description of the workings of the point system, in chapter 6. Significantly, the accounts of how the migration project was managed served to posit the narrator as capable, responsible, disciplined, independent, goal-minded, and so on, thus as possessing the personal qualities that the migration regime asks for.

An important connecting thread in this chapter is the link between identity and place, or rather: The imagined destination. In chapter 3 it was argued that the concepts of home and belonging bring together the concepts of identity and place, and thus illuminates the relationship between them, (Ralph and Staeheli 2011). Identity and belonging can become articulated through pre-imagined experiences of an attachment to a specific destination. In this perspective, narratives concerning choice of destination can be seen as reflecting identity claims. Following Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst (2005: 12), people judge the suitability of given sites with regards to their desire for belonging. Or, as Hage (2005: 470) writes, they seek spaces that are *'better launching pads for their existential selves'*. My informants' images of the destination were thus furnished with certain values, life style opportunities, and other qualities to which they felt an attachment. As seen in the previous chapter, Montreal was imagined as a place where 'good' civic values were promoted, respect for rules typical, efforts rewarded, diversity celebrated, and nature and environment prioritized. The 'order' and 'civilized ways' of Québec were juxtaposed with the 'chaos' and 'cultural problem' of Venezuela. However, few of my informants had been to Montreal or elsewhere in Canada before actually migrating, and their imaginations leant - at least in part - on the migration recruitment promotion of the Canadian and Quebecois authorities. The ways that Québec and Canada as destination was presented and pitched to prospective migrants therefore constitute an important context. In the following I will provide some examples to illustrate this point.

Sunshine sketches of a destination

'Québec is a modern society rich in its diversity. It combines American-style economic development with the influence of European cultures.'

(Immigration Quebec's website)

Active recruitment is an integral component of the skilled migration policy, as noted in chapter 6. In the eyes of the authorities, Canada stands in a competitive relationship with other destinations in what Koslowski (2014) calls the 'battle for the brains'. In the effort to win prospective migrants to the idea of settling in Canada, migration authorities seek to sell in qualities of the destination believed to attract the wanted applicants. Both the federal and the provincial authorities have such strategies. For example, on the website of Immigration Quebec, Quebec is presented as characterized by its 'dynamic labor market', its 'family-friendly environment', its 'unique culture',

as a 'place where you can practice a diverse range of leisure activities', and as a 'place where you can realize yourself completely'³⁰³. Moreover, the quality of social relations are underlined:

'Quebecers are known for their friendliness. Cordiality, simplicity and an open mind characterize social relationships in the street, in the workplace or at the bank (...)'

The nature is also emphasized as important with regards to quality of life, by offering esthetic experiences as well as the possibility of practicing outdoor activities:

*'Québec cities have abundant green spaces where inhabitants can take advantage of a wide range of outdoor activities. In fact, you could say that Quebecers have succeeded in building their cities in the country! For those who choose rural living and are looking for the beauty and tranquility of a country setting, each and every region of the province offers picturesque sites and a unique quality of life.'*³⁰⁴

The authorities have also understood the importance of security and stability in the equation:

*'Life at a North American pace with an enviable standard, without sacrificing security and evening walks in the neighborhood: this is the meaning and value of quality of life in Québec.'*³⁰⁵

Considering the narratives explored in the previous chapter, it is hardly surprising that these qualities appealed to my informants. The descriptions and images emphasize for example tranquility, green and healthy environments, possibilities for personal and professional development, and a friendly ambience. These were qualities that my informants clearly emphasized and identified with, and that they saw as standing in contrast to the situation in Venezuela. The promoted qualities possibly also alimanted my informants' narratives of why they chose Canada and Quebec. As noted earlier, most of my informants had few direct sources of information, since they were among the pioneers of the new emigration wave.

³⁰³ <http://www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca/placeauquebec/es/>

³⁰⁴ <http://www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/immigrate-settle/permanent-workers/index.html>

³⁰⁵ *ibid*

The Canadian government's webpages for prospective immigrants particularly emphasize multiculturalism and citizenship, which are put forward as summing up 'being Canadian'. The webpages present multiculturalism (discussed at length in chapter 7) as having the dual function of conferring people with a sense of belonging through an acceptance of their identities, and in turn rendering them more accepting of other cultures:

Multiculturalism ensures that all citizens can keep their identities, can take pride in their ancestry and have a sense of belonging. Acceptance gives Canadians a feeling of security and self-confidence, making them more open to, and accepting of, diverse cultures³⁰⁶.

I have already discussed multiculturalism, but what is central here is the link, or two-way process, that the government's webpages establish between being Canadian and being open-minded and tolerant. The mutual respect inherent in multiculturalism also contributes to developing common attitudes such as respect for legal and political processes, the webpages further state³⁰⁷. A link is thus also made between tolerance and acceptance towards cultural diversity, and for example, respect for rules. For the informants in this study, this image was not only appealing but also served to consolidate the perceived contrast between Canada and the chaotic, corrupted and narrow-minded Venezuela. As we saw in the previous chapter, in my informants' retrospective accounts, the lack of tolerance and narrowmindedness were presented as central in the explanation of why they had not felt at home in Venezuela. And, as we will see in the next chapter, their acceptance of different lifestyles and unproblematic relationship to for example gay individuals (an example they often mentioned) was often included in narratives of feeling at home in Canada. Indeed, some also presented this as partly explaining their own successful integration.

The promotional images and descriptions are complemented with recruitment tours to promising source countries like Venezuela. At the time of my fieldwork, the immigration authorities in Quebec and Canada were organizing information sessions about the skilled worker program on a regular basis. Delegates from the Québec Ministry of Immigration travelled from their office in

³⁰⁶ <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/celebrate/index.asp> (retrieved Aug 2015)

³⁰⁷ <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/multiculturalism/citizenship.asp> (retrieved Dec 2015)

Mexico to cities in Venezuela several times a year, holding sessions with titles such as 'Quebec – land of opportunities'. In addition to idyllic images of Quebec as destination, participants were informed about the steps in the migration process and the prospects of being selected. Many of my informants had come to know about the existence of the Quebec skilled worker program through such information sessions. These were often held at the *Alliances Francaises*³⁰⁸ where interested candidates could sign up for French courses.

In addition to the authorities recruitment efforts there were also private actors, such as migration consultancy firms, that offered information sessions. I will come back to these below. There was also the website *mequieroir.com*, which many of my informants had consulted. The website, which seeks to function as an information bank, began to offer so-called information *webinars* towards the end of my fieldwork³⁰⁹. The importance of this website for many of my informants will also be addressed later in this chapter.

Migration managers

Most of my informants chose to take care of their applications themselves. This choice was not self-evident. There is a growing industry of migration consultants accompanying the growing complexity of migration systems. One example is Gustavo, whose detailed knowledge of the Canadian migration rules is an example of what these companies offer. In general, Gustavo noted, their clients are either those who feel insecure with regards to complex paperwork, or those who cannot find time to do it themselves. Companies typically target middle-class individuals who can more easily assume the costs, which often amount to several thousand CAD. Although most of the migration consultancy firms were operating from Canada, several of them had opened local offices in bigger cities in Venezuela at the time when my informants were applying.

However, most of my informants shook their heads over what they saw as exorbitant prices charged by migration consultants. Luis, for example, told me:

³⁰⁸ A worldwide network of centers established to promote French language and culture.

³⁰⁹ I.e. web seminars

I went to a couple of seminars [*charlas*.] The first one was organized by a private company of lawyers. But after, they charge you. Like 5000\$. So I started to make my own enquires, and found out that you don't have to use a lawyer. It is your own decision. I thought, I can do this on my own. Why would I pay several thousand dollars for them to handle my application?

Ana had the same opinion:

I was used to dealing with complex procedures and filling out complicated forms through my job. I figured I would be able to do these ones too. Besides, everything is explained very well on the internet.

Indeed, a dilemma for these companies when it comes to skilled worker candidates is that while many of them have the means to pay for their services, they also tend to feel competent and confident enough to handle their applications themselves. My informants, as Ana's comment shows, were used to paperwork. Luis tells me he checked the Immigration Canada website where he learnt that it is neither necessary nor advantageous to use the services of a migration consultant. This was enough to convince him that he could and should manage the process himself.

When I asked about the period preceeding migration I had not thought of focusing on the formal migration process, which I did not expect to be particularly interesting. However, most of the informants gave more or less detailed accounts of this part of the process, explaining the various steps and not least, how they dealt with these. Luis, for example, emphasized the effort he put into creating an immaculate application. He vividly describes the contents; everything was there, duly completed and signed, organized in the right order, in color-coded plastic folders.

A lot of Venezuelans are sloppy about these kinds of things. They forget to enclose documents, or they think they can fix it later and send in an application that is incomplete, or they deliver the documents in a disorganized manner.

Luis, it appears, is underscoring his suitability for migration by contrasting himself to 'a lot of Venezuelans'. His own meticulously ordered application, he believes, signaled to the authorities

that he understood the task and had the correct approach to managing his migration. The application, in this sense, was seen somehow as an exam where one's aptitude had to be demonstrated. The narrative, then, served to posit him as corresponding the profile of someone who would easily integrate into the well-regulated and complex Canadian society, by presenting him as independent, resourceful, quick to learn and respectful of rules. In such ways, the informants presented themselves as capable of navigating complex schemes. The significance of such narratives, I suggest, is the importance of demonstrating skills beyond those explicitly stipulated in the point matrix. This, in turn, should be seen in the light of the presumption that access to mobility is related to individual qualities beyond scholarly or professional competences. Ana, for example, commented:

I know the importance of being exact. And how to formulate these things. It is about understanding what they look for, exactly what they are looking for. And to show them that you have done your homework, that you are prepared and have thought this through. That you have plans. A plan A, and a plan B. That you are serious.

As mentioned above, Luis, and also other informants, referred to migration as a 'project' and described it as something that can be managed well or less well. The 'migration project' was comprehensive and consisted not only of putting together the application, but also of preparing practically, economically and mentally for the move, and preparing for professional and social integration upon arrival. In Luis' opinion, the less well organized applicants run a higher risk of refusal or at least of getting off to a bad start upon arrival. Drawing on work and education experiences. Being a 'good migrant' in the application process in many ways resembled being a 'good student'. One had to understand the tasks to accomplish and study well, hand in the correct papers, respect deadlines and otherwise comply with formalities. Approaching the migration project with the same assiduity as he had towards his university studies, Felix claimed that he had been determined to complete the migration process in spite of having doubts about what he wanted to accomplish with it.

I am enterprising [*soy emprendedor*]. When I begin something I complete things. When I started the process of migration it was as if the decision was already made. I think they saw that.

The interview should also be seen in this context. Not so many of my informants narrated their interview experiences, but those who did underlined the concern with appearing convincingly. The interview was practiced; they had carefully considered what to wear, and how to organize their papers. The idea was to come across as competent, well prepared, well informed, motivated, and so on. Karen, for example, said:

We lived nearby, but I got up super early to iron my blouse and my skirt. The papers were already in my handbag, I had prepared that the evening before. I knew that whichever they asked for, I could take it out easily, not having to search for it. I knew all the important dates by heart. I was confident that I would make a good impression, the only thing that worried me was the French. What if I began to trip over the words? What if I had forgotten an important word?

I suggest that through these narratives my informants presented themselves as ‘good migrants’, in the sense that the way they handled their application process stood for their aptness as migrants (or as ‘migration project managers’). They demonstrated their aptness on the one hand by succeeding in the point system, on the other hand through their attitude and performance throughout the application process. At least, this was how it was narrated afterwards; all of my informants had succeeded, which I think is an important dimension in these narratives. Having been admitted represented a validation of the self-understanding that these narratives express, serving to locate them as belonging in Canada,

Nevertheless, sometimes minor mishaps would occur, such as when Guadalupe submitted her college and university diplomas, but forgot to submit the transcript of her notes:

We discovered it during the interview. They told me I had 90 days to send the papers to the office in Mexico. I sent the papers with a delivery company but they never delivered them. And the 90 days passed. You can't imagine how stressed I was when I found out. I called the official who had interviewed me and explained the situation. He said, OK, send the papers with another company together with the receipt from the first time. So I did. But it delayed my process several months.

When such incidents occurred they were generally met with understanding from the authorities' side; the framework of rules turned out to be somewhat bendable, and second chances possible. One might hypothesize that such friendly flexibility with regards to rules could be related to the fact that the applicants represent 'wanted' migrants. However, there were not many stories of errors committed. In the narratives of the handling of the application process the complexity of rules and information was never mentioned as anything deterring. On the other hand, the immigration authorities appeal to this capacity for independent effort in part by tailoring their information to such *emprendedores*. They especially target individuals seeking to 'achieve their goals, push their limits and expand their horizons', as the Immigration Quebec website states. For example, these capable and dynamic individuals are encouraged to make use of the computer-generated '*personalized action plan*' provided on the website to help them 'determine needs, define objectives and develop effective strategies to obtain them'³¹⁰. An increasing number of comprehensive guides and tools are available on immigration authorities' websites to aid and facilitate the planning and preparation of one's new life, primarily as worker and responsible community member. A range of topics are covered, from opening a bank account to 'embracing the values of Quebec' in the Quebec guide³¹¹. The guides carry the message that skilled migrants are welcome and wanted, but also expected to realize the better part of integration themselves. Integration, then, is cast as an individual project and responsibility. Applicants are encouraged to appropriate the accessible information in order to arrive better equipped for integration. And more, they are encouraged to 'aim for success'³¹².

Thus, putting together a flawless application and performing well in interviews in order to convince authorities, and perhaps also oneself, of personal aptness was part of the experience for many of my informants. However, migration consultancy firms would not be booming if there were not also a number of individuals seeking recourse to their services. A few of my informants had used consultants, and their narratives draw our attention to the central role of these in the migration trajectories, and life trajectories, of many migrants. I will discuss this in the following.

³¹⁰ '*Learning About Quebec. Your guide to successful integration*' (Gouvernement du Québec 2012)

³¹¹ Immigrants have to sign a declaration that they accept the common values of Quebec, which state that Quebec is a free, democratic, pluralist society, based on rule of law, where political and religious powers are separate, where women and men have the same rights, where human rights and freedoms must respect the rights and freedoms of others and the general well-being.

(<http://www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca/publications/en/form/selection-famille-en.pdf>)

³¹² '*Learning About Quebec. Your guide to successful integration*' (Gouvernement du Québec 2012)

Pathfinders and perfect files

We look for those that we can make qualify. 90% of our clients are skilled workers. We have developed the concept 'perfect files'. That means that we don't submit any application that is not perfect. That is the way we are working. None of our clients have been refused visa so far.

Gustavo

The restaurant is Venezuelan. It occupies a semi-basement north of Montreal's biggest food market. The walls are freshly painted in bright yellow and blue and decorated with large photographs of breath-taking landscapes in Venezuela. Yesenia leaves her niece in charge of the service and sits down with me. She introduces me to the specialties of the menu; *arepas*, *tequenos*, *pabellon criollo*. She comments that this (our meeting) reminds her of the work she did in Maracaibo 4 years ago, before they migrated. There, she tutored Master students at a university.

Yesenia tells me that when she and her husband first began discussing the idea of migrating, they consulted the *mequieroir* website³¹³. There, they could find out what they needed to do in order to migrate. Yesenia saw that with her 42 years, she was close to the age limit for skilled migration and this worried her. Around that time someone told her of a woman working as an immigration consultant and who was arranging an information session in Maracaibo shortly after. Like governments, consultants organize information sessions, or *charlas*, promoting the advantages of life in for example in Quebec, while underscoring the importance of putting together the application and handling the process correctly, which is where their services are of value.

I got the phone number of this woman who worked for a company of lawyers in Montreal. She told me that she would come to Maracaibo this and this date. I brought my CV, like she asked. She said I was a bit old, but that she would check with the companies' lawyers. A couple of months later she replied and told me I would qualify. And she sent me the papers.

The consultant took care of the paperwork, and Yesenia and her husband signed up to study French, which would be absolutely necessary for them to obtain enough points. However, on the

³¹³ www.mequieroir.com. I will elaborate in this website later in the chapter.

immigration interview they failed to convince with regards to language skills, and thus had to go back to studying intensely for another 8 months. Eventually, they passed the interview; although Yesenia jokes that she 'spoke like Tarzan'. They were thrilled, she says, and now only needed to do the medical exam before obtaining the visa. However, the medical tests revealed that Yesenia had a tumor in her throat. Nerve-wrecking weeks of uncertainty followed before the tests confirmed that the tumor was benign. This meant that not only was Yesenia's health fine, but they would also qualify for migration, at last.

During the medical exams after the operation I was very nervous, but it turned out I was in good health. So when the visa arrived, we had lots and lots of emotions. We had been through so much; we had failed once, I had been sick, and so on. So we were very emotional.

Migration consultants, sometimes referred to as 'legal coyotes', assist individuals in traversing not a physical border, but the border as a legal structure, created by procedures, categories, rules and regulations. For Yesenia, in her incertitude, it was worth it to have someone else take care of the paper work.

The consultant who handled her application was Pilar, who migrated to Montreal in 2006 together with her husband and their three adolescent children. In the first interview we managed to fit into her hectic schedule, she told me through her job she had already travelled to Venezuela 7 times in just a couple years. Pilar commented that the life they had left behind them had been a comfortable life. Economically they were well assured by their dual positions as engineers

We had dreamt of one day living abroad. At one point we were thinking about going to the US, but then the children came and changed our priorities. And then we never seriously considered leaving. But this time it was a decision we *had to* make, or else live with the consequences.

Like that of many other maracaibeños³¹⁴, their migration was set off with the oil strike in 2002 (see chapter 1). In this stressful situation, they contacted a company of immigration lawyers in Canada to help them with the application.

Meanwhile, Pilar began to collect as much information as she could about the immigration process and about life in Canada. This, she says, was a way for her to try to control the great uncertainty related to the decision they had made. However, this extensive compilation of information was going to influence her life in an unexpected way. Soon, she says, friends and acquaintances that were contemplating migration began to come to her with questions. She ended up having long and frequent telephone conversations with the lawyers about their own as well as other candidates' possibilities in Canada. After a few months she 'converted', as she puts it, from client to representative for the company.

