Chapter 7

Study Design, Research Questions and Theories

1. Introduction

In this chapter, we will elaborate on the main research goals and questions, and the tested research theories. We will begin by answering one of the questions often raised by social scientific researchers, namely, the reasons for selecting our chosen target research groups: Polish and Bulgarian immigrants in Brussels. After justifying the selection criteria, we will continue by introducing our research framework, which is divided into three stages, and subsequently focusing on the theoretical foundations.

The first empirical research stage constitutes an exploratory study of Polish and the Bulgarian migrants in Brussels designed to aggregate broad descriptive information about the two research groups. Since the phenomenon of undocumented and professional migrations from Eastern Europe has been only partially addressed, we cannot proceed towards addressing specific theoretical issues without obtaining information about the migrants' demographic profiles, educational background, migration histories and motivation from migration, and occupational practices in Brussels to mention just a few. An elaboration on the questions addressed at this research stage is presented in Section 3 of the present chapter.

The second research stage of the present study has the goal to elucidate the reasons for migration from Poland and Bulgaria to Belgium and the mechanisms behind undocumented migration from these two countries to Belgium. More particularly, we will attempt to assess the influence migration and social networks have on the process of the migration phenomenon under study. The present research will explore if, and to what degree, the social networks available to migrants are responsible for the process of migration. We will also address the issue of whether these social networks are an adequate concept for explaining the migration of both Polish and Bulgarian migrants and, if not, we

will proceed towards developing an alternative model for explaining the so-occurring migratory process.

At the third research stage, we will approach the question of what is the social and occupational position of undocumented Polish and Bulgarian migrants in Brussels. In particular, we will attempt to reveal if the undocumented East European immigrants (EEI) in Brussels constitute a new marginalized class of people in Belgium serving only to supply a low skilled and lower paid working force in the Belgian market. If this is the case, we will reflect on the factors placing the studied population in such a position and reflect on the prospects of undocumented EEI achieving upward social mobility in Belgium.

Having introduced the research questions to be addressed at each research stage, we will present the theoretical models that will be examined in the current study. Social capital theory and cumulative causation theory will be addressed at the second research stage. In order to understand why these two particular theoretical models have been selected, it is essential to first offer a critical overview of presently existing theories of international migration and their explanatory powers and drawbacks.

The approach for identifying a theoretical foundation for the third research stage, however, can be viewed as more controversial. Since we cannot know in advance the social and occupational position of undocumented EEI in Brussels, we are hypothesizing that the concept of "underclass" or "lower class" can be easily adopted as the most convenient way for describing this group of people. This is due to their undocumented status in the country and the fact that they belong to the most underprivileged, insecure, physically taxing and lowest paid sectors of the working market and have practically no chances for upward social mobility. Therefore, we will present the essence of the definitions of "underclass" that exist nowadays and on this basis, we will explore the degree to which these definitions apply to undocumented EEI. By deconstructing the term "underclass", we will consider if it is theoretically correct to apply it to undocumented EEI in Europe, and if this were not the case, we will search for an alternative theory or concept to refer to the social and occupational position of our research population.

2. Research groups

The current research will focus on two immigrant populations in Brussels: the Polish and the Bulgarian immigrants. The reasons for selecting Polish and Bulgarian immigrants as research groups have been derived from three primary considerations: to reflect the numerical importance of the Polish and Bulgarian populations in Brussels; to attempt providing a basis for answering the question of how EU enlargement will influence future migratory plans of EEI depending on the status of their home country as an applicant for accession to the EU; and thirdly, to offer a standardized research framework that will serve as the basis for improving research design within the presently existing traditions for studying undocumented populations in Brussels.

Since no systematic research on Eastern European migrations have been conducted in Belgium and knowledge about the various nationals of CEE is rather limited, we have limited ourselves to the construction of such systematic information about two groups only, since a large scale research of all groups of EEI cannot, in practice, be conducted by a single researcher. The selection of Polish and Bulgarian immigrants as target research groups reflects their numerical relevance as immigrant populations in Belgium and, particularly, in Brussels.

Polish immigrants in Belgium are the second largest immigrants group from Central Eastern Europe as of September 2005 (see Appendix 2). The 16,605 registered Poles are, however, only those who legally reside in the country, or who are registered in their district of residence. What remains hidden are the large numbers of undocumented Poles who are working in Brussels. Even though an exact figure of the size of this population does not exist, it is widely recognized that undocumented Poles are the largest population of Eastern Europeans residing in Brussels (see Chapter 4 and Chapter 6). As an indicator for the numerical prevalence of undocumented Poles, one could take into account the fact that with a deportation rate of over 50% per apprehended migrant, undocumented Polish migrants are the second most often deported group of Eastern Europeans, the first being undocumented Bulgarians (Perrin, 2005). Moreover, Polish nationals are the second least often released after apprehension group of undocumented Eastern Europeans in Belgium (Perrin, 2005).