Given the high number of people in Maracaibo who wanted to leave, the company was interested in establishing a local office there. Pilar turned up at the right moment for them. At the time, there were 3 Canadian immigration consultancy firms already operating in the city and, according to Pilar, they all had more than enough clients. The arrangement between the company and Pilar was that she and her husband would recruit new clients and then the lawyers would come to Maracaibo 2 to 3 times a year to hold seminars and information sessions.

In the beginning I observed and learned from the lawyer and her assistant. How they did their interviews, which questions they asked, what one needs to consider in the point system. Which variables. First I learnt, then I became more independent. Finally the lawyer no longer had to come to Venezuela. It was me and my husband who held the seminars, we signed the contracts, answered the questions, and so on. It took about a year and a half. The difficult cases were sent to Canada and the final applications were always handled by the lawyers.

There could be up to 300 people present at the seminars, she tells me. A few weeks in advance, she put ads in the newspapers, asking participants to register in advance. Those who were interested had to send her their CVs and were then pre-selected by her. After the *charla*, those

³¹⁴ Inhabitants of Maracaibo, a city located on the shores of the basin that contains Venezuela's oil reserves.

who wished it could arrange an individual appointment with her to go through their options. She made recommendations with regards to what candidates should do in order to maximize their score. Sometimes it meant taking a course, learning French or English, completing a degree, waiting a year or two to acquire more work experience, or opt for living in a remote village in Canada the first years. Pilar laughs: *-It could even be to have a baby now instead of later, since that gives you 4 more points in the province of Quebec!*

Pilar and the numerous other migration consultants are part of a growing 'migration industry' that Castell and Miller 2003 call the meso-structure of migration. These companies mushroomed in Montreal and all over Canada the first decade of the millennium. This also included many fraudulent companies that tricked people into believing that 'legal assistance' was necessary in order to qualify, often played on people's experiences with bureaucratic systems that work 'in the corridors'. Until quite recently migration consultancy was a largely unregulated sector, however immigration authorities now explicitly warn migrants against such companies, alerting them to the possibility of being swindled.

Thus, Pilar is careful to emphasize her honest work. As a consultant she was a significant person in the migration process for many of her clients and her evaluations and recommendations played a role in important choices that many of them made. She also counseled clients on how to handle various challenges and obstacles in the application process, as well as how to prepare practically and mentally for the big move. She followed some of them from the moment they decided to migrate, through the long and sometimes frustrating pre-migration years, and sometimes continued to have contact with some of them as they resettled and remade their homes:

The clients of the company I work for, more than 300 families and individuals, many of them have come to Montreal and they call me, write to me, visit me. Some have become my friends. It is nice. I have friends everywhere, in all the provinces. They were not my personal clients, but I was the one who dealt with them, who explained things to them. Every visa that arrived was a personal victory for me, not just a victory for the company. Every immigration interview that was passed was a personal satisfaction. People calling me to tell me their visa had arrived.

The pre-migration period

In the remaining part of the chapter I will focus on issues pertaining to the pre-migration period beyond those related to the formal procedures. As noted in the introduction, in this period many aspects of everyday life were influenced by and negotiated in the light of the upcoming departure. For example Michelle, a journalist and mother of two teenagers, described it as period when time was 'frozen', in the sense that it was a period during which no new projects were initiated and all decisions were oriented towards the upcoming departure:

You don't travel anywhere, because you are saving. You cut all kinds of expenses because you know you're going to need the money later. You don't initiate any projects. You don't buy new curtains, because you are leaving. You don't sign up for that course, you don't paint that wall, because you are leaving. Your life freezes. You don't plan anything because you are always on stand-by

For some, the most difficult thing with regards to this was not knowing how long the period would last. As Eduardo noted in the citation in beginning of the chapter, you can never be absolutely sure to qualify, and you get no indications of where you are in the process until the day you receive your visa.

The possibility is there, that you won't be accepted. And since that possibility is there, the decisions you make are never 100%. It's true, the [*Canadian*] government says, don't sell your house, don't sell your car, don't quit your job, until you have received the visa. And when you get the visa, that is when you are leaving. It creates a situation where psychologically you feel uncertain. People ask you but you cannot say for sure whether or not you are leaving.

Moreover, processing times seemed to always prolong. During the time of my fieldwork, the problem of back logs with regards to skilled immigration applications grew to become a serious problem in Canada³¹⁵. The uncertainty was a recurrent source of frustration. As Felix said:

The period is too long. One year should be sufficient. After one year you want to go on with your life. And things may have changed, even if you made plans, you cannot foresee everything. You may lose your job, you may get married, or have a child. And then

³¹⁵ So much that in 2012, processing of applications was suspended in order to eliminate backlogs. This measure did not affect any of my informants.

suddenly there is more paperwork, and you need more money than you had expected. In that period of two years, your whole life may have changed.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the situation for some of my informant was also conditioned by the highly politicised and controversial nature of emigration in Venezuela, which meant that many chose to be discreet about the project. Thus, during the whole period, they went on as if nothing, carrying their future as a secret. As Ana put it:

You cannot say that you are leaving, you have to pretend as nothing, even though it is the only thing on your mind.

At the same time, the period was also a time in which the migration journey was staged. Their future lives in Montreal were not just imagined, but also researched, planned and in certain ways initiated³¹⁶.

For many of my informants, the feeling of being 'not quite here, not quite there', as Eduardo described it, was dominant. The fact of the submitted application set its mark on everyday life in several ways, making - as Eduardo put it – life a 'function of migration'. Michelle also described the period through a metaphor of knitting, as 'casting off the stitches of one life while contemplating the pattern of another'. The idea of migration was always there, directing and affecting all the choices and considerations pertaining to one's daily routines.

The period could be described as liminal, in the sense that it represented a transitional period during which they felt neither here nor there, or in some cases both here and there at the same time. In Turner's (1969) writing, the state of liminality occurs between separation and reintegration. However, I agree with Benson (2013: 68) who, underscoring Turners perception of liminality as a linear transition between immutable, fixed points, writes that migration has no natural end point and that the concepts of liminality is therefore less useful as analytical tool to understand the trajectories of migration. Rather, I suggest that while the pre-migration period was experienced as special, it was not radically more so than for example the experience of a

³¹⁶ For example by establishing networks or through various activities using internet (setting up accounts, inscriptions to activities, subscription to mailing lists, etcetera)

pregnancy, and not all of my informants experienced this period as first and foremost 'inbetween'. Guadalupe, for example, told me that she had been so busy working and studying during these two years that she did not see the days go by. There were also a couple of informants who had felt discouraged by the long processing time. Felix, for example, claimed he had almost 'lost hope' of qualifying when the visa suddenly arrived. The uncertainty of the project also played in. Yoselin, a woman in her late twenties, told me:

It did not influence my daily life, because I was not sure I would qualify. I was not sure at all. I tried to save money, yes, but I told myself that if it would not be for migration, it would be to buy an apartment. I tried not to think too much about it, actually.

The changing situation in Venezuela was also an important factor. For example, when Michelle and her husband submitted the application, it had been their 'plan B', she told me, in case things would get worse in the country:

We didn't know if we would get a visa, or if we would even use it. But by the time the visa arrived two years later we had become desperate to leave, it was all we wanted.

The pre-migration period was not only about practical planning of one's new life and bureaucratic dealings related to the processing of the application. Money, for example, acquired a new significance. The main priority now was to save up and put aside, by cutting expenses, suspending purchases and working longer days. Guadalupe described the period as one in which she was only 'working, working, working' in order to save up. At the time of my informants' migrations, skilled migrants to Quebec had to have at least 3000\$ in their savings account on the day they arrived, a sum that was estimated to cover basic needs during the first three months. When they applied, they signed a contract where they affirmed that they would meet this obligation. At the same time, Venezuelan authorities had fixed the limit of how much foreign currency that a person could transfer out of the country to maximum 2800, so the only way to obtain the required dollars was to buy them on the black market and bring them, physically, (or have someone bring them) to another country and open a savings account there, which was what most of them did.

Some had parents as dependants, which represented another thing to settle. Ana, for example, says she hesitated for several months before sharing her decision to move, because her mother depended on her and her sister economically and practically, and they had to find a viable solution to this situation. Among the responsibilities that Ana would take upon herself was to cover the costs for a girl who would help out in her mother's house. Similarly, Guadalupe had felt a special responsibility for her mother, being her only daughter. The fact that several of her four brothers resided relatively nearby could not compensate for this. Her mother did not want her to leave her alone, Guadalupe says. - *I had to remind her, but you won't be alone, you will have my brothers!* Also Daniel, who was an only child, had had to find a satisfactory solution to the fact that his mother would henceforth be alone. He underlined, however, that his mother nevertheless supported his decision to migrate:

Fundamentally, she supported me because she knew what the situation is like. That the situation is very bad. She knew that I was making a decision that would bring me to a good place, that the idea was to prosper. Therefore she supported me.

Learning French was naturally a high priority, which meant taking classes and studying at home, often on top of fulltime employment and the exigencies of family life. Moreover, this would sometimes have to take place discretely, in the cases where the plans of emigration were not to be known. Since mastery of French is crucial to obtain enough points³¹⁷, most of them had ticked off an advanced level and then worked to actually reach that level in time for the interview³¹⁸. Having decided to leave also had social and emotional bearings. As described in the previous chapter, for my informants the decision to migrate was perceived as a definitive one. None of my informants had left with the idea that migration was temporary. As Eduardo stated, when describing the conversation they had had with their children, after migration *no hay vuelta atras* (there is no way back). This prospected great change produced all kinds of sentiments, such as excitement, doubt, sadness, confidence, frustration, uncertainty, stress and discouragement. One of the migrants told me she had retained professional help to prepare psychologically. Karen, a young engineer who told me she had since long wanted to come to Montreal and study at McGill

³¹⁷ 24 out of 55 in the Quebec system

³¹⁸ This is no longer so, since applicants now have to submit language exam results (the TCF test) along with the application.

University, told me that she saw a psychologist for a few months in the pre-migration period for what she referred 'migration therapy'. The therapy consisted of individual sessions in which she learnt ways to analyze her own sentiments and see them as part of a natural process of reintegration.

These techniques helped me in the beginning. This psychologist, she had also immigrated, to Venezuela. She taught me to think in terms of stages, and take one stage at a time. To divide the experiences into parts, into stages, and not try to deal with everything at once.

According to Karen several psychologists in Caracas are beginning to offer preparatory and therapeutic sessions to help future migrants deal with the emotions related to challenges of leaving and of being a Venezuelan migrant.

Preparing for life in Montreal also involved studying the labor market, learning what CVs should look like, gathering information about residential areas of interest and about how non-francophone children are integrated into the school system, and so on. Migration, as encompassing every aspect of life, was a complex project to manage, but increasingly all kinds of information was becoming easily available. In the following I will explore this aspect.

Virtually there

My informants' narratives make it possible to trace some emerging tendencies with regards to migration from Venezuela. The informants in this study were part of a new wave of immigration from Venezuela. They would often mention the absence of a tradition of emigration in Venezuela as opposed to other Latin American countries, and understood themselves to be among the pioneers of a new wave. Many of those who migrated at the beginning of the decade commented that there had been few established 'truths' and little unmediated information to guide them. However, in the course of my fieldwork, the paths of migration from Venezuela to Quebec were slowly becoming trodden. The internet came to play a crucial role. For example, many of those who went through the process left 'online trail marks' for others to follow. Through blogs, forums, images and direct communication; tips and information travelled back. Settled migrants, then, became important resource persons for migrants-to-be. Here, I will present two online sources that had been important for several of my informants.

Many of the blogs and the more static websites serve to illustrate that migrants' responses to ever-more complicated immigration system are characterized by a lot of ingenuity, strategy and creativity. They become spaces where individuals can acquire proficiency in immigration regulations in order to realize their migration projects. Knowing how to migrate has become something of a specialized competence that can be offered as service to those en route, whether as livelihood – as in Pilar's case – or as a personal networking or communication project. Some popular blogs may be said to serve as road maps tracing the 'best routes', which may contribute to establishing certain patterns.

A website that was mentioned by many of my informants was *mequieroir* (me quiero ir - 'I want to go'), a website that at the time was run largely by Venezuelan immigrants settled in Montreal. The site provided an overview of the general admission criteria in Canada, Australia, USA and Spain, and also compared these destinations based on a set of parameters focusing on health care, security, economic development, climate, openness to migration and so on. For example, Canada's advantages are listed as the health system, the security, a stable economy, a general high level of education, the country's history of receiving immigrants, and bilingualism. Disadvantages listed include the climate, the high level of taxation, the predilection for rules and regulations (which may 'clash with the Latin-American way of being', the website notes), and – again – the bilingualism.

The website also provides an online 'emigration test', to help people find out whether they are 'really ready to leave' and have good reasons. Reasons one can tick off include insecurity, lack of professional opportunities, poor income, and 'cultural anxiety, nonconformity with the indiosyncrasy' (*ansiedad cultural, inconformidad con la idiosincrasia*). Other things the test considers are how dependent one is on one's family, how one's family will react, how used one is to handling great changes, how one thinks one will react to for example having to work in a fast food restaurant, and what 'migrant type' one is (for example 'adventurer' or 'safety-seeker'). The website offers information, advice and have adverts from immigration consultancy and law firms that offer to '*ensure that your dream of a life in Canada is fulfilled*³¹⁹'.

³¹⁹ Slogan from advert of *Primus Immigration Inc* on www.mequieroir.com

The website also has a section of testimonials from migrants which is typical of these types of websites and can perhaps be seen as indicative of the strong influence that personal, lived experience continues to have in migration decisions. Indeed, there is a multitude of migrants' stories to be found on the Internet, personal, interactive and unfolding in real-time, through for example blogs. Some of these were also important sources of information and encouragement for my informants.

One of them, a blog called *Fran y Romi soñando Canada*³²⁰ was particularly popular, in a large part because the blog's creators began their migration process more or less at the same time as my informants. Fran and Romi set up their blog in the very beginning of the process, before they had even sent in their application. The blog had as its explicit mission to document every step on their way to migration. A number of forms and documents related to the migration process were made available on the blog, and often with links to other informative web sites. The migration process was also explained in a step-by-step manner. Fran and Romi blogged their way through the entire process that lasted almost 4 years.

Reading the blog entries during Fran and Romi's pre-migration period gave my informants a clear idea of how the migration process really unfolds. There was also of course the interactive aspect, the fact that the blog posts were often commented upon by a number of persons, many of whom were ahead of them in the process and who shared useful tips and advice. All sorts of information concerning migration-related issues were available on the blog, such as how and where to do language training, how to calculate expected living costs, how to get your diplomas recognized, and an overview of the questions you might be asked in the migration interview with suggestions of «right» answers. They also had special sections with up-to-date information on where and when migration seminars would be organized, customs procedures related to shipping your belongings, how to enlist your children in school, and advice on driving in winter conditions, only to mention a very few.

³²⁰ <http://franyromi.blogspot.no/>
The blog is created by an Argentinean couple.

My informants followed Fran and Romi's blog because it was considered a site where you would find answers to all kinds of questions. Moreover, since there were so many comments from readers, the information on the blog was almost always updated and completed. Indeed, at the time, the blog was often more up-to-date and comprehensive than for example the immigration authorities' website. Another important factor was the information having something of an 'insider' character. Blogs such as this are often quite detailed narratives written by real individuals – at least one assumes – and based on their lived experiences, their own hopes and projects for the future, chronologically anchored in the different phases and troughs that the migration process consists of. The blogs, then, were considered 'real' or 'true' information, sometimes as opposed to the generalized, faceless and sometimes idealizing information they would find on for example the authorities' websites. For example, while Immigration Canada on their website emphasized how much their skills and qualifications were needed and wanted in Canada, my informants arrived in Montreal perfectly aware that it would probably take time to find work corresponding to their qualifications, and that their work experience from Venezuela did not carry the same value. They not only knew that they would have to be patient and possibly remain unemployed or underemployed for some time, they also knew that this situation was quite normal and that many other qualified migrants were going through the same thing.

Emerging networks

One reason why so many of my informants subscribed to migrants' blogs was that few of them had a network in Montreal before arriving. Most of my informants were part of the beginning of a new wave of migration from Venezuela and said they 'rarely ran into Venezuelans in the streets'. The new millennium can be said to represent a watershed in Venezuelan migration to Montreal³²¹. In the decade that followed, migration went from being insignificant in terms of numbers to constituting a more noticeable fact of the city. As well as representing a sheer increase, the recent immigration is also made up of individuals issued from a different socio-economic class than before. Post-millennium migrants are mainly skilled professionals and their desire to migrate was related to their experiences of Venezuela under Chavez. Pre-millennium migrants, on the other hand, were presented as 'more often than now' issued from lower socio-economic classes. Sometimes my informants commented that these people had never lived in

³²¹ As well as Venezuelan emigration to other destinations.

Venezuela under Chavez, and therefore held a more positive view of his politics. There are, of course, no sources to confirm this. I did, however, notice on the few occasions when I participated in activities organized by the Venezuelan consulate, such as the celebration of the 20th anniversary of Chavez' *rebellion militar*, that the people I met there had all lived in Montreal for many years. None of my informants participated in these events.

Migrants themselves also made use of this watershed to identify peers. For them, asking how long another Venezuelan migrant had been in Montreal was also an indirect way of obtaining indications of political sympathies and - though less certain - class belonging. One of the older migrants I met, Oscar, told me that when he arrived towards the end of the 90s, the few Venezuelans living in Montreal were people who had come to escape poverty, and sometimes for 'individual reasons' as he put it, which in most cases meant marriage. Similarly, Mariela from a Venezuelan association noted that Venezuelans who arrived before 2000 in most cases originate from lower social classes and noted that there is little degree of contact between these individuals and the ones who come today.