The number of legally residing Bulgarians in Belgium as of October 2005 is 4,570 persons, but this figure is only a vague representation of those persons actually residing in Brussels (see Appendix 2). Bulgarian immigration to Belgium began in the late 1980s when Bulgaria became the major country from where asylum seekers to Belgium originated. As a rule, after 1993, asylum applications lodged by Bulgarians have been rejected because the country is now considered a "safe" country of origin, following its transition from a totalitarian regime to a democracy in the early 1990s. There is no information on how many rejected asylum seekers have left the country or have been deported, but it can be expected that the levels of return migration were rather low. Information provided by an employee of Western Union Money Transfer in Brussels reveals that annually between 2,500 and 3,000 undocumented Bulgarians are remitting money to Bulgaria from Brussels.

The presence of undocumented Bulgarians in Brussels can also be deduced from the numbers of deported Bulgarians. As mentioned above, undocumented Bulgarian migrants are the most often deported (over 80% of apprehended Bulgarians are deported immediately after apprehension) and they are the least often released after apprehension.[1] On average, three Bulgarians are deported on each flight of *Bulgaria Air*, which is the only Bulgarian carrier operating between Brussels and Sofia on a regular basis (four times per week). Thus, *Bulgaria Air* alone transports around 800 clandestine Bulgarians back to their country each year.[2] A similar estimate is advanced in the by the Belgian Contact Point of the European Migration Network, according to which, the intercepted undocumented Bulgarians per month in Belgium are approximately 1,100 persons in 2001, 1,300 in 2002, 1,700 in 2003 and 1,500 in 2004 (European Migration Network, 2005). If the average

[1] E.g. less than 15% of the apprehended undocumented Bulgarians are released, in comparison with the average rate of 35% of releases for other nationalities (excluding Poles with some 15% of releases and Brazilians who are released in some 8% of the cases) (Perrin, 2005).

[2] This information was obtained through personal communication with one of the representatives of *Bulgaria Air* in Belgium. No similar information has been acquired from *SN Brussels Airlines*, the second carrier operating directly between Bulgaria and Belgium.

removal rate for undocumented Bulgarians is 80%, the number of deportees will be respectively: 880 in 2001, 1,040 in 2002, 1,300 in 2003, and 1,200 in 2004. Based on these estimations, it can be concluded that the actual undocumented Bulgarian population in Brussels is indeed quite substantial, but, until recently, has remained largely understudied and invisible.

The second reason for selecting Polish and the Bulgarian immigrants as the main research groups is to attempt to reflect the potential impact of the EU enlargement on the population of EEI in Brussels. Our research questions the impact of the stepwise EU enlargement process on the future migration plans of immigrants, such as their motivations for settling in Brussels, returning to their countries of origin or continuing to commute on a regular basis between Brussels and their home towns. Using this framework, we expect that studying the most numerically relevant groups of undocumented EEI in Brussels from new and a future member state will reveal, most clearly, the respective influences of Poland's accession to the EU in 2004 and Bulgaria's prospective accession in 2007, on the size and the type of immigrant populations from Eastern Europe into Brussels[3]. Once we have established such a research design, we expect to be able to offer this research tool for a future comparative study of other EEI groups originating, for example, from non-EU candidate member states such as Moldova, Ukraine or Russia, and from prospective new candidate states such as Croatia and the former Yugoslavian Republic of Macedonia.

The third argument for selecting these particular research groups is that they can be used to improve existing research designs for the study of legally residing and undocumented immigrants in Brussels. As has been indicated in Chapter 6, the research already conducted on Polish immigrants in Brussels, in particular, and on undocumented immigrants, in general, is still in its initial state of development and it is far from offering broad conclusive material or generalizable results. These largely qualitative and

[3] We realize that the EU enlargement takes place during our research and that its potential impacts on migrants might be too early to evaluate. Nevertheless, information collected during the pilot studies, suggests that for example Poles expect better employment opportunities in Poland even before the enlargement, thus a possible influence of the accession of Poland and respectively Bulgaria to the EU should not be cancelled out.

anthropological studies provide a broad but only descriptive picture of the characteristics of the studied immigrant populations in Brussels. It offers a preliminary basis on which more in-depth analysis of the EEI should be conducted to achieve generalizability of the currently available results and to provide a more detailed understanding of immigrant groups of interest in Brussels. In this context, we will start by offering a broad descriptive portrait of the EEI, which will be supplemented by an attempt to achieve an accurate theoretical understanding of why migration from CEE exists and persists, what are the mechanisms that stimulate or prevent migration to Brussels and what are the perspectives for future migrations from Poland and Bulgaria. By developing a standardized research framework and testing particular theories of migration, such as social capital theory and cumulative causation theory, a potential tool for the standardized and comparable research on other EEI will be provided.

Another rationale for selecting the Polish and Bulgarian immigrants as the primary research groups is based on the postulates of economic theories of migration, which explain migratory movements as generally determined by wage differentials between the sending and receiving countries. The main assumption of these economic theories is that the larger the wage differential, the greater the likelihood of migration. In line with this argument, we selected Polish and Bulgarians in Brussels because, by 1989, when emigration from these countries was already a fact, Poland and Bulgaria were the two former communist states with the least purchasing power of money (UNECE, 1989).