As I have noted earlier, most of my informants had arrived Montreal without knowing anyone and often without having visited the city before. However, this situation seemed to be changing as the number of Venezuelan migrants increased. The migrants who arrived towards the end of my fieldwork mostly seemed to have had some kind of contact with someone in Montreal, whether directly through friendship or kinship, or through online forums, mailing lists (such as that of the Association), Facebook-groups or so on. Migrants often follow the routes of previous migrants, migration researchers have observed, a phenomena often put down to exchange of experiences, information and contacts (for example Kearney and Nagengast 1989, Massey et al. 1997). To some extent, some early traces of networks being made were noticeable in the case of my informants. Ana and Miguel, for example, were one of four couples in a circle of friends who all migrated to Montreal, the first arrivals helping the next, and so on. Since Guadalupe migrated, two of her close friends have started the process of migrating and have come to stay with her for several months while taking French classes *in situ*.

It is a great advantage for them to have had a lived experience with the city, culture and climate. In this sense, I am a window for them.

There are also physical places in Venezuela where future Quebec immigrants now tend to meet. For example, most of my informants had studied French at their local *Alliance Française*, which is part of a worldwide network of centers established to promote French language and culture. There are several such centers in Caracas, and also in at least 8 other cities in Venezuela. Through their provision of French language training, the centers have become a common meeting place for prospective immigrants to Quebec. As mentioned, they are also favored venues for the information sessions that the Quebec Ministry of Immigration holds³²². Several of my informants mentioned having stayed with friends they had met at the *Alliance Française* their first days in Montreal, or mentioned that they themselves had accommodated newcomers that they had come to know at the *Alliance Française*.

Networks and information exchange were useful in many ways when it came to planning the arrival in Montreal. Coming from cities where the differences between neighborhoods are extreme, many Venezuelans are hesitant about renting an apartment over the internet without knowing the area. Those who do not have friends or relatives they can stay with the first weeks, often rely on advice from other Venezuelans when it comes to accommodation. This creates certain curious patterns, such as for example that of staying at the rather modest motel Excel in the not-so-centric Saint Leonard neighborhood, which was Guadalupe's case:

What happens is that you pass the information on to others. For example, a girl I had met at Alliance Française contacted me after I had left to ask me where I had stayed. Motel Excel, I said. So when she came, she stayed at the Motel Excel.

Guadalupe herself had gotten the address of the motel from someone else when she was planning her own arrival. - *And so everybody goes there*, she laughs, *although it is not anything special* [gran cosa].

³²² The role of the *Alliance Française* as centers of gravitation for Quebec migrants has possibly been strengthened since 2012, after which applicants must submit a recognized attestation (*the TCF test*) of their language proficiency. In Venezuela this exam is offered only by the *Alliance Française* centers.

Life as it happens

The pre-migration period was sometimes experienced as living an overlap between previous and future life situations. Yet, in the midst of it all, everyday life went on. As Felix stated, the period was sufficiently long for unexpected life changes to occur; changes that might alter or destabilize the migration project. Couples could be formed or split up, children could be born, health problems develop or one's economic situation change radically. As described in chapter 8, most of my informants were in the 30s when applying, which is a period of life when careers are developed, families formed and homes established. The ongoing migration project was in constant interplay with these domains of life. For example, two of my informants had received interesting job offers during the period, and for one possibility of buying a nice home at a good price had presented itself during the application process. Declining these offers - particularly in the light of not knowing the outcome of one's application - had been difficult.

Some had also experienced unexpected turns of life of a more serious kind. For example, two of my informants had initiated their migration processes together with their spouses, but during the pre-migration period the relationships had ended. The dissolution of their marriages had left them in doubt as to whether or not to go on with the project. Migration had been imagined as a project of the couple, of together creating a new life in Montreal, raising their children there, etcetera, and now had to be re-conceptualized as a project realized by and for oneself. Luis and his wife, for example, separated after they had received the Quebec selection certificate.

I was very sad and depressed. I thought, what should I do now that I am alone? Because part of the idea of migrating was to found a family, and have our life, right? But then I thought, with or without a spouse, I am going. I will settle, find a job, and maybe I'll meet someone.

In more fortunate cases, an unexpected applicant had to be added. Such was the case of Eva and Eduardo. One year was added to their pre-migration period, given that in the course of the process their daughter found out that she was pregnant.

Eva: - The process stopped because our granddaughter was born. It delayed it with a year, because we had to do her paperwork too.

Eduardo: - And incorporate her.

Eva: - Passport, birth certificate, permission from the father that the child could leave, the court ruling, and many conversations to be sure that we had not changed our minds. So, clearly, it became more complicated since originally the girl had not been in the application.

El año de cerrar (The closing year)

The arrival of the visa typically offset quite a sprint, since it is stipulated that one must 'land' in Canada within six months. Many informants described the moment when they were notified by the Embassy of the arrival of their visa as one of joy, thrill and relief, but also of seriousness. Suddenly migration was becoming real and required a series of concluding actions, such as handing in one's notice at work, putting one's house up for sale, selling off or shipping off one's belongings, informing the school, buying plane tickets and health insurances³²³. The 'project' changed velocity. Michelle relates:

The last year is 'el ano de cerrar' (the closing year). You prepare a thousand documents; you visit everyone that you don't want to leave without having seen. It is a long farewell, the whole year. You spend your time closing circles and saying goodbye.

Michelle took charge of all the final preparations since her husband was travelling very much through his work, and was rarely there. She resigned her job as journalist, which would have been impossible to combine with the other tasks. It was an exhausting period, she recalls, not least because she wanted to arrive Montreal with everything in perfect order.

For example, I did what I call a medical Olympics. All those health problems you never bother to go to see the doctor for; an allergy, a little pain somewhere, your teeth, your glasses, all those things. I wanted to arrive with everything in order, with my daughters' grade cards translated, the vaccination cards updated, - even with new tooth fillings!

For most of my informants this period was experienced as a rush to conclude one's present life. Eva relates:

It happens so fast. You have been waiting for that moment and then suddenly you have to act. There are so many decisions. The car, do I sell it or not? The apartment, do I sell it or

³²³ Since immigrants are not immediately covered by the publicly funded health insurance

rent it? One thing is planning that you are going, another thing is when you get your visa and you have to go.

While emigration is a new phenomenon in Venezuela it has intensified during the last decade, and those who stay thus have to come to terms with 'losing friend after friend to migration', as Eva put it. There is therefore a particular kind of sadness related to the announcement of another departure.

We said goodbye for a month. It was very sad. As I said before, Venezuelans have not been emigrants before. And now, families and circles of friends are being scattered all over the world. And you are another one leaving.

For some the rush to conclude things left little energy for strong emotions. Yesenia tells me that after the burst of emotions she felt when the visa arrived, the reality of it soon caught up with them.

We started to sell off our things; tables and chairs, plates and dishes. You get rid of a whole life to start a new.

She says they were '4 persons and 8 suitcases' that left Maracaibo only two months after they had received their visa. - *8 suitcases to start our new life!* she laughs. Similarly, Michelle said:

I had thought that the last months would be very sad, but you are so stressed and you have so much to think about, that you just don't have time to be sad or nostalgic.

She was mostly alone with the final preparations and with her two daughters, since her husband was travelling very much through his work.

I had to sell everything or give it away. In Venezuela, when you no longer need something, you normally give it to someone. There are so many poor people. Sometimes it is someone in your family. Usually it is the woman who cleans. In Venezuela every building has a woman who cleans, she lives downstairs with her family. She gets all the children's clothes, for example. I gave her everything we were not going to bring. That is common; a lot of these women benefit from migration these days.

Nevertheless, Michelle brought a whole container of things (even her refrigerator, I later learnt). She also brought her cat, even though it required an operation, rounds of vaccinations, obtaining an animal health card as well as permission from the ministry of agriculture. - *The cat had its own migration process*, she laughs. When they had shipped everything to Montreal, she and her two daughters stayed in the apartment for another month before leaving, with just three inflatable mattresses and a compact refrigerator. This was an unusual solution; most of my informants stayed with parents or close friends the last days before departure. For Michelle, the feeling of rush extended even into the moment of leaving:

I remember the day we left Venezuela, when we were at the airport. All this time I had imagined that there, at the airport, I would cry and cry and cry because we were leaving. But I felt nothing. Nothing. In my head I was going through the lists, had we forgotten anything?

- - -

This chapter has focused on narratives of the time period between making the decision to migrate and actually leaving. Through these narratives I have explored various ways in which everyday life was coloured by and negotiated in the light of the upcoming departure. The pre-migration period also represents a period in which their future lives in Montreal were imagined, researched, and planned. In this regard, I have discussed some important sources of information and inspiration, including the images of Quebec and of Canada projected by the immigration authorities. The chapter has also been concerned with the narratives as ongoing stories of the self, for example by drawing attention to the identity work inherent in the narratives concerning the handing of the 'migration project'. I suggested that the purpose of these self-representations should be understood against the background of the structural expectations to skilled migrants. The following chapter presents and discusses their trajectories after having migrated to Montréal.

10. Trajectories

Landing

The first thing I noticed was the architecture. I didn't like it! It was ugly, so flat and square. It was not pretty... It looked like the poor neighborhoods back home. Grey houses with mold stains. It looked dirty. There was paper trash in the stairways, at the bus stops. Graffiti everywhere. Oh, I didn't like it!

Ana

It was love! Immediately!

Guadalupe

'Landing' in immigration terminology refers to the moment when migrants legally enter the country at one of the designated ports of entry, to take up residence. This is the moment when the status as permanent resident becomes activated. All my informants touched ground at the Pierre Elliot Trudeau airport where they had to register at the Immigration-Québec's reception service. Although landing is a bureaucratically important passage in the migration process, it was insignificant in my informants' narratives, overshadowed by the subsequent first impressions of their new environment. For some, such as Guadalupe, it was *'love, immediately'*, for others, such as Ana, the first impressions crashed with prior imaginations.

This last empirical chapter deals with narratives of their lives after arriving in Montreal. The intention with the chapter is to relate some of the ways that my informants carved out a place for themselves, and through their narratives explore the nature of attachment, identification, belonging and different meanings of the notion of home. The accounts weave together several themes that are central in the thesis. From the outset, I took inspiration from Leung's (2004) comment that the places where migrants make their homes are as important identifiers in their stories as their movements. Similarly, Bönisch-Brednich and Trundle (2010: [1]) argue that *'most*

people still become mobile with the intention of settling once more and of making the new locality a meaningful site for daily life'. Drawing on these insights, I suggest that migrants' ideas of home and belonging are important keys to understand migration decisions and adaptation strategies. Scholars interested in the concept of home have been concerned with exploring peoples' referents of home, whether they are one or multiple, in what kind of places they are located, what it is that makes people feel at home, and how this changes (Gilmartin and Migge 2015). I take my informants' narratives as basis for discussing what kind of belongings they desired, what kind of 'homes' they were searching for, and their different strategies to attain and realize these homes, suggesting that narratives of homes are also narratives of identity. To leave, in this perspective, is to become, and involves seeing one's life as possessing a certain directionality (Rapport 2003).

Narratives, as previously discussed, play a crucial role in creating a sense of coherence and stability by connecting separate events into a larger, structured, meaningful story. This process involves selecting and connecting events (Riessman 2005), constructing meaningful wholes out of 'scattered events', as Ricoeur (1981) phrased it. A central point in narrative theory is that through narratives, random events are given a sense of coherence and continuity across time (Rapport and Overing 2000, Ochs and Capps 1996). In order to capture how the events in the narratives presented here were ordered and given meaning, I argue that it is important to see them in the light of pre-migration thoughts, plans and hopes. Expectations, naturally, influence the interpretation of events and trajectories. However, the relationship is also the inverse; experiences influence later accounts of the goals and circumstances one started out with. This is another crucial point in narrative theory, namely that narratives simultaneously explain the past and are oriented towards the future, and that this is an ongoing process.

An Unexpected Home (Guadalupe's story)

I like to sing. I love to sing. But I would never have thought that music would be the tool to my integration.

It was August when Guadalupe came to Montreal from Barquecimeto. She had wanted to arrive in summer, saying she had been worrying for 2 years about how to survive Canadian winters. She

had installed an application on her computer dashboard, she tells me, where she could see the temperatures in Barquecimetoto and Montreal side by side. She planned to focus on three things in the first few months after arriving: To perfect her French, to begin looking for a job, and to become more extroverted.

I don't know how it is in other places but in Barquecimetoto people are very closed. You could say it's a bit provincial. It's almost in the mountains, very interior [*al interior*]. So people are a bit closed. To say hello to someone in the streets without knowing them, that is very rare. If you are waiting for a bus, and someone else comes at the bus stop, they are unable to say something to each other. Nothing. It's very different from here.

She challenged herself into talking to strangers, she said, and tried to get rid of her shyness, which she attributed to reigning norms in the city she comes from. She needed to get rid of the *barquecimetana* in her, she told me, because if not she would tend to want to stay at home, be alone, get depressed, and maybe even want to go back. On the outset, the life that Guadalupe had envisioned in Montreal included her then partner and their plan of founding a small company. She imagined being two, sharing experiences, living and working together, one day having kids. However, in the process of migration, they split up. When I first met Gudalaupe, she had been in Montreal, and alone, for a few months. Her imagined life in Montreal was bound never to be; the questions was whether or not she would stay or return to Venezuela. On our first encounter, she was determined to stay.

Guadalupe, in fact, does not come across as very introverted. She seems to make friends easily; for example, she already knows everybody in her French class. She is well informed about many things, to a large extent because she is not afraid of asking. As soon as she started looking for work she turned for help from the *Emploi-Québec*, a governmental service.

I have a coach, who gives me advice on strategies for what I should do, and who follows me up. I have to do certain activities this week because next week she will ask me what I have done. It is a very systematic way to work. Because sometimes I tend to spread too much. Montreal is a big city and there are very many companies here. I did not know where to begin. That's why I sought help, because I did not know where to begin. But the

coach says says, do this, and this, and this. Do these things this week, and then we look at the results next week.

She says that the labor market in Quebec is more competitive than she is used to. After having passed five job interviews without being chosen, she tells me that she gets too nervous in the interviews and is unable to 'sell' her skills. Nevertheless, she soon found work in her field, and was happy to have an office and colleagues to go to every day. She is the only woman working in her department, and this situation sometimes reminds her of home, where she has four brothers. Her colleagues come from many different countries. - *It is a very international environment*, she says, *and the guys talk to me as if I was their sister*.

Guadalupe has a profound interest in music. She sings soprano; in Barquecimeto she had studied singing for several years and sang with different musicians. A few months after arriving in Montreal she joined a choir. She has been to auditions, but feels that the competitive mentality that she also senses in the labour market is present in the musical environment too. The choir she has joined stands as a contrast to this, for example, there are some individuals there who like to sing but who, according to Guadalupe, do not sing well at all and who are nevertheless included. She brings this up as an example of the good spirit of unity and accepting environment she found there.

It is really funny. Not everyone sings that well. And we all smoke! We are 15, no 16 members. I got integrated in the choir fast, because I like so much to sing. And also because they speak French and nobody speak Spanish. I love that.

Through the choir Guadalupe made friends with persons who were engaged in the underground cultural life of Montreal and in particular the activities at an independent cultural center of the trendy Plateau neighbourhood. Somewhat to her own surprise, she came to like what she describes as the 'bohemian ways' of her artistic new friends, and also enjoyed the informal, laidback way that the cultural center was run. They represent chaos in a way that she finds creative and fun; she smiles over their propensity to smoke pot and over the choir's unconventional and spontaneous concerts in public places. Guadalupe's narrative illustrates that attachments, and also *desired* attachments, change over time. Instead of establishing belonging through a career and family oriented life as imagined, she came to become attached to Montreal

through its musical scene. One side effect of her social life was the pleasure of feeling safe going home alone at night, which was something previously unthinkable.

I like that it is a safe city. I have walked on Sherbrooke Street at 3:30 in the morning, *alone*. The first time I did it I walked like this [*repeatedly glancing over her shoulder*]. If I heard footsteps behind me, I startled. I was traumatised. But after about three months, it passed.

Guadalupe has also taken up biking and describes the experience as liberating. The bike, in fact, recurred in several of my informants' narratives representing a freedom of movement that they had gained in Montreal. Many had not done it since they were children. In a sense, the bike linked the feeling of being safe with the feeling of being at home. For example, Eduardo had commented that he felt that he had lost his 'city identity' as Caracas became parcelled into safe and unsafe enclaves. Against this, biking or walking home alone after dark represented a restoration of the possibility of being at home in the city, and thus also worked to consolidate the decision to leave.

The winter, which Guadalupe had dreaded before coming, would also turn out to be a different experience than she had expected. Her first winter was according to native Montrealers a 'mild one'. She laughs about this. She discovered, to her surprise, that it was not the cold that was strange about winter, but the feeling of wearing thick winter clothes and heavy boots. She could not have imagined this beforehand; as Minh-ha (2010) notes, home is embodied, it carries lived experiences and histories. However, the first winter brought her other difficult feelings:

G: - I have had troughs. Yes. In December. Very strongly. I cried a lot, it was terrible.
T: - Did you want to go back then?
G: - Yes. I was thinking, what am I doing here... But thanks to my friend, the girl from Uruguay, she said to me, Guadalupe, *por dios*, forget that it's Christmas. Forget all that. It's nothing. And I tried to block it out, telling myself that it is just a party, that it is like Halloween, anything, just not Christmas. It was hard, above all because I used to be the moving spirit of my house [*alma de mi casa*], right? I organized the dinner, what we needed to do, who should do what, the exchange. I was the engine that moved everything in the house. Since I was not there, my brothers kept saying, oh, we miss you... My mother, my father, we miss you so. So that did not help. I told them, on the phone, don't

worry, next year I'll be with you. But when I hung up I cried like a real fool [*una misma tonta*]. Then I told myself, one step at the time. One after the other. And it passed.

She tells me that she has made three close friends in Montreal; the woman from Uruguay, a Québécoise woman, and a woman from Bulgaria. These women helped her through this period.