A supplementary reason for selecting Polish and the Bulgarian migrants as research groups derives from the linguistic competence of the researcher, whose contact with prospective interviewees is facilitated by the knowledge of the Bulgarian and Russian languages, respectively.

3. The empirical research framework and research questions

3. 1. First research stage: the exploratory study

As it has been indicated, knowledge about legal and undocumented EEI in Brussels and in Belgium is rather rudimentary and no comprehensive portrait of these populations

have been made available until now. Therefore, the main goal at the first stage of our research will be to initiate a broad exploratory study of the Polish and Bulgarian populations in Brussels by systematically collecting wide-ranging information on a number of immigrant characteristics, which should be included in research attempting to provide wide-ranging knowledge about an understudied aspect of the immigration phenomenon. To achieve this goal, we will explore in detail a number of issues, summarized in the following thirteen points, which will be applied to both professional and undocumented immigrants in Brussels:

1. *Immigrants' demographic characteristics*: This refers to the average demographic profile of the EEI on Brussels. The demographic characteristics of the studied populations will be explored in relation to the already identified ones to look for any points of convergence (See Chapter 3 and Chapter 4). In the same logic, we will look at the major sending areas in Poland and Bulgaria to see if, and to what degree, the major sending regions of origin have changed over the past years.
2. *Education and language skills*: In this section, we will reveal the immigrants' educational status and language skills, including pre and post migration educational history and the relation between an immigrant's educational qualifications and their employment status in Brussels. The educational profile of migrants will indicate if undocumented migrants are the populations with lowest educational status, as some studies have been shown to indicate, or if EEI fall out of the so-established pattern.
3. *Living conditions in Brussels*: This part of the study will map the geographical distribution of EEI in Brussels. It will examine if there are specific areas where undocumented immigrants are concentrated and whether these areas are the same as where other immigrant populations from non-European origin reside. The next focus will be on the means by which undocumented immigrants find accommodation, the overall quality of the housing and the degree to which EEI have comfortable living conditions in terms of size and price of the housing, the

existing need for sharing accommodation with other people, and possessing of household equipment. Further, it will be explored if there is a tendency for upward social mobility within EEI groups by considering factors such as changing residence for one of better facilities or general quality, settling in "better" neighbors in Brussels, renting larger accommodation or acquiring one's own housing as one of the criteria for upward social mobility.

4. *Social life and prevailing type of social relations*: Here it will be elucidated whether EEI form close relationships with people from their own ethnic group, with other emigrants or have broad social connections with Belgians as well. It will also be revealed if EEI constructed their social network before or after arriving to Brussels. Finally, we will collect information about the motivations of immigrants for establishing contacts in Brussels and the strength of contacts with relatives and friends in their country of origin. The so-aggregated information will provide a ground for testing the hypothesis that the existence and operation of social networks determine the process of continuous migration from Poland and Bulgaria to Brussels.
5. *Migration history*: This part of the study will reveal individual migratory experience before coming to Brussels. Some of the questions to be answered here include: Is migration to Brussels the first experience of immigration? Are there traditions of family migration that have determined the present migratory step? How did past experience or lack of experience in migration influence the decision to come to Brussels? If migration to other countries has taken place in the past, what prevented the respondent for settling in that respective country or continuing to migrate to the same destination? Are there structural or legislative obstacles or facilitating factors that have directed these migrations?

   The reasons for choosing Brussels as a target destination city will then be explored. Special attention will be given to the major information sources regarding living and work opportunities in Brussels that were used by the

migrants prior to migrating to Brussels. From this, a detailed picture of the preparation and implementation of the migratory step will be presented.

We will continue by testing the hypothesis that circulatory migratory movements are the predominant pattern of migration of the undocumented immigrants. Concurrently, we will study settlement history, motivations for remaining in Brussels for a longer time and the means by which settlement in Brussels was achieved by non-commuting undocumented immigrants. Lastly, we will focus on the relevance of ethnic networks for initiating and implementing migration to Brussels by revealing the particular role that immigrant communities or personal relations to friends and relatives have in the process of settling in Brussels.

6. *Employment history and occupational activities in Brussels*: The present research will offer a detailed picture of an immigrant's employment status in Brussels by focusing on several aspects of an EEI's occupational history, such as the nature of present and previous occupations of EEI in Brussels and the relation between their education and professional experiences in the country of origin, on the one hand, and their employment status in Brussels on the other. Also examined will be an immigrant's history of unemployment and their strategies for finding a job, the incidence of problematic relations with employers, such as underpayment, nonpayment or firing, job satisfaction and evaluation of the difficulties in finding a job on the black market in Brussels, and so on. The average income of immigrants will be assessed and their saving and spending practices in Brussels will be outlined. To complete this thematic section, we will further concentrate on an EEI's future professional plans, their intentions for return migration in relation to possible employment opportunities upon return and other job related factors, which might influence the decision for return migration.
7. *Health status and work accidents*: the goal of this set of questions is to reveal what is the general health condition of the EEI in Brussels and to point at major health complaints of the studied population. As undocumented immigrants have no right to reimbursed medical assistance (unless in emergency cases) we would

like to find out what are the main coping strategies in case of illness or work accident; what is the incidence of work accidents and respectively the reaction of the employer and the employee in these situations. Undocumented immigrants are described as the most vulnerable group of workers, usually working in precarious conditions with reduced safety measures and in this context, we would explore to what degree this is the case with undocumented migrants from Eastern Europe as well.