These are friends who... from here to the end of the world. It is incredible. We have a chemistry between us that... is very good. Me for them too. They tell me that they did not think they could find friends like that here in Montreal. It is very nice.

Later, Guadalupe joined two other choirs, a Venezuelan choir and a choir singing renaissance music. She says she joined the Venezuelan choir because she misses singing Venezuelan traditional songs. The other choir is more serious, she says, and demands more of an effort from her; she joined it because it represents a new challenge. Guadalupe's singing also made some of the most memorable moments of the fieldwork. She generously sang and played for me on several occasions, introducing me to her favourite traditional Venezuelan songs. She is proud of her knowledge of Venezuelas musical heritage and is in command of numerous songs, musical history, genres, rhythms, instruments, and regional differences. This is also something her local musical friends can recognize and appreciate, more so than her other competences. Because of her dedication to music, Guadalupe's contact surface also grew broader than that of most of my other informants. Not only did her musical activities lead her to meet many people, but through concerts and practices she also came to know many less obvious spots and corners of Montreal. The meeting places (some of which are represented on p. 219) that she suggested for our encounters in many ways reflect this appropriation of the city: Whereas our first meeting took place in a mainstream café downtown, later we would meet in alternative cafes, pop-up galleries, or some bar off the beaten track. We also met in her home, where there would often be people dropping by or friends from Venezuela for longer visits.

A couple of years after getting her first job, Guadalupe changed job and bought herself an apartment on the Plateau, where she moved in with her two cats. Buying her own place had been a goal all along, although she had not originally imagined that she would be living alone. In many ways, her story can be read as one of successful integration, both socially and professionally.

However, it also stands to show that integration is a subjective experience that does not necessarily correspond to structural expectations. For example, as Thomsen (2006) points out, an individual can be integrated in the labour market, and economically integrated, without feeling integrated socially. Her story also agrees with Sennet's (2006) observation that in a context where work has become instable, identity becomes axed around other things. Guadalupe formed her Montreal identity to a large part around her as a singer and active participant in Montreal's cultural life. The element of merit, so central in our first encounter, is still present but toned down. For example, she now emphasises that she has had favourable circumstances, and that the reason why she has succeeded is partly related to that:

G: - I never felt... rejected as immigrant. Or, what do you call it?

T: - Discriminated?

G: - Aha, discriminated. Never. By anyone. Or perhaps I just did not notice, but I never felt out of place [*fuera del lugar*]. There is an incredible mix here. Everybody are immigrants. I never felt like, what am I doing here? No, never.

What she does feel, however, she later commented, was that many of the people she met refused to understand why she did not support Chavez, and that many of her native quebecois friends did not seem curious about her culture. For example, she had tried to invite friends to concerts with traditional Venezuelan music or to Latin-American parties, but they had not been interested. This attitude seemed to disagree with the valuation of diversity and acceptance that her friends otherwise evoked. This sometimes bothered her, and she did not understand it. It should be noted that Guadalupe had made more native Québécois and French-speaking friends than any of my other informants. She had not sought to socialize with other Venezuelans, according to herself because she had friends and therefore did not need it. At the same time, she was probably also the one who was most continuously connected with family and friends in Venezuela. Her professional background as ICT analyst was a favorable basis for putting technologies to use to uphold contact with friends, family and professional contacts elsewhere. Technology was an integrated part of her daily life and often in more innovative ways than most of my other informants³²⁴. For example, after migration she continued to work for previous employers in

³²⁴ Although they were all very used to technology

Venezuela while trying to land a job in Montreal³²⁵, since the consultancy work she was doing in any case largely took place online. She also used technology in novel ways when it came to weaving together her experiences in Montreal and her close ones in Venezuela. For example, the first time she was going to sing solo in a concert in Montreal, she streamed it so that family and friends could also 'be there' in this important moment for her. She was singing, then, for two separate audiences that were both personally important for her.

Guadalupe tells me that she talks with her mother on Skype on an almost daily basis. They often talk while she is making dinner or sit down to have 'kitchen table conversations'. This is a good thing about being in Canada, she comments, because in Australia, for example, the time difference would have made this daily ritual impossible. Having internet on her phone means that her mother can write to her anytime and that Guadalupe can answer instantly. That also relieves their at times tense relationship, as her mother had not initially wanted her to leave, and had felt abandoned. When I ask Guadalupe how often she communicates with friends back home, she laughs: *As soon as I sit down somewhere!* Her cell phone is never far and rarely quiet. In addition to short messages, she also meets with her friends on Skype.

Every time they are gathered somewhere, they start sending me messages. *Where are you? Connect yourself!* And so they are there with their bottle of wine, and I pop out to buy a beer, and we chat, me in my apartment, they there, and they tell me what's up.

Such practices correspond with what researchers of transnationalism have pointed out, namely that many migrants continue to maintain hometies and interconnections across borders, while simultaneously becoming part of the places where they settle (Basch et al 1994, Levitt and Javorsky 2007). Indeed, Guadalupe was probably the 'most integrated' of my informants, in terms of her local social network and participation in activities, in addition to having found work in her field, become a homeowner, and so on. Still, she is in contact with friends or family in Venezuela 'as soon as she sits down somewhere'. Al-Ali and Koser (2002) points out that migrants' transnational practices contribute to challenge ideas of one home and one belonging, and

³²⁵ Although she admitted that it was complicated since she was being paid in *bolivares*, and that her father had to go through a lot of trouble on the black market to get the money to her in dollars.

Gudalaupe can be seen as an example of how here and there can be continuously interwoven in everyday life.

However, Guadalupe also experiences the flip side of this 'connected presence' (Wilding 2006). For example, she tells me that her mother sometimes prefer that they speak on the phone rather than Skype, because she finds it too painful to see her and not be able to give her a hug. Wilding (2006) describes this dimension of ICTs through the notion of 'sunny days technologies', implying that the connected presence that these technologies enable, tend to be experienced as positive as long as things go well. However, in cases of the contrary, the virtual presence makes the physical separation extra frustrating. Guadalupe, for example, tells me that in periods when things were not going so well for her, she did not want to Skype with her mother, because she did not want her to notice that she was sad, and begin to worry. I ask her why she feels that she cannot share these emotions. - *I cannot show weakness*, she tells me, *because if they see that I suffer, they will ask me to come home.*

One of these down periods came after she ended a longer relationship with a young Québécois man, because she wanted to settle and found a family, whereas he felt that he was not ready. She wants to have children, she has told me. - *You do things, like migration, so that your children will have possibilities, right?* However, she says that she thinks that Québécois men seem too satisfied with their lives and lack a desire to 'push further', whereas she wants to 'learn more, make a better salary, buy a house, have something to fall back upon when she is old'. They don't seem to have ambitions, she exclaims, in contrast with her own mentality of setting goals and trying to reach them. - *Maybe when you are a migrant you have to be like that*, she ponders. Since our first encounter, Gudalaupe has upheld a narrative of herself as goalminded and as someone who will stay on track even in stormy weather. This was particularly evident in the accounts of what she had achieved in Venezuela and her emphasis on the value of effort. Her stories support an image of her as a person who, when having made a decision, will stick to it, for example when she decided to migrate to Montreal, or when she decided to stay there although her couple broke up. She sustained this narrative even in periods when she was uncertain, sad and confused. Indeed, her understanding of herself as strong and determined seemed to help to pull her up in those periods of hardship. Through narratives, Thomsen (2005) writes, individuals

represent certain aspects from the past in terms of intentions for the future by which he or she guides present actions. Guadalupe's narratives illustrate that this must be seen in relation to current contexts. For example, in the first narratives of herself as someone who achieves objectives, which were set in a Venezuelan setting, she explicitly linked this attitude to class and education, tracing it to the idea that middle class individuals had had to work hard for what they have, and also, that they had understood the necessity of this effort, as opposed to the poor and misled. In this later interpretation, enterprise and determination are understood as personal qualities more generally associated with the mindset of migrants; reframed, then, as required by the act of migration.

My father gave me the Alchemist for Christmas. I am not a fan of Coelho, but I ended up reading it while I was waiting for my flight. And, you know, finally I liked it, because it is about an immigrant who has a project, who has a goal.

In her second year in Montreal, Guadalupe spends Christmas with her family in Barquecimeto. She tells me that the situation has gotten worse; that the shops are as good as empty, and that everything has become corrupt. With tears in her eyes she tells me of her mother, who has to go out and stop the gas truck in the street, sweet talk the driver and pay him, in order to convince him to sell her gas. The increasingly difficult situation in Venezuela has made her mother less negative to her decision to leave, and the narrative thus also shows the complexity of the relationship between her mother and herself as daughter/emigrant. Her mother now says that is was a good thing that Guadalupe left, and thus Guadalupe is less burdened with the feeling of guilt; instead she is now continuously worried about her mother's wellbeing. In difficult moments, however, her mother still expresses bitterness over the fact that Guadauple is no longer there.

The first winter after having migrated, when she did not go back for Christmas, it had been painful for Guadalupe to notice the 'hole' that she had left. She was strongly missed, as the one who 'moved everything' with regards to the celebration. Now she tells me that her younger brother has taken her place when it comes to organizing the Christmas dinner, and that it was equally painful for her to see her place filled by someone else. Even so, she says that she felt really at home, and that if she can, she will repeat the experience every year. Home in this sense,

can be said to exist as a 'moment of individual or collective performance', as Williksen and Rapport (2010: 3) describe it. In this perspective, the Christmas celebration in her mother's house works as an 'act of home-making' (ibid), upholding a home that for Guadalupe otherwise only represent origin and roots, and not the place where she longs to be. This home remains an attachment, a space where she continues to negotiate her place, although in that same conversation she states that she wants to stay in Montreal always. Christmas represented a moment when the everyday separation of the rest of the year was dimmed, and yet, the real-life consequences of the separation were not always possible to disregard. For example, Guadalupe tells me:

(..) My grandmother... she has become blind. Nobody had told me that! When I went to see her, she was groping for me, feeling me with her hands. I asked my mother why she hadn't told me. She said she did not want me to worry. That means that the last time my grandmother ever saw me was last year when I was home. And I had not known.

Guadalupe has also begun worrying about her father, who works too hard, has health problems, and consumes too much alcohol. He has to drink with clients, she explains, since her father is a businessman, managing an engros company that has been in the family for 70 years. The company is important enough to affect food prices, Guadalupe says to indicate its importance, and for this reason her father also has enemies. She also tells me that recently he nearly got in trouble for refusing to paint his entrepot red. She seems worried, but also quite proud, of his stubborn resistance to such pressures. She has mentioned before how attached she is to her father. Such a close father-daughter relationship was rare among my female informants. Once, an old friend of Guadalupe visiting from Venezuela claimed that Guadalupe had been 'raised as a boy', in the sense that her father had encouraged her as much as her brothers to realize what they wanted. This was an 'unusual' upbringing, the friend commented. For Guadalupe, then, the value of going after what you want is planted deeply and has been part of her self-understanding since childhood.

After her Christmas visit, Guadalupe tells me that her father has a business idea where she would play a part. He wants her to meet with cheese exporters in Quebec, opening doors for him to make a deal with them. She does not seem too convinced, and says that it will be an extra

workload for her, but at the same time the idea of having a project together with her father, anchored in Venezuela and Montreal, pleases her. She tells me that it represents an opportunity for her to have an extra income and in the long run, if it works, she could begin to spend the winters in Venezuela. - *Like the snowbirds*, she laughs. The idea of this long-distance commuting consoles her in what she calls her 'moments of homesickness'. However, at the time of this conversation, 2 months had already passed and she had not yet commenced. Ultimately, the project was never realized.

Guadalupe is also increasingly worried about her mother, who according to her is unhappy and lives a secluded life, only leaving the house to go to her bible study group. Her mother has a big house, Guadalupe tells me, and her brother and his family are also living there. Her mother, however, spends every evening in her room watching TV; the *novela* (soap opera) and Globovision³²⁶. Their relationship, as already noted, is characterized by mixed feelings. According to Guadalupe, her mother never got over her father leaving her for another woman and carries a lot of bitterness in her. Sometime this imputes on Guadalupe, who always remained close to her father. This is particularly the case now, as Guadalupe's father is coming to visit her together with his new wife. Guadalupe is happy but also finds it difficult. For example, it will be impossible to have the daily conversations with her mother on Skype while her father is there, and it will be equally difficult *not* to have them. On the one hand, her mother is glad that Guadalupe does not have to live in the *miseria* of Venezuela. On the other hand, in moments such as these she continues to make her feel guilty. - *I ask her how she is doing, and she answers that she would be doing better if I were there*, Guadalupe sighs. At the same time, Guadalupe's salary enables her to pay for an eye operation that her mother needs, and she also pays a girl to come and do the house work.

They don't want money from me, but they want me to help them live a little bit better in Venezuela. My brother doesn't have money to pay a maid [*chica*], so I take care of that. It is better for everyone. Everyone relaxes more when things are in order.

In the course of the fieldwork, several of Guadalupe's friends from Barquecimoto commenced the process of migration to Canada. One of Guadalupe's close friends was admitted as skilled worker

³²⁶ Venezuelan television news network.

and moved in with Guadalupe for almost a year. Guadalupe's apartment, centrally located and suitable for social gatherings, became a juncture of several social networks; her Montreal friends, her visiting Venezuelan friends, and their - mostly Latino - friends. Another friend of Guadalupe was close to migrating to Montreal, but eventually decided to settle in Panama instead. Guadalupe's first friend in Montreal - the girl from Uruguay who supported her through the first Christmas - eventually missed Uruguay so much that she moved back. None of Guadalupe's family members have so far made concrete plans to migrate. Guadalupe, however, is clear in her advice to those who consider it as an option:

If someone asks me, should I migrate, I tell them they should. That they have to. But that if they come here, they must be open, they must be like a sponge. They must come with the ability to absorb every thing that is here. Everything. Because there are negative things here too. There really are. But where we come from things are so terrible that this seems like a paradise.

Self-realization Projects (Ana's story)

After a shiatsu session

Ana: I will always continue to do this. I need it, I need to feel that I give.

Turid: Sometimes it's hard to imagine that you once chose to become a mechanical engineer...

Ana: Well, initially I wanted to become an industrial designer, but my sister, who is a clothing designer, convinced me that I couldn't stand all the drawing. So that seemed like the closest thing. And it's exiting but I didn't like working with it, and I felt that already while I was studying. I was dreaming of other things. Of a more bohemian life, of travelling...

Tucked away in a massive warehouse and surrounded by diverse small and medium-sized enterprises, lies a Tai Chi school. It occupies a spacious suite with large windows giving onto a popular residential neighborhood. In a small room next to the *dojo*, Ana offers sessions of shiatsu therapy. She is wearing white, loose garments and moves calmly and with light steps as she shows me around. Over her desk she has two large posters showing the meridians that channel energy in the body and she gives me a short introduction on how working the pressure points will aid the balance between negative and positive energy. – *You'll see, it will do you good.* Before

beginning the treatment she needs to obtain a clear image of my physical and mental history and present state. She takes out a pen and a paper and begins to ask me questions more personal than I have ever asked her. Then she dims the light, invites me to lie down on the dark blue mat, and begins the treatment. The only sounds are the distant thumps from the tile factory situated on the floor above.

It took 5 years to get here, but Ana focused on realizing the transformative potential of migration to its fullest. Moving to Montreal represented in many ways a new beginning and not least a professional second birth for her. Ana had told me earlier that when she lived in Venezuela she was 'someone she was not'. She had studied to become a mechanical engineer and says she liked the theory but not the work. Both Miguel and her envisioned life in Montreal as a change not only of country, language and climate, but also of career. This was a crucial part of the migration project, and carefully planned: First, Ana would work while Miguel studied (because he had a clearer idea of what he wanted to do) and when he finished, they would switch. All she knew at that point was that she wanted to go into something 'softer' than engineering, something related to care and the body.

In Ana's case migration and identity processes are clearly and closely linked. Her narrative resonates with Benson and O'Reilly's (2009) approach to migrants as individuals trying to realize desired lives, and seeing migration as the transformative action that makes this possible. Migration, Amit (2007, 2012) has pointed out, is also motivated by the desire for a change or an escape from certain circumstances and relationships. For Ana, who claimed that she felt like a stranger in Venezuela, migration represented at once a desire for change and a quest for home. Transnational researchers' focus on the continuities in migration processes represents a critique of the view of migration as uprooting/regrounding (or assimilation). However, some ruptures or uprootings, such as Ana's, are desired and important in the decision to leave. Trajectories such as Ana's also illustrate why outcomes of migration can hardly be designed. Ana had been admitted as a skilled immigrant based on her education and work experience as a mechanical engineer, however, migration, for her, represented an occasion to realize a long held dream of reorienting herself towards a 'softer' occupation, better aligned with her attraction towards Asian philosophies.

In spite of having plans and objectives, it was not obvious that Ana and Miguel would achieve a sense of belonging in Montreal. As the vignette in the introduction shows, Ana was at first repulsed by the city and thought that it resembled the worst neighbourhoods back home. Place, as discussed in chapter 4, is significant in part since in the contemporary world individuals can imagine themselves at home somewhere else. In this perspective, spatial relocation and self-realization becomes closely linked (cf Benson 2010). For Ana and Miguel moving to Montreal was a way to advance personal and professional projects, and live in an environment they imagined matched better with their own values. Hage (2005: 470) employs the notion of 'existential mobility' in order to capture spatial relocations that are related to a sense of self as developing, suggesting that *'we engage in the kind of physical mobility that defines us as migrants because we feel another geographical space is a better launching pad for our existential selves'*. Ana, we saw in chapter 8, declared that 'she was Canadian before she even came here' and that she had felt like an 'extra-terrestrial' in Venezuela. In spite of the initial disappointment, she was therefore not discouraged. The feeling of being at home, she comments, also depends on time; on accumulating experiences with the city. In this sense, home and belonging is also linked to one's knowledge and reservoir of memories about people, places, situations and events which contribute to make one an insider. In contrast, in the beginning, experiences with the city were above all physical and sensorial, which Ana also emphasized:

In the beginning, before you feel confident about speaking French, and in any case you don't have so many to talk to, you are just a body. You move, you listen, you observe.

Her comment resembles other informants' narratives of the time before they got used to the new environment, before any attachments were created or new habits acquired. The aesthetics of Montreal, for example, were predominant in accounts of first impressions or first days, and in particular those aspects that were not as one had imagined. The descriptions of the first period find an echo in Simmel's sociological figure of 'the stranger', who is at once both inside and outside and whose position is characterized by *'belonging as well as non-belonging, proximity and distance'* (Simmel 1998, in Christensen and Jensen 2011). The perceptions of the cityspace was also informed by ideas of the future; in that the informants' perceptions should be seen in the light of them being permanent residents with an envisioned life to realize in this environment.

The embodied experience of living in Montreal also resulted in readjustments of some patterns of behavior and reactions; and a new awareness in situations one had been used to navigate without reflecting or consciously sensing. Ana:

In the beginning it made a real impression on me that all the houses were made of wood inside. But the sounds travel so easily from apartment to apartment! I have always lived in houses made of concrete so I have never had to walk quietly. I walk with heavy steps [she demonstrates]. Here I was told that I had to walk more lightly because of the neighbors.

Miguel added that it was the same thing with speaking; that they had to learn to lower their voices:

In Venezuela people talk loud all the time. Here I have gotten used to talk normally. When we have visitors from Venezuela I notice that they are shouting. I tell them, don't speak so loud, people here don't speak loud.

The notion that ordinary sounds such as footsteps and voices could be experienced as a disturbance by others, was at first experienced as curious, but soon internalized.

I never thought about how noisy Venezuela is until I came here. All the cars. And the music. Every time people meet they play loud music, and they talk even louder to hear each other. They speak loud all the time. Those who live by the coast speak loud to make themselves heard above the ocean, those who live by the mountains speak as if they shout from one mountain top to another. Here, I have become used to speaking normal.

Ana associates loudness with Latin Americans in general, but also relates it to a lifestyle more typical for lower social classes. This comes up when I ask them if they go to Latin American shops and restaurants, of which there are many:

Ana: There are a lot of Latin American places around St-Hubert, but I don't like them.

Miguel: I have been to some of the clothes shops that play Latin-American music, but it does not attract me.

Ana: That kind of music makes me leave the shop! When I hear that kind of Latin American music, it is always the kind that is played in bars. The lyrics are very... very vulgar, and simple. And uneducated [*no educado*]. A lot of it. People here don't know that, they just like the rhythms. But when I hear that music I associate it with the kind of places

where it is played in Venezuela. That I don't identify with. That's probably why. I associate it with the Third World, and I did not come here to live in the Third World.

Her comments bring to mind Jacobson's (2006) observations of Latin American middle class individuals who distance themselves from what they perceive as 'Third Worldism' associated with chaos and normlessness. In the above narrative, a link is constructed between loudness/tranquility and class, resembling the narratives that contrast the 'chaotic' Venezuela with the 'well-ordered' Montreal. However, dimensions such as the 'loudness' apparently became important only in Montreal, since - as Miguel notes - he had not thought about Venezuela as loud before migrating. Relationship to and also *markers* of class are not, as we have seen, uncomplicated matters. For example, certain common middle class practices in Venezuela are not at all common among middle class people in Montreal, such as employing a maid to do housework. Ana told me that when she lived in Venezuela she had thought it necessary to have someone help her in the house, since both she and Miguel were working full time. Here, that would be almost unthinkable, she smiles. Eva made a similar comment when I interviewed her and Eduardo, joking that Venezuelans have to learn how to clean their own bathrooms when they migrate. Ana also mentions that Venezuelans, including herself, are used to thinking that their children must go to private schools, and many think that if their children have to attend a public school that means their living standard is lowered. The notions of class here must be considered in a transnational perspective, since these draw attention to the fact that migrants can experience belonging in or be placed in different social classes in the society of origin and the society of destination. Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004: 1015), for example, point out that migrants may '*occupy different gender, racial and class positions within different states at the same time*'. The narratives here also illustrate that perceptions of class and class markers can change over time in migration.

After the therapy session Ana and I are having lunch at *Les Deux Soeurs*. - *I wanted to ask you something*, she says. - *Are you planning to look at migration also in the light of projets d'épanouissement? [i.e. self-realization, literally: flowering]*. It is a matter close to her heart. In fact, for her it was paramount in the integration process, and it is something she has been thinking about a lot, she tells me. Ana's narratives present her as someone who seeks to constantly grow and develop; however, they also serve as evaluations of others. Narratives, Ochs and Capps (2001: 18) suggest, are '*imbued with a moral and aesthetic evaluation of actions, emotions,*

thoughts, and worldly conditions'. In Ana's opinion, migrants who lack a self-realization project are more likely to fail with their integration. Sometimes she compares her and Miguel's experiences with those of other migrants they know, who are unhappy or who have even returned to Venezuela. We have friends who are unable to adapt, she tells me. These individuals get caught in a spiral of negativity and only see the bad things. In contrast, Miguel and her always had projects, and always sought to 'grow and develop', as she puts it. They had set goals, and worked to reach them. Through this narrative she establishes a favourable difference between her and Miguel's handling of migration, and others. In this way, the narrative also serves to confirm that they have had the right strategy and attitude.

After Miguel graduated, Ana began studying massage therapy. At first she would offer sessions at home, then she became part of an Asian medical clinic before finally establishing her own independent practice. On our second encounter she had just completed a privately run course called *Mon projet d'affaire* (My business project) where she had learnt the basics of entrepreneurship and of being self-employed. At the time of the therapy sessions, she was still dedicating herself to developing her business and career by completing a diploma in acupuncture, explaining that she would like to be able to offer her clients a wider range of therapeutic methods. Meanwhile, Miguel had been working for a couple of years within his new specialization in informatics but discovered that he did not like it as much as he had expected. It was hard for him to compete with young people who have spent half their lives in front of computers, Ana explains. I recall that when we last met a couple of years ago, Miguel identified his goals for the near future as buying a house, obtaining a job that would bring him a good quality of life, and having an aikido *dojo* where he could practice and learn. He then began to orient himself back to his previous career in automation and renounced an offer of a permanent position for a contract in another company where he could combine the two fields. The two also bought their first apartment, which Ana describes as 'simply an investment'. Her real 'home' is in her practice, and her sense of belonging related to being able to live out her interest in shiatsu and aikido. Miguel also underlines the importance of aikido in his life. The practice has represented a constant in a period of many changes. Nibbs (2014: 6) defines belonging as 'the state where self-representation is perceived to fit' which is located in migrants' own understandings of 'being in the right place'. This view applies particularly well in the case of Ana and Miguel, and explains perhaps why

they, according to themselves, never had a down period or moment of doubt after having resettled in Montreal.

Today Miguel has an important decision to make, Ana says after a therapy session. Last night he received a call from the company where he used to work, with an offer of permanent employment and better conditions than where he works now. Most importantly, he would be working as an engineer, not a technician, although his position would be called something else since he has not yet received his permit from the Quebec Order of Engineers. But Miguel hesitates, she says, since he very recently changed jobs. - *I tell him, it is a freedom for you* [es una libertad para ti], she says. Ana, typically, sees life as full of opportunities, however, you need the right mindset to benefit from them:

I don't believe that we are lucky or not. I believe that we have many opportunities, but we must see them and take them.

In this comment, excluding the 'irrational' explanation of luck, Ana also reduces the role of constraints beyond individuals' control, suggesting that everyone has opportunities, though not everybody 'sees them'. The comment also supports her self-understanding as someone who actively pursues her passion. The concern with goals and achievements, Ana notes, is perhaps typical for Venezuelan migrants. In one of our conversations, in which she asked about my findings so far, I mentioned to her that the Venezuelans I met typically underlined the importance of having a project, setting goals and working hard to reach them. In fact, few of the informants ever complained that their situation as immigrant was hard or blamed factors external to themselves. I had discussed this earlier with Mariela of the Association, who had commented that this was probably related to class. And and I discuss the methodological challenges that this could pose for my project, in that it is difficult to reach other individuals than those who are doing well (see also methodology chapter). Ana suggests that those who find themselves in a difficult situation, probably do not wish to participate:

It is not because there aren't any, but probably they don't want to share it. You should at least comment on it in your dissertation. People with high education are expected to be successful and then it is more difficult to admit it when things don't go so well. Perhaps it is cultural too.

Venezuelans are like that, they are proud. When things go well they talk, and like to talk. If things do not go well they don't like to talk about it. They keep quiet. The Romanians are opposite; they complain when things go bad, and when things are good they keep complaining.

Like most of my other informants, Ana and Miguel also receive questions from Venezuelans who want to know how they can migrate to Canada. The threshold for contacting more peripheral acquaintances has been lowered with regards to questions related to migration, Ana indicates:

Even old students of mine! They find me on Facebook, or they still have my e-mail address, and then they write. Hi teacher, how are you doing? And I: Eh... what? I know what they want. When they write like that it's because they know that I am here and they want to know how I did it.

Although they made a 'clean break' when they migrated, Miguel says that he still follows closely the situation back home, although less and less with time. Ana, on the other hand, claims that she does not at all follow the news from Venezuela, although it becomes clear in later conversations that she is well informed of the developments there:

Miguel: I read newspapers, watch the news, listen to the radio... And of course, I talk with my family so I know what everyday life is like there, though it is not the same to hear about it as to live it. But I'd say have about 80% of the same information as they have there.

Ana: For my part, I don't like news from Venezuela, I don't want to hear about it. When Miguel puts on Venezuelan radio I turn it off. I don't want to be informed except if it was to hear that we're done with Chavez. That everything is good.

Ana Skypes with her mother once a week, and with her father once a month. Her parents are divorced, and her sister is 'taking care of' their mother, as Ana puts it. Her mother had not really used ICTs until Ana left, and their communication is characterized by some of the same challenges and dilemmas as Guadalupe experiences with her family:

In the beginning, my mother did not like to see me on the screen of Messenger. It was hard for her to see me and not be able to touch me, so she'd stay only a few minutes. She was happier when I called. Then we could talk longer without problems.

Both Ana and Miguel have visited Venezuela several times since they migrated. Ana's first visit lasted three weeks, and she tells me that towards the end of the journey she was fed up and only wanted to go home:

(...) home to Montreal, to my life, to my apartment. When we were in the plane and we flew over Montreal I had tears in my eyes. I was touched. This is my city. I had no feeling of nostalgia over Venezuela. It was more a confirmation of my life here. I am proud of what I have accomplished with my life. Now I can move on with even more energy because I have this confirmation that the decision was right.

Ana's narrative stands out as the most 'linear' of all my informants. She narrated her migration as a decision she never doubted, as a project of self-realization that unfolded as envisioned, and claims that she has never looked back at her old life; she only looks forward. Ana was also among those who most strongly underlined a disidentification with common norms in Venezuela. Migration was a desired rupture, enabling her to become someone she had wanted to be. Ana nevertheless has an attachment to the house she grew up in, and that she still refers to as home. As Ilcan has noted, in spite of newer more dynamic perceptions of home, it still retains connotations of stability, constancy, and origination. For example, Ana recalls moments when she has relived emotions reminiscent of the home that her mother's house used to be:

The nice thing about my mother's house is that it lies on a corner, with trees all the way around. And there are many birds in those trees, you wake up to their song every morning. That was one of the nicest things about being there. Every morning I lay in bed thinking, Yeeees, *that's* how it was... I grew up in that house and I'd always wake up to that sound. But I was not nostalgic. I didn't get a feeling that this is where I should be. I was just thinking that I have to enjoy these moments while I am here, because it will be three years until the next time.

On our first encounter, when talking about the importance of aikido as practice and as social environment for them, Ana had noted that the only thing that could make her want to go back to Venezuela was their aikido instructor:

Miguel: I miss him [*the instructor*]. And I miss going out with our aikido friends. They were like family. But they are not so much on the internet, so we don't have a lot of contact. Our teacher is not on the internet at all. Sometimes we call each other, but we can't do that all the time.

Ana: The only reason to go back to Venezuela would be to meet our aikido instructor. To train, and develop further in martial arts. That bond is important for me.

Miguel: I remember I told him once that my only reason to go back would be if he needs me for something. I wouldn't have to go back for anything else.

Now, 3 years later Ana tells me that they are practicing aikido with a new instructor at McGill University. Until recently they trained with a group in Côte St-Luc, but the group lost their dojo and their new training hours are less convenient. I ask her if they are still in touch with their old instructor from Venezuela. She shakes her head. - *Is that sad?* I ask. - *No*, she says, *that's just how it is. And anyway, we have a new master now.*

Basic Things (Luis' story)

It is the second time that I come to meet Luis. 6 months have passed since I first interviewed him in his tiny and sparsely furnished home in a highrise building on Crescent Street, two months after he arrived in Montreal. That time he told me about his migration process and his decision to go to Montreal, but his life in Montreal had not really commenced yet. This time we meet in the National Library, after his French class. He has begun looking for work as a computer engineer and the search occupies most of his time and his thoughts. He gives me an update of what he has been doing during these first months:

I have started the Francisation course. I was placed directly in level 2. Do you remember that I did not speak a word of French when I came? But I made an effort and advanced, and I managed to finish the course as second best. But I haven't got a job yet. I have had interviews, and I was very close to getting a job at one point, but the company restructured and finally they did not need me. I make an effort to integrate myself language-wise, I just need a chance to show it. So far there has been a lot of positive feedback but no concrete offers.

The fact that he does not have a job yet is already beginning to worry him:

I am worried because I have finished level 2 and 3, but my French is still not good enough. The jobs are not coming. I feel that the symbol of true integration is when you have a job and can sustain yourself economically. But I still don't have a job. The problem is that my money is soon exhausted, and I don't know when I will find work. I have to improve my applications. And my French. But I hope that a job will come soon and then my integration will be complete and my

economic worries will end. Because now my worry is that I am not productive in the labour market, I just don't know when I will have an income to pay my future rent with.

Luis' statements illustrate that certain narrative themes can become problematic to hold on to, such as for example the idea that the success of the migration project depended on having the right mindset and personal qualities. Periods such as this create the need for supplementary narratives underlining his so far unrewarded effort. His narrative focuses on the effort he is investing in improving himself in order to become a more attractive candidate. In a setting where success fails to appear, this narrative can be seen as serving to uphold his compatibility with the structurally constructed ideal migrant. His strategy is clearly oriented towards self-improvement; for example, he tells me that he is trying to better his interview techniques, learning to make his CV more attractive to employers, working on his French, and trying to always be up-to-date in his field, which is continuously changing. He has also broadened his search scope:

And I am open to... I mean, I have applied for positions beneath my level. In one interview they commented that I was over-qualified, but I said that I was very motivated for the job and that they would benefit from my experience, that I am passionate about this. I did not see their point. But still, they decided to hire someone less qualified than me.

As noted in an earlier chapter, Luis was worried that following instructions to indicate whether or not he belonged to a visible minority, did not augment his chances. Rather, it made him feel 'rejected' and 'classified', he said.

When you come here they say that you have the same rights as Canadians, right? So why do they call you hispano or black or indigenous?

Through this comment it becomes clear that Luis also assumes that external factors are playing in on his chances and that his *latino* origin could contribute to explain why his effort had not yielded a return. However, for Luis, who on our first encounter had commented that he liked to be in control of situations, the idea of being discriminated against somehow framed the situation as uncontrollable. Focusing instead on the advices given to him at the employment agency, gave him a sense of mastering the situation and a way forward. Luis and two other of my informants, went through phases in which they felt fragile, worried and even embarrassed by the difficulty of

obtaining work. In addition to the stress of seeing their savings dwindle, there was the frustration of feeling that they were doing everything possible to get a job, yet the effort did not yield. In chapter 3 it was argued that individuals are pushed to routinely create and sustain the self (Giddens 1991, Bauman 2001). Identity, Giddens (1991) writes, consists in sustaining coherent yet continuously revised biographical narratives. In the context of migration, where understandings of self are destabilized and questioned, Farrell (2008: 45) suggests that narrative is a central resource in creating self-coherence. Indeed, the power of a narrative is that it creates a temporal order and has the potential of continually offering new versions of that same order (Rapport and Overing 2000). The case of Luis somehow illustrates the complexity, even contradictions, in such processes. For example, in his accounts he would often link his difficulties of finding work to the general tight labour market in Canada at the time, but his solutions were always self-improvement, more training and more effort.

In narratives of this period, Luis was concerned with reporting on his effort and strategies. These narratives can also be read as narratives of emplacement (Jervis Read 2012), intending to assert the narrator's rightful place in society. Luis' narrative served to confirm that although he was not yet in the anticipated economical position, he nevertheless possessed the required attitude and motivation; qualities on the basis of which he had been admitted as immigrant. He also underscored his willingness to ameliorate and adapt, and his capacity to act and persevere. Emphasis, then, was placed on the personal responsibility that is inherent in the ideal of 'pulling yourself up by the shoe strap', or as the then minister of migration had put it with regards to migrants: Hitting the ground running. Along similar lines, Luis claimed that integration into society, and into the labor market in particular, is to a large degree up to yourself, and related to one's attitude:

There are some Venezuelans that I used to meet before, but I have less contact with them now. They had problems integrating themselves, finding work, problems with the French. They were complaining, criticising, but they were not making an effort themselves. I felt that we started to lack things to talk about. I felt different. It was inside me; I believe that migration has to come from the inside. It is not everybody who can handle it.