8. *Remittances*: Beginning by specifying the economic situation of immigrants and their households in Brussels and countries of origin, we will move towards a detailed presentation of the size of the remittances and the way they are utilized by the recipients. In this section, we will also concentrate in more detail on the immigrants' saving practices and the intentions for investing these savings in the future.
9. *Stimulating further migration*: The motivation for asking questions concerning the EEI's intentions of stimulating and facilitating new potential immigrants is two-fold. On the one side, they will reveal EEI's perception and subjective evaluation of the possibilities for working and settling in Brussels and, on the other, they can be viewed as "practical guidelines" for living without documents in Brussels, which in its turn will allow for a more detailed understanding of the coping strategies of the undocumented Eastern European population in Brussels. This information will provide additional recourses to evaluate the existence, strength, and impact of migrant networks on migration from Eastern to Western Europe. Some of the specific questions we will seek to answer include: who are the migrants actively stimulating further migration of kin or friends form their regions of origin? At which moment after migration does the respondent decide to stimulate further migration? Can chain migration practices be viewed as a strategy for additional income increasing strategy of the family?
10. *Legal aspects*: This set of questions is designed to reveal what is the present residence status of the EEI in Brussels and whether there has been a change of

residence status such as a shift from legal to illegal residence, abuse of residence provisions such as applying for asylum or enrolling as a student only and exclusively for gaining access to the territory of Belgium and to the working market. We will further outline what are the main reasons for which the respondents would like or not like to have a residence in Belgium and to what degree they are familiar with the requirements and the procedures for obtaining residence in Belgium.

The attitudes of professional immigrants towards permanent settlement or obtaining Belgian nationality will be revealed at this research stage.

If migrants have undertaken steps towards regularization, settlement or naturalization, we will analyze the major obstacles towards obtaining the respective change of status. Special attention will be given to applications that, according to the respondents, have been rejected on an unfounded basis, administrative difficulties in each step of the process of obtaining a new legal status and subjective feeling of discrimination or violation of rights. At each step of this analysis, the acquaintance of the applicants with the procedure and the existing legislation will be made explicit, to avoid unjustified conclusion about the forms and the nature of discrimination when discriminatory practices might not have occurred according to sound legal criteria.

11. *Children of immigrants in Brussels*: The aim of this research component will be to collect information about the migration history and migration experiences of minor children of EEI in Brussels and the degree to which minor children of Polish and Bulgarian immigrants are currently residing with their parents in Belgium. The main questions of interest can be summarized as follows: what are the reasons for which EEI decide to bring their children in Brussels; are those children enrolled in Belgian educational institutions; what are the main problems that children of EEI face at school? We will also look into the living conditions of minor children of undocumented immigrants in Brussels. We will attempt to see if the crucial minimum elements necessary for the proper raising and education of

children are made available to the parents. By this we mean not only material factors such as decent housing conditions, a separate bed for the child, desks with enough light, availability of school accessories and textbooks, the provision of a quiet environment for studying and good conditions for night rest, but also physical and psychological support by the parents, such as spending time communicating and playing with the child, taking care of the child, and not leaving minor children alone.

12. *Influence of the EU enlargement*: One of the final aspects of the exploratory stage of the research will focus on the anticipated impact of EU enlargement on the status and life perspectives of EEI in Brussels. This part of the study will elucidate if EEI in Brussels perceive the EU enlargement process as having a direct impact on their professional life and immigrant status as well as on the living conditions and professional opportunities in their countries and regions of origin. Further, we will look at whether the accession of EEI's countries to the EU influences the intentions of EEI to remain in Brussels or to undertake return migration.

    The impact of the EU enlargement could be in equal direction for all migrants with different status in Belgium (e.g. settlers, commuters and undocumented migrants), but several distinctive patterns of influence of the ongoing political changes can also be hypothesized. For example, in the case of permanent immigrants, we will address immigrants' anticipation of the possibilities for upward occupational and social mobility, expectations for life standard improvement, ambitions for the further development of self-employment activities or putting them on hold (such as with settlers under the framework of association agreements between the European Union and, in this particular case, between Belgium, and PECO countries[4]) and foreseen opportunities for better professional opportunities in the case of legally employed migrants.