Through such narratives, a contrast was established in a way that framed Luis' continued effort and optimism as 'doing the right thing'. As such, they also echoed Hall's (1991: 21) view of identity as a *'structured representation which only achieves its positive through the narrow eye of the negative'*. The 'negative' in this and similar narratives was other migrants' lack of effort and 'concrete action', their tendency to complain, and their closed-ness towards difference. Self-made aspects were prominent in many of these narratives. There was little focus on for example cultural differences or structural discrimination as obstacles; rather the focus was on effort, enterprise, diligence, and taking responsibility for one's integration. The statements stressed the importance of motivation and persistence, which also correspond with statements from the migration regime underscoring economic self-sufficiency through labor market integration, and individual responsibility with respect to the integration process. Thus, in these self-presentations, official Canadian master narrative of the qualities that ideal migrants should possess, converges with the mindset and values that my informants tended to wrap up as middle-class. The pressure is strong on skilled migrants given that they are expected to be particularly resourceful and able to integrate fast into the labor market. Combined with the idea that the way to get there is through personal effort, there is little room for not being successful. For example, Ana commented that many skilled immigrants expect to get a good job immediately and if they do not, they become frustrated and unhappy. Luis:

There are immigrants in my class who only criticise, comparing Québec with their own country all the time, but they are not doing anything concretely to integrate themselves. My case is the opposite. I want to get to know Quebec, I want to know new things, try new things, integrate myself, know what is happening in society, and not be negativ. There are things I criticise here, but they are tolerable things, which is positive in a way. That's a way to accept that my future is here, that my life is here, and that I shall adapt to both the good and the bad things.

As discussed earlier, the pressure to act as a self-managed and responsabilized self is commonly associated with broader economical and political developments referred to as neoliberal. Harvey (2005), for example, has argued that the conception of the individual as in control of itself and responsible for its own fate is a necessary accompaniment to the shift to policies of deregulation and privatization. This development in Canada has been accompanied by an increase in numbers of migrants that are admitted as skilled professionals. In the wake of this, a number of

organizations have emerged that offer courses tailored to skilled migrants seeking to develop skills in order to obtain work. In July 2012, I participated in one of them, together with around 20 skilled immigrants mainly from Latin America. The course took place in a conference room in the basement of a downtown tower. In his introduction, the course instructor stated that migration implies falling to the bottom of Maslow's hierarchy of need, and then stated that the goal is to get back on top. To illustrate his point, he wrote down a list on the whiteboard of things that migrants' typically lose and must regain, including status, one's circle of family and friends, work, social relations, autonomy and economic independence. He underscored the importance of setting oneself clear objectives, without which you 'cannot know when you have arrived', and thereafter made us all set up our own personal plan, divided into 'professional goals' and 'life goals' for the upcoming 12 months, and thereafter the period from 1-5 years after migration. We were also asked to plot in our financial plan. As a conclusion, he reminded us to consult our list of goals from time to time in order to not become 'blocked' in our integration. Such courses respond to a need that has emerged in recent years, according to the leader of an NGO working to support migrants who have difficulties finding work. I interviewed him about their work, and he told me that they have noticed a clear change over the last years when it comes to migrants' experiences of integration:

The immigrants who arrive today do not experience any great culture shocks. Really, we don't see so much of that anymore. They ones who arrive today are highly educated and they usually arrive very well informed. Plus, they are often already used to a more or less Western lifestyle. But they come with other ambitions. Before, we would have more of those migrants who came from nothing and who were happy just to get a job. They had to overcome other more cultural challenges. Now, many of the migrants who come are frustrated primarily because they are used to a certain quality of life but here they have to start lower on the ladder.

In consequence, the organization has adjusted its services and staff structure to deal better with 'work life challenges', whereas before the organization's main focus was on 'cultural differenc

Luis told me that he now has a specific reason to want to overcome the difficulties. A happy event has occurred in his life: He has commenced a relationship with a Québécoise woman, and together with her he has travelled around in Québec and regularly visits her family. He therefore

has a privileged access to what could be described as a regular Québécois household and lifestyle, and moreover, his French has improved rapidly.

Everyday I discover more of Québec, and when you integrate yourself here, you distance yourself from there [*te alejas de allá*]. I know I am only 6 hours away and that I can go and come back as I want. But with every day that passes I feel more integrated here, and every day I forget a little more the things there. Now, in this very moment, if you'd asked me if I would cry if I knew I would never come back to Venezuela, I would say no. I think... I am actually afraid to go back to Venezuela.

Shortly after meeting his girlfriend, Luis was offered a job in a small, family-run company on the south shore. He had to take the metro and two buses to get there, but says he could not afford to reject the offer. He did not get along with the boss, he tells me, and got particularly frustrated after he had worked a lot of overtime and many weekends to finish a project, which became a success, but was never compensated for the extra effort. He says he suspects that the boss thought that he as a migrant without previous work experience in Canada did not know the rules, and therefore would not complain. Luis then decided it was time to move on, and took the chance on calling one of the companies where he had previously been to an interview, and this time got hired.

On top of that, my new office is four streets away from our apartment. I walk there in a few minutes. So I ended up with more money and more time. I could not be more satisfied than I am now. I get to travel too, I'm going to France in a few days, I've been to Italy. I feel a lot more comfortable in a French-speaking work environment. In anglophone companies [*his previous job*] it's more like, I am the boss, I give the orders, you do the job. Here it's not like that. We are professional, yes, but we are relaxed, we have a good environment. We laugh together.

Before this happened, Luis had actually been close to accepting a job offer that would have put an end to his life in Montreal, and brought him to El Salvador:

Luis: You see I got an offer from my old employer, a very good offer, of a regional position for Latin America, and I would be based in El Salvador. The company would pay a house, a car, and a good pay in American dollars, and a special bonus for residing in El Salvador. But I declined.

Turid: How did you feel about that?

Luis: It was a very difficult decision. I had three days to decide, I had asked for that. Friday and the weekend. The net salary was 5500\$ a month. A *lot* of money. I thought, well maybe I can play with my Canadian residency, I mean, I could go there, and come back two years later. I thought, Luis, go there, save up money, and then come back to Canada. And I wouldn't lose my residency. But... My decision to come here was never an economic decision. It was about life. I did not care about money, I wanted to be well and safe. So... What do I do. I had just been to several interviews here. I decided to stay, even if I did not hve a job offer here. To stay, and remain resolute, although the situation is difficult. But now, when I don't have money, sometimes I think, wow, I could have had that. But if the offer came again tomorrow, I would still say no.

It is March 2012 and Luis has invited me to their apartment in Villeray. It is a newly renovated condominium, bright and nicely decorated, with Venezuelan fabrics on the table and a *cuatro* (Venezuelan string instrument) and a guitar in a corner; they belong to Luis' girl friend. He offers me coffee from an espresso machine. We speak together in French for the first time; he has become fluent.

When I got my first job we moved here together, to Villeray. I had more confidence and felt more secure since I had a job. I discovered other places than downtown. I began to think, why should I live wall to wall with nightclubs and discotheques when I can live here, in a peaceful neighbourhood, next to a big parc. We have everything here. There are food stores nearby, a gym, a yoga centre, a video club, the metro is close, buses. My girlfriend sings in a choir in the church just down the street. I have taken up tennis and can play in the parc.

Luis statement here brings to mind Ortner's (2006: 71) description of the American middle class as *'all those who have signed up for the American dream, who believe in a kind of decent life of work and family, in the worth of the 'individual' and the importance of 'freedom', and who strive for a moderate amount of material success'*. Luis arrived with the modest aspiration of getting a job he liked and that would accord him a certain material comfort, and with the hope of meeting a woman and found a family. His did not come with the idea of radically changing his career or lifestyle, and yet now, after a few years he finds himself changed.

I did not experience anything extraordinary, it was only a robbery, but that wasn't enough reason to leave. There were other things also that made me want to go. Now I am here and I feel like I made the best decision in my life, my life is very good, very calm and secure. My worries are not

the same as before, they are not related to my safety. There's been a change in the 8-10 months that I've been here, from heaven to earth [*del cielo a la tierra*]. I can't imagine going to Venezuela. No. If I go I'll get a heart attack or something. I won't tolerate the bad service or the insecurity or the lack of civism [*civismo*], peoples' behaviour. I don't think I can go back. I can go to visit my family, I'll bring them to a remote tourist place and spend the vacation there. And I'll go only for that. Not for anything else. I couldn't have lived there. But, a migrant is a migrant, you never know what will happen. Life is very complex.

Benson (2010: 73) writes that the '*rhetoric and ideas about locality rely as much on the migrant's perceptions of life back home as upon their experiences in the new place*'. After several years in Montreal, Luis still operates with dual reference frames when reflecting upon his life trajectory. The lifestyle that he has embraced in Montreal colours his perceptions of Venezuela and his ways of relating to his family there. This was particularly evident in his narratives of visits to Venezuela; accounts that echoed Ahmed's (2000) observation that returning home is impossible, since home is not '*exterior to the self, but implicated in it*'. In this perspective, migrants who return realize they return with a difference, as Luis' account well illustrates:

We were there for 3 weeks. It was a shock, more for me than for my girlfriend. Because I was able to compare and frankly it was difficult for me to understand that I have lived there. I reacted to so many things. I thought everything was awful. What they eat, the machismo. [*His girlfriend*] and I, we are concerned with eating well, eating fruits and vegetables. She was so excited over the fruits there. But in my family they drink coke for breakfast. I told her I wanted to go home to Montreal; that this is bad, and the service everywhere is bad. We could not even find a map over the city at the airport. Basic things. My girlfriend wanted us to stay. I just wanted to leave.

It turned out that Luis' new lifestyle and orientations, did not fit with his old life, and put him in an uncomfortable situation when he was going to present his place of origin to his girlfriend. Vasta (2013) notes that migrants often experience contradictory forms of belonging. Luis' narratives illustrate this; they are very critical of Venezuela, and have been since our first encounter, but it was nevertheless important for him that his girlfriend would get to know his society of origin. His experiences in Venezuela resemble those of the 'homecomer' (Schutz 1976), expecting to return to a place that he knows intimately, only to be shocked that he now longer does. Moreover, Luis did not only perceive Venezuela through his own altered regard, he was also affected by how he imagined it through his girlfriend's eyes. From his new vantage point he

felt like a stranger in Venezuela, and did not even identify very much with the Venezuelan middle class values and mentality that he had invoked in early interviews, and that in some ways had inspired him to imagine himself as at home in Canada³²⁷.

Luis states that he especially values Québec as an open and secular society. - *I share this mentality*, he declares, and at the same time he hopes that his new values can inspire his family in Venezuela. For example, when his mother was there to visit him, he took her to see the annual Gay Pride Parade. Luis says he cannot imagine for example women wearing a hijab or openly gay persons in Venezuela, and claims that there is a lot of criticism and moralization and hypocrisy there. For him, this closedness towards diversity stands to show Venezuela's backwardness, in contrast with the acceptance and celebration of diversity that he associates with Canada. Yet, with regards to this, there is also an element of self-scrutiny in his narrative, since Luis not only perceives Venezuela differently; he also sees the person he used to be when he was living there, with new eyes. One example is his criticism of his former attitude towards women, where he finds he has gone through a big change:

When I was in Venezuela, I was the same, I was *machista*. The girls had to be beautiful and slim, with make-up, silicon breasts, nail polish. Now it's strange to think that I had such attitudes. Last year, when I went back with my [*Québécoise*] girlfriend, my sisters immediately wanted to take her to the hairdresser, to have a manicure. They said they didn't think my girlfriend took care of herself. They did not understand that some women don't like those things and don't want that. I had to talk to them and explain how impolite and hurtful their comments were.

Since he settled in Montreal, health and nutrition have become central concerns for him. This has also provided him with a field in which he tries to influence his family into taking over some of his new habits and attitudes. He tells me that he is very concerned about the food habits of his family in Venezuela:

The problem of bad diet is serious. My sister's children are skinny, they don't get enough calcium. People have bad health because they do not eat vegetables. First of all because they lack education about it, but also because it has become hard to find. You have to

³²⁷ Although it should be noted that in Luis' narratives, the concern with safety always weighted more than lifestyle preferences.

drive around from place to place, because the supermarkets don't have what you need. When something comes to the market, let's say coffee, the jungle telegraph starts immediately and people rush there and buy large quantities, and then there's no more. It's so complicated to get hold of stuff, so you end up eating just anything. I wanted to make a Thai chicken dish for my family, but I had to give up, I just couldn't find the ingredients.

Luis has therefore taken it upon himself to try to positively influence his family. For example, he says that when he and his girlfriend have made dinner, he sends his mother a photo of the plate, hoping the colours and the use of vegetables will inspire her. To his satisfaction, his mother has started sending photos back and he says that he can tell that she puts more effort into both the cooking and the presentation. - *So, this is our way of provoking a little change*, he smiles.

Stebbins (1997) writes that lifestyles, in addition to related sets of values and attitudes, include shared patterns of behaviour; and therefore has a dimension of performativity, and a desire to be recognized by others, to belong. Luis' narrative could be read in this frame. However, Luis does not only want to be recognized by lifestyle peers in Montreal, he also seeks to be recognized by his family in Venezuela. His performance thus illustrates the need to pay attention to the bifocality associated with transnationalism; since it is intended for local as well as Venezuelan others. It is also a performance that communicates several things; for example, that he is faring well, that he is well adapted to a 'Canadian way of life', and perhaps also that he is now in the position to educate others in the 'ways of life' of the middle class in this Western country.

Luis is the only son in a family of women, and says that he has to be careful not to appear 'too paternalistic' in their eyes, in which case his message would not pass. Luis' relationship to his mother is quite different than that of for example Guadalupe, particularly in that he does not have any sentiments of guilt related to having left her. He tells me that his sisters take care of her, while he contributes with money, and this is according to him an arrangement she is happy with. Guadalupe, on the other hand, is her mother's only daughter, and says that although her brothers all live close to her mother's house, for her it is 'not the same'. Luis' mother came to visit him last year, which was a big step for her, he says, since she had never traveled anywhere before and only speaks Spanish.

She wants to come back this year, but I told her we cannot afford her ticket, and that we are planning to go to Vancouver for the vacation. But she is so eager about coming that she says she'll go back to working again and pay her own ticket. Which is good, because she was not working because of health issues but now she wants to reintegrate into the labour market. That means she is serious. So the plan is that she'll come in June.

Luis' migration has also inspired some of his friends to commence the process:

A couple of friends are arriving soon. They came to visit me in Montreal and I took them everywhere, telling them with all honesty what is good, what is bad, what is different compared to Venezuela. They got very enthusiastic over the idea of coming here, and then they did the migration process. I gave them several advices. First, I told them to make the migration project the most important one. It is a life decision. It's not easy, but it's not impossible. But this project must pass before any other project.

Our last meeting has come to an end and Luis and his girlfriend accompany me to the door. To my surprise, Luis comments the amazing goal of Sidney Crosby a couple of days ago.

Turid: So... you are watching the hockey?

Luis: Yes, yes.

Turid: But the first time we met you said that *that* was one thing that you would *never ever*...

Luis: - I know! But I watch it now.

Turid: There is a match tonight.

Luis: Yes, and a good one too. But on Sunday, in the match against the US [*during the Vancouver Winter Olympics*], then ai, ai, ai, I was suffering! ...So, well, to sum up for you, all in all I can say that it [*migration*] has been a good experience, but it is going to continue, because after all it does not end now. It is hard, but not *that* hard. It is... You make the decision, and tell yourself, I am going to make the jump [*voy a dar un salto*], and hang in the air for a while... And then...

A little 'Venezuela in Montreal' (Yesenia's story)

We arrived with 8 suitcases and enough money for about 3 months. And with that we had to buy everything; beds, sheets, plates, glasses, towels, - everything. In the beginning we sat on the floor, we did not even have chairs. My husband and I started working for one of those agencies that offer you a job for a day and we did all kinds of jobs. It was hard

because in Venezuela, you know, we worked at the university and we had never had physical jobs before. My husband has always liked cooking and sometimes we would make *tamales* or *pan de jamón*. The word spread, and soon immigrants from Columbia or Venezuela started asking us if they could order from us. We started making traditional food and got more and more clients. Last year we registered the business and three months ago we opened this restaurant. But it was really not our plan to open a restaurant when we migrated! That idea was born here.

Yesenia

After a long process of struggling to qualify for migration, including the stress caused by her health problems, Yesenia, her husband and their two children arrived in Montreal in June 2005. She says that by that time she had accepted that she would never speak French well enough to continue her career as a university teacher. She got her credentials recognized in Canada, but never applied for a job in her field:

I do miss the university, but I am sure I would have had to go back to studying again in order to teach, and I am too old for that now. I gave up without even trying.

When we first met she had been working for over a year selling children's books over the phone, mostly in Spanish. As Yesenia stated in the narrative presented in the previous chapter, the idea of opening a restaurant was born after they settled in Montreal. In the interviews, which took place in the restaurant, Yesenia assumed a double role; as my interview object but also as a tutor, asking me questions about methodology and hypotheses. Nevertheless, she states that she has put her university career behind her. She continued with her sales job even after they opened the restaurant, to assure them a stable income. She nods towards the kitchen where her daughter is sorting out the cutlery, and says with a laugh:

At least this is something real, something for the future. And when I am too old to work I can come here and drink coffee and chat with the employees.

For Yesenia and her husband changing professional field was experienced as a big move, but not as a very great loss. They both had long careers behind them and when they decided to migrate they had already begun to think about life after retirement. They did not have ambitions of

pursuing their careers after migration; the decision had mainly been related to their children's futures. They wanted to settle in a place where their children would be safe and have possibilities; the restaurant was simply a matter of seizing an unexpected opportunity. Many of my informants redirected their careers after migration; entrepreneurship, however, was untypical. At the time of the last interview I made with Yesenia (2009) there were few businesses run by Venezuelans in Montreal, at least that could be identified as such³²⁸. This could partly be explained by the fact that the residence permits had been granted based on specialized skills in a field, and for most of the migrants the goal was to find relevant work in an existing company³²⁹. However, this was not always easy, for reasons discussed in previous chapters. Yesenia feels the weight of this situation in many of her encounters with Venezuelans clients.

I don't ask them what they work with. It is uncomfortable, you know, for someone who, say, worked at the university or as an engineer to admit that now they work in a shop. Even if it is only temporary, until they learn French better. Venezuelans are proud.

In her opinion, their at times unwanted work situations make Venezuelans maintain a distance:

They don't like to be asked what do you do, where do you work, how much are you making per hour. And so people keep their distance. Here we are nobody. You can be the best professional in the world, but here you are nobody. Employers want people who are fluent in French and have a Canadian diploma and Canadian work experience. Many people have to start at zero and then work themselves up. And it takes a strong character to do that. So I don't ask, what do you do (*a qué te dedicas*)

Mariela from the Association also commented this situation:

These people worked hard to establish a career. They are conscious of their competence, they know they were selected because of it. They are supposed to succeed. So when the only job you have managed to get is one that you are over-qualified for you don't want to talk about it.

³²⁸ Except for Yesenia's restaurant and one or two others, my informants could not mention any such businesses.

³²⁹ However, it should be mentioned that by 2015, there were Venezuelan restaurants in several central locations in Montreal

Such comments point to another characteristic of migration from Venezuela to Montreal, namely the absence of a 'Venezuelan community'. Some of my informants participated sporadically in the Association's occasional activities, such as trips to sugar shacks or apple orchards, summer picnics or Christmas parties. Most of my informants, however, did not participate in these. Apart from a softball team (made up almost exclusively of pre-millennium migrants) and a choir, and the courses and conferences organized by the consulate (which my informants did not participate in), there were few initiatives seeking to unite Venezuelans. Several of my informants commented upon the lack of solidarity among Venezuelans, but also claimed that they themselves did not seek out other Venezuelans. Yesenia had her view on why a 'Venezuelan community' had not developed in Montreal, in spite of the increased immigration. She commented, like several other informants, that Venezuela 'does not have a culture of migration':

We are spread, we are not woven together. We easily make friends with Peruvians and Colombians and Salvadorians, but among us we keep our distance. There is a lot of envy and jealousy.

It was not the first time I heard this discourse. Mariela pointed to this with regards to the work of the Association:

It is not easy to build this solidarity. Because Venezuelans are not migrants. It is a new phenomenon. You know, if you see yourself as an immigrant then you have this *esprit solidaire* right away, you want to help others like you. But what I have seen, generally, among Venezuelans is that they don't see themselves as migrants.

Such narratives underlined that Venezuela had always been a country of *immigration*, which had made the decision to emigrate less obvious, and that also meant that there was no established tradition of migration networks. Yesenia does not express any longing for a more tight-knit community, though. - *I have my Venezuela here*, she says, nodding towards the other restaurant tables. When it comes to the relations between Venezuelans in Montreal, she laughs at it, and says:

That's how it is, you are in another country with your difficulties with the language and the adaptations and the rules and the culture, and on top of that, you cannot stand your co-patriots!

Nevertheless, the restaurant does attract many Venezuelans, which underwrites Yesenia's feeling of having a 'little Venezuela' right there. For Yesenia, 'Venezuela' continues to exist in distinct enclaves of her life. She tells me for example that she has sought to keep 'her Venezuela' in her home, especially with regards to her children's upbringing. She says that for her it has been important that the rules 'inside the door' were 'her and Venezuelan'. For example, she would not let the children to sleep over at friends' houses, since this is not common in Venezuela. This was presented as a way for her to pass on certain values, in this case, the emphasis on the family, but it was also a way for her to retain her authority as parent in a context where her influence seemed to weaken while her children's power increased. Language was one dimension, since Yesenia did not feel confident in French, whereas her children had become fluent.

The children are Québécois already but they have not tried to push for Quebec rules, they have respected ours. But you know that you cannot be too strict because the children can turn to the DPJ [*the Director of Youth Protection*]. Here, parents lose their role as parents. In our country it is the parents who educate the child, but here this is split between the parents and the state. If the children disagree, they can go to the DPJ. The parents are afraid of that because in addition they don't understand well the language.

Although child education was rarely mentioned as a particular challenge, the legal restrictions on parents' responsibility and authority were sometimes presented as a (too) forceful weapon in the hands of the children. Yesenia jokes about this: - *I tell them that inside this house, I am the DPJ!* Her children's wellbeing and future, which had been the central concern in the decision to migrate, was initially set back by her daughter's school experiences. The girl, who was 14 at the time, had to redo two years of schooling and experienced this as a big crisis.

She cried; I am losing two years! And the only thing she wanted was to move back. It was also difficult for her to find friends, because her classmates were so much younger than her.

At the time of the interview, her daughter was about to start Cégep [*pre-university college*] and hoped this would represent new possibilities for her. Her French was now on par with her fellow students and this, Yesenia believed, would change everything. Yesenia herself, on the other hand,

had more or less given up learning French, thinking that she was too old to ever speak it well. She is thus limited when it comes to developing a sense of belonging to a community where communication unfolds in a language she does not command. At the same time, she had found a way to realize a meaningful life that does not depend on this kind of belonging. In this sense, Yesenia could be said to negotiate belonging in a space situated both within and beyond Quebec and Venezuela, in a 'Venezuela' in Montreal of her own making.

Belonging in Words and Images (Michelle's story)

Michelle, the former journalist, immediately thought that she had made a terrible mistake when she arrived in Montreal. The mismatch between expectations and reality could not have been greater, she says. She had expected it to be '*like the USA but better, shinier*'. An old friend of hers, who had been living in Montreal for many years, had spoken so warmly of the city, and Michelle believed her. She self-ironically comments that she had imagined her new life here as 'perfection and tulips'. However, from the outset she detested what she saw and found the city ugly and dirty:

I couldn't believe it. People had said to me that Canada is like the US, only better. But it was so dirty. The metro was repulsive, and people were *eating* in the metro! And there were newspapers on the ground everywhere. I didn't like the architecture. It was my culture shock, but I was already 43 years old when I left everything I knew, and instead of feeling nostalgic and sad over Venezuela, I felt a rage against Montreal. Everything seemed terrible. And the French they speak! And on top of that, our first landlords were dirty, the stench from their apartment rose to ours.

Michelle's remedy for handling the shock and disillusion was her talent for writing and taking photos. She had expected to have to find a new occupation in Montreal, since she did not think she could write well enough in English or French to work as a journalist. However, her change of professional field would be less radical than anticipated. Michelle had the ability to translate her emotions into words and images easily; and when she communicated with her friends she narrated her experiences with a good dose of self-ironic humor; a form that appealed to many. Michelle comes across as a skilled storyteller in the interview, too, and her migration is already a well-worked story, complete with triggering events, action, problems, allies and a resolution. She tells me that her friends insisted that she would make a blog out of her tragicomic accounts of her

life as an immigrant, and a few months after arrival she did. She sees the blog, then, as serving the needs of others as well as herself; and her work, thus, becomes needed. The decision to create a blog would become a turning point for Michelle, in the sense of what Kupferberg (1998) refers to as *biographical events* that particularly affect self-understandings or life projects:

-The blog was like a window where fresh air came in, she says. For one, the project forced her out of the house. She began trawling Montreal with her camera in search of interesting or funny things to write about on her blog, and through these explorations she did find 'the beauty and the tulips', as she says, and she ended up feeling a strong attachment to Montreal, as well as knowing every corner of the city. However, her attachment seems to become most strongly actualized when it is transposed onto her online world. Her blog could thus be seen as a sort of home for her, in the form of a social and psychological space (Rouse 1991) in which she presents and engages with an environment that is very much her own making, and have numerous individuals watching and engaging with what she does. She says that when she started the blog she had been 'depressed and maladapted and alone', but that she had learnt to see Montreal with different eyes. Seeing Montreal through the lens of the camera helped her shift her focus and become aware of the city's beauty.

I use to say that it was like an arranged marriage. You marry this guy that you detest, because you have to marry him, but you don't know him. But then, little by little, through the cohabitation of daily life, you discover that he is beautiful and good and kind, and a good lover, and finally you go: wow! I love you! That's how it was with me and Montreal.

Although particularly concerned with aesthetics, Michelle was not the only one of my informants who commented that they had *seen* the city differently in the beginning. Ana, for example, said that the architecture, the streets and the metro had shocked her. What stood out in the unfamiliar city landscape was the cracks, the dirt, the greyness. However, as Michelle and Ana's narratives illustrate, depressive first impressions became overwritten by various life events that the places then came to stand for, so that the city streets were no longer grey and filthy, but strewn with places carrying meaning.

Michelle's blog is read by her family and friends as well as old acquaintances, such as the parents of her daughters' old classmates in Caracas and her old family doctor. - *These are people I would have otherwise lost out of sight*, she says. But it also quickly attracted the attention of Latin Americans and mothers/migrants in other countries and Michelle claims that she has come to establish something like a 'sisterhood' network with them. She feels that the support she gets through their comments and their shared laughs gives her the necessary strength to face her new reality. She attributes her ability to connect with different people to her own 'multicultural background', since her father is of French origin and her mother of Spanish, while she herself grew up in Caracas. Her self-understanding as 'personally multicultural' also, of course, works to present her as fitting neatly in the Canadian national identity narrative. In spite of the many comments she gets on her blog, Michelle does not experience it as a real two-way relationship. Therefore, she says, she does not aspire to get to know her readers personally:

Many of my readers are in the process of migration and some of them come to feel that we are friends somehow. They follow my experiences and comment upon them and then they think that when they come here we will be friends and visit each other. But I keep my distance, I want to maintain the relationship blogger/reader. People feel familiar with me, but I know nothing about them.

Michelle does not talk about the formal process of migration on her blog, but she talks a lot about her experiences and her sentiments with regards to migrating. At the time of the interview the blog was read by between 1500-2000 individuals every day. A large group of her readers were people who were going to migrate. At some point the flood of questions that she received related to migration made her remove her contact information from her blog. She did not want her blog to become a knowledge base on migration, she explains, she just wanted to tell her own story and put her new life into words and pictures.

I got tons of questions, it was as if I was an immigration office! Some were polite, but some nearly insisted that I answer. If I didn't answer right away, they'd send reminders. If they were not happy with my answer, they'd ask for more. How do I find an apartment? What are the housing prices in this and this area? Where can I buy a mattress? Where can I find a diving course? There are blogs that dedicate themselves to these things, but not me. I had to make a FAQ section and

remove my e-mail. But I understand them. I have been through the process and I know that when you are there you have so many doubts and questions.

Michelle's blog comes across as very personal; containing her reflections upon small and greater things in everyday life and pictures of her daughters, her house and garden, her culinary creations, her travels, her cat. The blog can be read as an ongoing identity performance or identity construction, in the sense that she presents her life as migrant, mother, and worker in well-composed, humoristic and nostalgic texts and images. Her blog personality is recognized and admired by numerous readers, so is 'her Montreal'.

As I got more and more readers, I felt obliged to show even more of Montreal's nice sides. I did not use the blog to get out my frustrations, I did not use it to channel disgust. I did not want to write bad things. I have been accused of presenting a Barbie version of Montreal. They say that I write as if Canada is perfect and as if migration is a rose garden, but that is not what I mean. I think that through these years of blogging that has become clear. It is difficult to migrate. It is very painful. I am not nostalgic about Venezuela, but yes, there are things I miss a lot.

Although she describes herself as 'private', Michelle has a vast social network and is now established as self-employed photographer, blogger and author. Through the work with the blog, she part found part created Montreal as an environment in which she could feel at home. The connection between ideas of place, identity and belonging is thus at heart in her narrative. Through her presentations of her experiences of living in Montreal, the blog became a significant site in which her belonging was negotiated.

Continuity and Rupture (Felix', Karen's and Daniel's stories)

In the narratives presented above I have sought to 'unpack the processes of belonging' (Nibbs 2014) of some of my informants. Although their trajectories differed, these informants all succeeded in carving out a place for themselves in Montreal. Sometimes the homes they made were unexpected, but nevertheless embraced. However, not all of my informants stayed in Montreal. Moreover, several of those who did, went through periods when they seriously considered moving back or moving on. The following two cases illustrate that belonging and the sense of being in the right place can change or be destabilized, including in relation to time and life cycles.

Felix is back in Montreal for the weekend. A year has passed since he moved to Mississauga, Ontario; two years have passed since we first met. Back then he was studying business, in accordance with his plans for his post-migration life. Felix explains that he regularly comes to Montreal for the weekend, to meet friends and go out. He has given me rendez-vous downtown where he has been shopping. He suggests that we eat a light lunch, because later he is going to meet some Venezuelan friends and they are going to eat Venezuelan food, which is very heavy, he says. He is looking forward. When we last met, Felix was experiencing the same insecurity with regards to finding work as Luis did. He told me:

I *have* to find work, because according to my plan I could go without an income for 2 years, but now those 2 years are up and my money is running out. My studies are also over and the grant too. So, no matter what, I have to find a job. I am worried about this insecurity. People tell me that with a title from the HEC³³⁰ I am sure to find work. But I haven't found any.

In retrospect, Felix puts his problems of finding work down to his lack of skills in 'selling himself'. He got help from an employment office and went to 12 job interviews, but says he always got too insecure and shy and was never selected.

I have done many kinds of work in my life. I have been a teacher, a project manager, an engineer, but I have never worked in sales, because I know I don't like it. I cannot sell anything. Least of all myself.

In Venezuela he never had to write a letter of motivation or 'brag', he says, because there you find work through your networks. Eventually, he had to seek recourse to social assistance, until he accepted to leave Montreal for the job in Mississauga. He tells me that he 'lied' on his CV when he applied for that job. He did not mention having a Master's degree in business, neither his education in engineering, because he would have been considered over-qualified. Although he does not elaborate on his work tasks, it is clear that he has 'deskilled' himself to get a job.

³³⁰ Université de Montréal's business school.

Felix describes his life in Mississauga as boring and he feels alone. It is difficult to get around without a car in the area where he lives, and the bus services end at midnight, so he does not go out. He says he lives there only because it is close to his work and cheap. When he is not working he spends most of his time at home and Skypes with his family in Venezuela every day. On our first encounter, Felix had told me that he talked with his family every day but that he expected that after a while they would be communicating less:

I guess that with time we will have fewer topics of conversation. Each of us will have their... Well, our lives go their separate ways [*se separan*], right? Sometimes I feel too tired to sit down those 15 minutes to talk with them about the same things as yesterday...

Nevertheless, this relationship remains a central element in his daily life. Fortunately, he says ironically, his long work hours do not leave him much time to feel lonely. He has made 3 friends, a Québécois who he met at the grocery store, and a couple of Venezuelans through work. He remains attached to Montreal through friendships, and still half-heartedly applies for jobs there. Yet, the idea of moving again discourages him. Although his situation is not as he desires, and the work is 'far from a dreamjob, and not very well paid', as he puts it, he does not feel like breaking up again. Neither is going back to Venezuela an option, since that would mean going back at zero, he says.

People who stay there do it because they have no choice. Not everyone can migrate. First of all it is an enormous investment. Not only when it comes to money. You have to be very convinced and never, never doubt. Because there is no way back. You can think that you can go back, but that's not how it is. Your home is no longer there, your job, your car, your friends. You can never come back to what you had.

Nevertheless, three months after our last encounter Felix changed job again and moved to Toronto. Thus, in spite of his reluctance to move again he decided to opt for another relocation. Migrants' trajectories should be studied as a balance and dialectic between continuity and rupture, according to Amit (2012). For Felix, moving to Montreal was part of a long process whose direction he never doubted, whereas leaving Montreal was experienced as a rupture, an unwanted turn in a direction he had not himself chosen. Such situations call into question the conventional focus on the act of migrating as the most significant rupture, as Amit (*ibid*) also notes, calling for

a more '*measured appreciation of the balance and dialectic between continuity and rupture*'. Felix' narrative also illustrates the point that ruptures can be both wanted and unwanted. In his case, moving from Caracas to Montreal was a 'positive rupture', in contrast with moving between Canadian provinces afterwards.

Life cycles also inform sentiments related to ruptures. The experiences of Karen, who told me that she had gone to migration therapy as part of her migration preparations, illustrate this. It is late winter when she receives me in her home in a new residential area. Her 7 months old son is playing on a play mat. Karen has already lived a couple of years in Montreal and is completing her studies to become a dental secretary, having abandoned her previous career as engineer. She tells me that until last year she never doubted that she would stay in Montreal. - *But last year was the year of death*, she says. Around Christmas her mother-in-law fell ill, and shortly after, her own mother. Karen says it was unbearable to be so far and to not be the one who cared for her mother. Suddenly her migration had seemed 'all wrong', and she says that she was very close to moving back to Venezuela. - *I kept asking myself what on earth I was doing in Montreal, when my place was by my mother's side*, she says, with tears in her eyes. Belonging, Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst (2005: 12) argue, should be seen as an embedded process in which people reflexively judge the suitability of a given site as appropriate. Montreal was an appropriate site for Karen when her focus was on realizing a career and founding a family. However, she did not feel that she could be a 'good daughter' there. When that concern took prominence, her staying in Montreal became 'all wrong'. Her narrative thus illustrates the role of life cycles with regards to belonging, also in relation to her reaction to the events that took place: Both her mother and her mother-in-law died after rather short time, and Karen says: - *My mother died before I had the chance to make the decision to go back. And now I am glad to be here.*

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The narratives presented here illustrate that the trajectories of these migrants; their ways of making homes and creating attachments, came to differ greatly. Migration, as Luis noted, does not have an end point, however, there were moments when homes were experienced as achieved or at least within reach, and others when they were challenged. An important insight here is

related to time and the expectations of linearity in the adaptation and integration processes. The narratives in this chapter illustrate the diversity of my informants' experiences, interpretations and strategies, reflecting their different goals and aspirations, orientations and choices, contexts and circumstances. Retrospective at different moments, they also bring forth the dynamic dimensions of identity and home thoughts. They illustrate that home-making processes are ongoing and remain open-ended, and also that they can take unexpected turns. New homes and radical breaks were sometimes an inherent part of the very migration project. This was the case for example for Yesenia, Ana, Miguel and Michelle, whose narratives serve to underline the transformative potential of migration, presenting rupture not primarily as an uprooting but as a new becoming. The narratives also demonstrate that place, although commonly seen as having 'lost its moorings' in relationship to identities, remains highly significant. In the narratives, place emerged as crucial not only as imagined and concrete environments, but also by symbolizing certain values and qualities that my informants identified with.