[4] The association agreements between Belgium and PECO countries (Poland, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia, The Czech republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia) outline the provisions and the

With respect to commuters, we will reveal the intentions for undertaking steps to settle in Brussels, plans for return migration or for commuting on a more irregular base. Joining the common European market will possibly lead to an increase in prices and salary levels in joining countries and this factor together with the inevitable rise in fuel prices is expected to be a significant factor in shaping a commuter's travel patterns. The majority of the pendular migrants who used to pay little for a trip to Belgium before their country became an EU member state, could possibly find commuting to Belgium no longer profitable enough, especially when the cost of the trip increases and the purchasing power of the earned money decreases.

For the undocumented immigrant group, we will examine the motivations for remaining undocumented, for legalizing their status, or for return migration. Finally, an answer to the question, "Is the response to the EU enlargement process different for the two groups under study?" will be offered.

13. *Perceptions of Brussels*: The first research stage will be conclude by exploring the positive and negative perceptions of immigrants on the different aspects of living and working in Brussels and their general opinions about the city. We will attempt to relate the decision for living in immigration or circular migration to these perceptions and to see if a negative image of the city or negative personal experiences after migration have the power to trigger a return step. We will raise the question of what is the overall psychological well-being and subjective feeling of integration of migrants from different categories, whether these elements differ substantially from one group to another and what is the personal response to the feeling of lack of integration and well-being. To avoid entering into a broad terminological discussion about the concept of integration, we will attempt to

requirements for PECO citizens to exercise economic activities in Belgium, other than salaried employment. The full text of these provisions for establishing an economic activity in Belgium, conditions on the sojourn, and conditions under which the sojourn is terminated, can be consulted in the Official Journal of Belgium from 4 February 2000 (BS, 2000).

answer these questions from the migrants' understanding of "integration". Since the purpose of the current research is not to develop a broad study of integration from an external perspective or according to the state criteria of integration, we will argue that a person-centered approach could shed more light on the mechanisms for achieving or failing to achieve integration. Thus, we would like to avoid the commonly made error of perceiving a certain group of people as integrated according to an external or state criteria, such as language knowledge, economic integration, and nationality acquisition, when in fact migrants express a negative opinion about the degree to which they feel integrated.

3. 2. Second research stage: what factors trigger the contemporary Eastern European migrations to Brussels?

As presented above, the first goal of our study is to introduce a comprehensive portrayal of undocumented and professional EEI residing and working in Brussels. The so collected multifold descriptive information about EEI will enable us to proceed to the second research stage, which is aimed at identifying the main factors that could account for the presence of EEI in Brussels and the reasons why migrations from Poland and Bulgaria persist over time, in spite of the increasingly difficult conditions for immigration to Western Europe and the improving living conditions in countries of origin, which at least in theory, should keep emigration levels low. In addition, the issue of how undocumented EEI manage to live and work illegally will be addressed. In this context, we will explore whether migrant networks are a crucial factor for stimulating migration and making it possible and successful within the conditions of limited possibilities for legal migration.

This general research goal can be translated in several research questions, such as are there established migration networks among the Polish and the Bulgarian migrants in Brussels and do these migration network structures differ for the two research groups? If "yes", what is the exact function of these networks? Do they promote and support the continuation of migration flows from countries of origin to Brussels? Or do they serve only to facilitate the process of social and occupational integration of the migrants once in

Brussels? What is the subjective importance of the migrant networks for our respondents? Are these networks viewed as indispensable for successful migration or not? In what situations do migrants rely on migration networks?

If we fail to identify migration networks facilitating and perpetuating the migration to Brussels, we will look for alternative explanation of the migratory process under focus. Among such alternative explanations, we will address the importance of a number of interacting factors, which we consider relevant to East-West migration. These include financial deprivation in countries of origin and personal and household needs as shaping the motivation and decision to migrate. Subsequently, we will seek structural factors in the countries of origin, which may operate as triggers for migration. By structural factors, we mean among others employment possibilities, salary levels, opportunities for professional advancement, increased income, and job security as well as possibilities for becoming self-employed. We will also explore how the hypothesized reasons for migration interact and if they trigger migration in a cumulative way or not.

3. 3. Third research stage: the social and occupational position of Polish and Bulgarian undocumented migrants in Brussels

Once having detailed descriptive information about undocumented Polish and Bulgarian immigrants on the topics specified in the first research stage and, consequently, obtained information on how undocumented EEI succeed in settling and working in Brussels under conditions that do not allow for legal immigration, we will address the question of what is the social and occupational position of undocumented migrants in Brussels. In particular, we would explore if the undocumented status of EEI leads to their transformation into a new marginalized class of people who are a working reserve for low skilled and lower paid jobs and who have limited possibilities for improving their social status and entering mainstream society. The degree and ways in which the status of being undocumented ties the EEI to a position in the society which does not offer chances for upward social mobility, securing long term employment, and access to the provisions of the welfare state will be examined. It could be hypothesized that undocumented EEI in fact

have little or no opportunities for changing their social standing while living in illegality and working without formal entitlement for work in an EU member state.