I introduced the ethnography that the thesis is based upon through Daniel's migration story (pp. 43-48). At the end of this first meeting, accompanying me to the metro station, Daniel told me that his wife had just found out that she was pregnant. It was not official yet, he underlined jokingly, and I had to promise to keep my mouth shut. I congratulated him on the happy circumstances. - *Oh, I don't know if I should be more happy or more worried*, he said, smiling.

Now we meet again in the same food court, and Sofia just turned 2. Her birthday was celebrated amid the unpacking of boxes, since they are in the process of moving into a new apartment in a quiet residential neighbourhood just off the island of Montreal. They no longer rent, they own, and are thus another step closer to the life they envisioned when they first began to think about migration. - *Things are falling into place*, Daniel says. He also tells me that he is about to change jobs, moving from a good position to a better one. - *I wanted new challenges*, he says, shrugging his shoulders. The time of the tedious survival jobs he held after arriving Montreal 7 years ago seems very distant.

Having a child has changed their life in many aspects. Through Sofia's day-care they meet Québécois families, but in general they socialize more with other Venezuelan families, and

benefit from their advices on childraising, he says. His wife in particular seeks to transmit certain things from her own upbringing, he says, such as the evening prayer. Daniel is active in the Association and his close friends are all Venezuelan. He does not know why this is so, he says, except that they 'laugh at the same things'. In the first interview he had told me that he did not want to remain in a Venezuelan social environment. He does not have any attachments left to Venezuela now that his mother has passed away, and he has little desire to go there for visits. The only thing I miss, he says, is that Sofia would have grandparents here. - *But then, you can't have everything.*

11. Connecting the Threads

In March 2014 hundreds of Venezuelans marched in the streets of Montreal in a protest against violations of human rights in Venezuela. The demonstration was organized by a group called SOS Venezuela, part of a social media-based organization called SOS Worldwide. Many of my informants participated. The background for the protest was the political unrest in Venezuela that had commenced a month earlier, as students took to the streets in several cities in Venezuela. Nearly one year had passed since Hugo Chavez' had died and a special election had put his successor Nicolas Maduro into power. In Montreal, a record-high number of Venezuelan immigrants registered to vote in the Venezuelan elections of 2012 and 2013.

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Since the beginning of my work on the thesis, many things had changed for Venezuelan immigrants in Montreal. For one, as the above passage illustrates, Venezuelan migration went from being new, unknown and unsettled, to 'carving a channel' (Tsing 2000), and entering Montreal's 'collective memory' by becoming noticeable in the cityscape, becoming a piece in the Canadian 'multicultural mosaic'. My work on this thesis unfolded in the same period.

In December 2012, I left Canada and from then on followed the developments from a distance. While the individual and collective experiences of Venezuelan immigrants in Montreal continue, this work has come to the point where it is time to try to connect the strands. In the following pages I will sum up some of the key insights I that I believe the research has yielded.

Multiple belongings

An overarching aim of the thesis has been to explore skilled migrants' negotiations of belonging and their practices of home-making in Montreal. One important insight that oriented this work was the ideas of long-term commitment to their new society that were central in my informants'

narratives. In the accounts, the informants constructed themselves as settlers, not sojourners, in Montreal. In the light of this, it became natural to approach skilled migrants not as 'embodiments of flows' but as individuals searching for lasting attachments and seeking to realize their futures in the places they settled. Narratives of the decision to migrate, as we saw in chapter 8, brought up themes relating to life quality and personal values, to mindsets and orientations, and to how these were given meaning. Venezuela was narrated as a place where they could no longer feel at home, especially given their middle class identities. In comparison, Montreal and Canada was imagined as a destination where they would not only be accepted, but welcomed. The narratives, then, illustrate that although skilled individuals have more possibilities of migration, we should not approach them as free-floating and indifferent to place. Rather, the narratives established a clear link between belonging, identity and place, which I suggest was crucial for their interpretations of experiences after migration.

The thesis offers empirical examples showing that belonging can be experienced and realized with regards to different kinds of 'sites', including social networks, cityspace, virtual communities, arenas of professional self-realization, family and lifestyle. Homes and belongings can also be made and consolidated through everyday practices. The narratives in chapter 10 relate experiences of belonging as multiple, ongoing, and fluid processes. They also echo Nibbs' (2014: 6) description of belonging as *'the state where self-representation is perceived to fit'*. According to Probyn (1996: 19) belonging captures both the desire for some kind of attachment to other people, places, or modes of being, and the ways in which individuals are caught within the interstices of wanting to belong. These ideas, I suggest, lies at the heart of all the narratives. Equally useful in this respect was the concept of home, understood as constituting an important basis for developing and maintaining personal identities (Rapport and Dawson 1998). The thesis thus builds on earlier works that see migration as involving acts of imagining, creating, unmaking, changing, losing and moving 'homes' (ibid, Al-Ali and Koser 2002). Whereas belonging is understood as formed in the interplay with other individuals and with structures, home can also be understood as a psychological space we create for ourselves (Rouse 1991). The notion of home brings together *'memory and longing, the ideational, the affective and the physical, the spatial and the temporal, the local and the global, the positively evaluated and the negatively'*, Rapport and Dawson (1998: 8) state. In the present work I have been concerned with

exploring the notion's different and pluralistic meanings, including its dual reference to origin and destination.

Narratives of identity

Some crucial dimensions of migration processes are not accessible through direct observation, including ideas of identity and belonging that motivate and guide migration trajectories. The thesis has approached narratives as a way to access these dimensions, both by studying what was told and by analysing the telling. Narratives are 'doing' as much as 'saying', Rapport and Overing (2000) note. In this perspective we might also explore the act of migration itself as a narrative, and, as the thesis suggests, as a narrative that locates the migrant as belonging in a particular place. I have approached my informants' narratives as representing different self-understandings and life projects that underpinned both the decision to leave and the strategies related to realizing meaningful lives in the destination. The narratives bring forth the diversity of trajectories and thus also challenge the notion that migration can somehow be designed. By analysing narratives we also have a better vantage point from where to examine structures and discourses that are assumed to be influential; a strategy that can produce more nuanced insights into their nature and their individual, contextual and contingent impact.

The experience of migration makes personal identity central, for example by raising questions regarding the relationship between self, place and belonging. The choice of destination can also be read as articulations of life projects, in the sense that migrants see their lives as having a particular character, force and direction (Rapport 2010). According to Trundle and Bönisch-Brednich (2010), individuals construct identities in part through a sense of belonging in place. Migrants, the authors argue, move in search of new home and a better way of life, and these can be linked to ideas of local lives and anchored to a place, whether real or imagined. The relationship is dynamic, as both identity and place are changed and connected through migration (Gilmartin and Migge 2015). In my informants' accounts, the act of migration was thus constructed as constituting a part of already ongoing processes of constructing identity and belonging. The narratives expressed identification with qualities they associated with Montreal while simultaneously expressing a disassociation with what they perceived as the prevailing culture in Venezuela. Fog Olwig (2008: 87) has noted that migrants' narratives could be seen as *'foundational stories seeking to assert the rightful place in society that these people wish to*

establish'. Many of the narratives in chapter 8 served the dual purpose of locating the informants as belonging in Montreal and as not/no longer belonging in Venezuela.

The narratives have been approached as integral to processes of identity construction. Lived life is made up of fragmented events, but through narratives these are linked together in a larger, structured, ongoing story of self. This means that narratives both constitute experiences and guide action. In their narratives, individuals select certain aspects of the past, and narrate these in terms of their present intentions for the future (Thomsen 2005: 73) This is an ongoing process: *'Individuals not only write their stories of social reality, they are also ubiquitously engaged in rewriting them'* (Rapport 1997: 47). It is also a multilayered act: At one level they represent and order events in meaningful sequences, at another level they create the narrator at the very moment it is being created (Toni Morrison 1994: 22). Through narratives, lived life becomes text, and it is *'by way of this textualization that individuals come to know themselves and their worlds (...)'* (Rapport 2003: 30). Drawing on these insights, I understand my informants' narratives as representations of past and present events in particular, ordered, framed and context-related ways; that simultaneously create and articulate the narrator's identity.

Being ideal migrants

The thesis suggests that notion of belonging can work to integrate various levels; here ranging from personal emotions to national identity discourses. I have been concerned with the various ways that migrants conceptualize and seek to realize belonging in and through migration, but also with the ways that national discourses prescribe particular modes of belonging. The narratives of identity and belonging are seen against the backdrop of rather clear structural expectations that I have mainly approached through the notion of the ideal migrant (Barber 2008). This notion, I suggest, bring forth structural conditions that the focus on identity and belonging could perhaps otherwise have omitted. The focus on my informants' self-understandings and senses of belonging thus intersects with a focus on host-country discourses concerning who can be 'admitted to belong' as residents or citizens, articulated in federal and provincial migration schemes as well as the multiculturalism policy. More than a matter of strategic adaptation, the thesis suggests that the ideal migrants delineated in skilled migration program mirrored certain aspects that were narratively constructed as important in my informants' self-understanding. This

could be linked to Vasta's (2012) view of belonging as linked to acceptance or recognition of the group or society to which one seeks to belong. Immigration authorities' rhetoric, Barrass and Shields (2013: 2) write, embrace '*the virtues of self-sufficiency, hard work, and effective and efficient labour market participation*'. Similarly, immigration is presented as a 'do-it-yourself project', where the candidate is responsible and accountable. The skilled migration program can thus be seen as somehow rendering belonging contingent on economic productivity and self-reliance (Neborak 2013), and as linking successful integration to whether the migrant is hard-working, honest, resilient, well-organized, independent, open-minded, and flexible. These were also qualities that my informants invoked in narratives, which thus presented them as having the 'right reasons' and the 'right attitude' towards migration, presenting her or him as an individual who will easily fit with Canadian ways and values, and live up to the expectations to skilled migrants. The present ethnographic case must be seen in relation to a more general tendency towards neoliberal governance, where individual effort and responsibility are emphasized. Especially narratives of difficult periods echoed the neoliberal prescriptive subjectivity of seeing oneself as a collection of skills and traits, and focusing on improving these and managing them well. However, the narrative approach enables us to critically distinguish between settings and moments where this was presented as important, and others when it was not.

The notion of the ideal migrant also links up to broader ideas of desired citizens and of Canadian national identity. The latter, as we have seen, is articulated through the official multiculturalism policy. National identity, however, rests upon an idea of togetherness that Vasta (2013) points out as problematic with regards to integration and social cohesion. Migrants, she notes, can have a sense of belonging to the polity without necessarily feeling the need to associate with dominant ethnic groups, or share a sense of common identity that transcends group identities. For example, the narratives in this study show that, with a few exceptions, after several years in Montreal my informants' social networks were largely made up of other Venezuelans or other immigrants. Although they participated actively in 'Montreal society' in various ways, sought to live as 'responsible citizens' and were committed to the common good (as these were generally and officially understood), the belongings they developed were only to a small degree formed around attachments to an idea of an overarching national Canadian togetherness. Rather, they could perhaps better be described as formed around a sense of belonging to a polity, defined by Mason (2000: 127) as identifying with 'most of the country's institutions, some of its central practices

and feeling at home in them'. These insights could be useful contributions in the work to rethink and support social solidarity and cohesion in Canadian society. This, however, falls outside the scope of the present thesis.

Transnationalism and the new connectedness

Although not initially a focus in my work, my informants' use of communication technologies somehow imposed themselves through their obvious influence on social practices and feelings of connectedness. Various internet-based sites and groups influenced the migration process, even inspiring the very idea of migrating, and these sites grew in quantity as well as significance throughout my fieldwork. While transnational writers often focus on the crossborder activities between migrants and society of origin, the narratives of chapter 9 show the significance of cross-border communication also before and during the migration process. As the narratives also illustrate, many of my informants arrived Montreal equipped with comprehensive and actualized knowledge of Montreal and Canada, retrieved from official and informal online sources based both within and outside Canada. The destination, then, was anything but a blank space on their mental maps, and various sources had alimanted their imaginations and anticipations for life after migration. The migration authorities' online narratives of Canada and Montreal as destination could be seen as competing in this landscape, strategically seeking to tap into the longings and wants of desired candidates.

Transnationalism has been a helpful lens through which to understand the multifaceted and bifocal belongings of my informants. As some of the narratives in chapter 10 illustrate, the possibility of constant communication with family and friends back in Venezuela was experienced as an advantage, although at times difficult. In periods when things were not going so well, some of my informants actually reduced the amount of contact, contrary to what one might have expected. At the same time, the frequency of more brief communication and the number of platforms multiplied rapidly during the years of this research. These aspects of daily life are part of what transnational scholars describe as migrants' simultaneous practices of maintaining ties to home society and becoming a part of their new societies. Transnational perspectives were also useful to better understand cross-border translations of class identity and my informants' dual frames of references in this regard.

As noted above, my informants' negotiations of belonging unfolded in a Montreal where Venezuelan immigration was becoming increasingly noticeable in the cityscape. For example, the growing number of Venezuelan immigrants was mirrored in the number of commercial enterprises and cultural events labelled 'Venezuelan'. Moreover, the events and political and economic developments in Venezuela mobilized migrants to take to the streets in protest. However, my informants expressed little wish to be part of a community of Venezuelan immigrants and described their relations with other Venezuelans as merely personal and more or less incidental friendships. Daniel, for example, simply stated that he shared the same humour as his Venezuelan friends. Similarly, Guadalupe said she had joined the Venezuelan choir simply because she liked the songs. Although it would take further research to trace the development, my informants' narratives at this point did not support an assumption that a sense of collective belonging to a Venezuelan community in Montreal is bound to evolve.

A process with no end

The thesis has approached migration in relation to migrants' ideas of identity and belonging, which were understood as dynamic, fluid and ongoing. At the same time, the thesis has underlined the need to situate migration in its particular local and historical contexts. An underlying theme given the focus and time span of the study, has been experiences of continuity and rupture with regards to sentiments of belonging, life quality, personal growth, and so on. For many of the informants, migration represented an opportunity for transformation and a chance to realize projects they could not imagine realizing in Venezuela; to become someone they had wanted to be, like in the case of Ana. However, things did not always turn out as expected, as was the cases of for example Yesenia, Michelle or Felix. The narratives also exemplify how mobility and stasis was experienced in different moments, and illustrate that these were not necessarily related to spatial mobility.

As indicated in the beginning of this chapter, migration is no simple A to B process. According to Ilcan (2002: 2), settlement is a practice without firm boundaries; its enclosure is never complete or finalizable. Migration processes should therefore be studied in a long-term perspective. In that respect, the work of this thesis has brought forth the diversity of identity narratives that motivate

and influence migration processes, and perhaps more than anything, demonstrated the fluidity and open-endedness of migration.

12. Epilogue

Montreal, July 2015

In the summer of 2015 I return to Montreal. A Venezuelan restaurant now occupies the hotspot corner of St-Laurent and Mont-Royal and there are 5 other restaurants offering Venezuelan food only in the Plateau neighbourhood alone. The presence of Venezuelans has become visible in the cityscape. Moreover, Venezuela has clearly also become a piece of the Canadian multicultural mosaic, and will for the first time be represented in the summer series of free, outdoor mini-festivals focused on celebrating cultural diversity.

Week-Ends du Monde

On the evening of July 4th, Guadalupe and I find ourselves in a crowd of cheerful, dancing people in front of a big, brightly lit stage on the Île-Sainte-Hélène. *Joropo, merengue* and *gaita*³³¹ ring out into the humid summer night; the first-ever Venezuelan festival in Montreal is unfolding. Local Venezuelan artists play songs everybody seems to know. There are food stands and people selling arts and crafts. The host on the stage reminds us regularly in Spanish of the generosity of the sponsors and of the organising committees' unselfish work motivated by the love of the community. Student grants are raffled to families with young children. A phone company offering cheap calls to Caracas is distributing promotional cardboard fans. Most of the people in the crowd are Venezuelan or from other Latin American countries, but next to us an elderly Japanese couple is sitting on folding campstools, observing attentively the energetic and colourful action on the stage. - *Por el amor de nuestro país!* [For the love of our country], shouts the enthusiastic host, and there are smiles everywhere. There are several hundred people present. Guadalupe picks up her phone. - *Did you know that Luis and his girlfriend bought a house in Terrebonne*³³²? She shows me a picture. - *Look, it's their baby! Isn't he gorgeous?* Night has

³³¹ Popular musical genres from Venezuela

³³² A suburb just off the island of Montréal

fallen and on the opposite side of the river the lights of downtown Montreal shine brighter than the starry sky.

You never know

Earlier that evening, I had the following conversation with Guadalupe in the metro:

G: - Listen, this is going to be interesting for you in your thesis. I went for two weeks to visit N. She lives in Panama now.

T: - Really? So she's not moving to Montreal then?

G: - No. It is becoming more difficult to come here you know. She came here and took French classes, but still, it's difficult. So she and her husband went to Panama. They are starting a business there, supplying food and equipment to restaurants. And you know what, Panama is full of Venezuelans! Everywhere you go you hear Venezuelans talking in the streets. At least in Panama City. You know, those who had money, when things started to become complicated in Venezuela and they couldn't wait for the immigration processes in Canada or Australia, they went there. They rushed there. Because there they could bring their money. You know, they couldn't bring it here. And Panama is developing, tourism is developing. There are skyscrapers being built everywhere. I am sure there are more skyscrapers in Panama City than in Montreal. And the new businesses and companies, they are run by Venezuelans. Because the Venezuelans who went there were the entrepreneurs, and they came with money. But mind you, they are the nouveaux-riches, eh? Not the ones with inherited money, those who were educated, prepared. No, no, these are people from the middle class who invested and became rich. I couldn't believe how they treated the panameños! Like this [*she mimics arrogance, condescendence*]. But it's such a beautiful country... the beaches are lovely, and the panameños are so friendly... You know something, in a long-term perspective, and I mean long-term, because you know, I don't really have anyone here, except friends, you know, maybe later, much later, I would like to move there.

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