4. The theoretical research framework

4. 1. Theoretical foundations for the second research stage

To answer the questions raised in our second research stage (see Section 3. 2.) and to test the importance of migrant networks in perpetuating migration from CEE to Belgium, we will base our research on the assumptions of two theories developed precisely to explain the persistence of migratory flows - Social Capital Theory and Cumulative Causation Theory. We will try to reveal to what degree these so widely and uncritically accepted theories (Krissman, 2005) are indeed capable of explaining the perpetuation of contemporary migration. Before proceeding with a detailed presentation of these two theories and pointing out their possible relevance for our research purposes, we would like to begin with our justification for the selection of precisely these theoretical approaches by touching upon the reasons why the so-called "old" migration theories fail to offer a satisfactory explanation for the migration movements that have been predominant in Europe since recruitment programs for immigrant workers were officially stopped in the 1970s. Addressing the limitations of the "old" migration theories will not refute their explanatory power, but point to the fact that different theoretical perspectives should be seen as complementary if the complexity of the migrations phenomenon at different times is to be explained. We will also illustrate how certain present day migrations cannot be explained by any of the existing theories or an amalgam of several distinct theoretical approaches but require new theoretical insight.

International migration is a response to innumerable varieties of causes ranging from unfavorable environmental conditions and natural catastrophes, to wars, totalitarian political regimes, local ethnic, religious, or political conflicts and economic and political exclusion or oppression and persecution. Migrations can be the outcome of personal feelings of insecurity and desperation that no positive developments are foreseen for the future. On the other hand, international migrations are not necessarily a response to

inauspicious factors only. Migration is often a consciously chosen strategy for income increases even in situations when the economic and the political conditions in the country of origin are stable. Some of the recent tendencies in migrations include a completely new range of movements such as job transfers, professional relocations, undertaking long humanitarian or military missions that sometimes finish with settlement in the new country and the respective migration of a migrant's family. To summarize, the forms and the stimuli of migration are various and it is not an exaggeration to claim that international migration is one of the basic structural features of nearly all industrialized as well as impoverished countries.

Considering the multitude of migration responses as triggered by differential factors, one of the primary questions to be addressed will be the possibility of developing a theoretical approach capable of explaining and predicting these various migration flows. Taking aside migrations of genuine asylum seekers and migrations resulting from natural disasters or military conflict, or in other words, taking aside migrations resulting from a grave danger for one's life, the questions will be: is there a theoretical model that can account for international migration in the long term and not only in a specific historical moment? What is common among international migrations from all around the world and is there a model capable of capturing this commonality? If the answer to these questions is "yes", then we have to consider what is the added value of having such a theory and whether the construction of "general" migration theory allows for a detailed analysis of the migration phenomenon or if the distinct factors behind each migration flow cannot be captured by a single theory.

The issue of creating a theory of migration is further complicated by the fact that the existence of migration stimulating circumstances does not result in an immediate immigration flow and do not influence all people in the same way. Migrations do not occur unless certain preconditions are met, including for example the presence of an anchor community in the host country, a loosely regulated labor market that can absorb newcomers, a favorable immigrant policy in the target country, etc. It could be argued that the variety of migration factors, the different personal and community responses to these

factors and the particular migration movements specific for one or another time span do not allow for building a general explanation of the phenomenon of human migration. This is indeed illustrated by the fact that the number of theories on migration is quite substantial. Studying migration is a broad multidisciplinary field explored mainly but not only by economists, sociologists, psychologists, geographers and political scientists. The up-to-date results of scientific efforts could hardly be described as resulting in a strict and uniform theory of migration. The actual outcome is indeed a conglomerate of models, analytical frameworks, conceptual approaches, and empirical generalizations that describe and try to explain only certain facets of migration or were initially developed to explain other parts of human behavior and later were adapted to explain migration (Arango, 2000). The complex nature of the human migration phenomenon explains why current theoretical and empirical knowledge about it, focuses only on one dimension or aspect. In this context, it is understandable also that the majority of migration theories were developed largely in isolation from one another (Massey *et al*., 1997). As the following discussion over the main postulates and drawbacks of the existing theoretical approaches will reveal, it is only recently that frameworks of cumulative causation of migration have been developed. The initial awareness that multidisciplinary approaches are vital has still not yielded a uniform theory of migration and researchers and theoreticians should ask themselves if this is even a possible venture and for what purposes it should be accomplished. An attempt for such an all-encompassing understanding of migration has been advanced by Roger Brubacker (1991: pp. 27), who claims that: "Almost all migration is economically conditioned in one way or another". Beyond doubt, the economic factor plays a crucial role for the existence of human migration. What remains uncertain is to what degree economic factors are the only responsible factor. The following critical overview of the theories of migration that have been developed up to now provides indisputable evidence that migration is something more than a mere response to economic deprivation or financial needs.

Neo-classical economics, developed in the early 1970s, is the pioneering theory attempting to explain migration. According to this theory, the main trigger and determinant of migration is the structural and economical differences between the sending and receiving

countries. The main reasons for migration are defined as international wage differentials, geographical differences in the supply of and demand for labor, utility maximization, and expected net returns (Ranis & Fei, 1961; Todaro, 1969; Todaro, 1976). The theory aims at explaining migration at both the macro-level and micro-level. The macro-level approach views migration as stimulated by the spatial distribution of production and capital resources, and it considers immigration as induced only by the characteristics of the labor markets. The logical conclusion derived from this assumption is that migration will cease when equilibrium is achieved in terms of decreased labor supply and increased payment in poor countries and increased labor supply and decreased payment in rich countries.

The micro-level of neoclassical theory explains migration as an individual decision-making process based solely on the assessment of wage differentials in sending and receiving courtiers and the potential financial benefit in cases of migration (Todaro, 1969; Borjas, 1990). In other words, people tend to migrate when the expected net profit is higher than remaining in the country of origin.

Briefly said, the neoclassical theory explains labor migration in Europe exclusively in terms of the need for workers in the heavy industries in the more developed countries and the poverty levels in the sending countries. An obvious drawback of this theory is that it ignores the importance of personal decision making processes and individual and/or family motivations that cannot be reduced only to making a rational choice for maximizing individual benefits.

Since the official recruitment of a foreign labor force in Europe has been terminated and the borders of European countries have been closed to new economic migrants, new forms of migration have occurred and the neoclassical theory of migration fails to account for their existence and perpetuation. Another substantial weakness of the theory is its inability to explain why so few people migrate given the huge differences in income and welfare distribution between the countries. Similarly, the theory fails to account for the lack of significant migratory flows in the more distant past when economic disparities between countries were already present. A closely related problem is how to explain the phenomenon of differential migration or why some countries have high migration rates

while other, structurally similar countries, do not. These few comments suggest that the neoclassical theory underestimates the influence of all kinds of non-economic factors, which indeed play a major role in the process of someone's decision to migrate and the actual implementation of the migration project.

A *new economic theory of migration* (known also as *new economics of migration*) has been developed as an answer and challenge to the assumptions and conclusions of the neo-classical theory. The focus of this theory still concentrates on the importance of rational choice making as the main migration trigger, but it stresses the importance of the family, the household and sometimes even the community as factors influencing an individual's decision for migration (Stark, 1984; Stark & Bloom, 1985; Katz & Stark, 1986; Stark, 1991). So, it is not the individual alone who seeks income enhancement but the household units, whose overall economic stability and prosperity should be improved. Migration, in this sense, is not only a way of maximizing one's absolute income, but a means of diversifying the income of a household in order to minimize possible future risks related to factors such as a family member remaining without income, deteriorating living conditions, inflation, and so on.

Another determinant of migration, according to the economic theory is related to the income of other households in a given region and the relative standing of one's household within the community. Thus, the families who send migrants workers abroad do so not only to increase their income and to minimize potential risk, but also to reduce their relative state of deprivation in comparison with some other reference group with a better socio-economic status (Stark & Taylor, 1989; Stark, 1991).

The main argument for taking the household as a unit of analysis is that, unlike single individuals, families are able to control economic risks by differentiating the allocation of their recourses. Some family members are involved in local market activities while other, if needed, migrate to increase the family income and return when there is no longer a necessity to rely on income from abroad. By viewing immigration decisions as taken within the household or the family, this theory is able to explain how regional concentrations in emigration and settlement patterns arise in destination.

Even though the new economic theory of migration is considered one of the most detailed and powerful theories of migration (Arango, 2000), it still has the drawback of not being able to explain the initial origins of the migration flows or, as was the case with the neoclassical theory, why under the same circumstances one household "produces" migrants while other does not, and why migration flows continue even after the economic or demographic incentives that originally caused them disappear.

Another descendant of the neoclassical theory is the *dual labor market theory* (also known as *the segmented labor market theory*) developed by Michael Piore (Piore, 1979). Unlike the previous two theories, the dual labor market theory stresses the importance of macro-level structural determinants, or the permanent demand for foreign labor in advanced industrial societies, as the main migration stimulating force and advances the hypothesis that push factors in countries of origin do not act as a trigger for migration. During the years during which this theory developed, one of the primary labor market characteristics of industrialized societies was the predominance of dangerous, low-paid, unskilled or semi-skilled and non-prestigious jobs that local people refused to accept and were performed mainly by immigrants. The theory explains international migration by elucidating why local workers reject such jobs while migrants are willing to accept them and why the problem cannot be solved through standard market mechanisms. Generally, the value of the theory is not in providing a broad explanation of international migration but rather in highlighting and justifying the importance of structural demand for foreign labor in industrialized societies at the time.

This theory also has apparent drawbacks in so far as it excludes personal motivations for migration and the "push" factors in the sending countries, while viewing migration as entirely "demand-based" and not related to factors such as wage differentials or an individual's rational choice.

World systems theory (globalization theory) developed from what used to be historical structural theory, is another macro-level model, which unlike the previous macro-level theories, identifies the reasons for migration in the expansion of the developed capitalists economies and relates it to political mechanisms of power and domination

(Wallerstein, 1974). The main postulate of this theory is that the penetration of capitalist economic relations into peripheral, non-capitalist societies creates a mobile population, which is likely to emigrate as a response to the process of local economic disruptions and dislocations accompanying capitalist development and expansion (Massey *et al*., 1997).

Defining migration as the outcome of market expansions obviously ignores the importance of a whole range of factors, such as wage rates or personal motivation and relative deprivation, which are necessary for provoking migration. The process of new market creation and expansion and the overall political structure of the global economy can hardly be regarded as the only unique factors for migration since, if this were true, the levels of international migration would have been much higher than is the case. Following this same line of reasoning, migration should not occur in countries not yet strongly penetrated by capitalist economies (such as Albania) or where global markets did not expand to such a degree as with other less developed countries. However, contrary to the theory's assumptions, these are major immigrant sending areas.

The theories discussed until now mainly focus on the causes of international migration. A second large group of theories aims at identifying not only the causes of migration but also the factors that make possible the persistence of immigration over time and space. In the next section, we will discuss in a similar fashion the postulates of these theories as well as their explanatory powers and respective drawbacks.

Migration networks theory is one example of a model that tries to explain why migration persists over time from places where the incentives for migration in terms of push factors are no longer present. According to this theory, migration will be successful only if the prospective migrants can rely on existing social networks to provide them with the necessary social support and social capital upon arrival (Massey, 1990a; Massey, 1990b). Migration networks are broadly defined as the interpersonal ties connecting immigrants, former immigrants and non-immigrants as well as places of origin and destination. Social capital refers to the social relationships that permit and facilitate access to elements of economic and personal significance. Existing networks lower the costs and

risks of migration, help new migrants to settle more easily in a new country, offer financial and psychological support and assistance in overcoming various difficulties. Another assumption of migration networks theory, drawn directly from its main postulate, is that precisely because of established networks, migration will persist even when initial triggering factors such as wage differentials or economic disadvantages in the country of origin no longer exist. In other words, the major strength of this theory comes from its two mechanisms for explaining why migration persists. On the one hand, due to the formation of networks, migration becomes "institutionalized" and, over time, it gradually becomes independent of the individual or structural factors that initiated it. On the other, network support, which decreases migration risks and costs, makes migrations less selective from the point of view of socio-economic traits of migrants and more representative of the sending society.

Even though the theory has unquestionable strengths, such as offering a mechanism for understanding why migration from certain regions does not cease when according to classical push-pull theories it should have decreased or stopped, this theory also has some major drawbacks concerning its ability to explain some movements such as those of qualified professionals, "false students", economic migrants abusing the asylum system and smuggled migrants, to mention just a few. The theory's assumption that migration will persist over time just because migration networks have been developed seems to be far fetched as well. Firstly, not all migrants from the same nationality or the same geographic origin tend to establish communities and support newcomers. Secondly, migrants tend to mainly support kin, not just any migrant who happens to be a co-national or from the same town.

Lastly, the theory was developed on the basis of Mexican migration to the United States, which is in fact only one type of a specific migration movement. No generalizations of world migration can be made without taking into account numerous additional social, political, institutional, and psychological factors.

Closely related to the network theory is the *systems approach*, which views migration as a system of spaces characterized by the relatively stable association of a group

of receiving countries with a number of areas of origin. This association results in permanent migration flows and in turn stimulates future migrations (Kritz *et al*., 1992). These constructed migration systems are characterized by an intense exchange of capital, goods and people (Massey *et al.,* 2006). The focus of this approach is not on the entire network that could possibly developed, but the links between one region of origin and a corresponding destination point, where the original community is reconstructed in nearly the same way as it existed in the home country. This explanation also has its weaknesses in its inability to go beyond mere description of migration systems and its inadequacy in explaining many present-day migration flows.

Another theory concentrating on the factors making migration persist over time is the *institutional theory* (Massey, 1990a; Massey, 1990b). The phenomenon on which this theory is based is the large number of private legal institutions and social organizations created as a response to the large numbers of people willing to immigrate, while at the same time, the increasingly difficult conditions for entrance into target destination countries. Official state agencies for recruitment of qualified labor force and seasonal workers, the immigrant diversification programs such as that existing in Canada, the USA, Australia and New Zealand are example of some of the legally institutionalized systems for immigration support. This theory takes into account the significant influence on immigration of proliferating underground systems for smuggling people, trafficking women and children for prostitution or household services, and arranged marriages. The theory, however, is still unable to recognize the different factors initiating a migratory step and to predict who will probably undertake migratory movement and whether such a person might make use of any of the available "institutions" facilitating the migration process.

An overview of the main migration theories developed to date points clearly to the lack of a uniform theoretical approach that can offer a comprehensive description or even a detailed understanding of migratory movements. This drawback, however, should not underestimate the significance of these theories in their attempt to explain such a complex phenomenon. When they were being developed, the discussed theories offered a pioneering

step in the field of international migration and managed, to a certain degree, to encompass and elucidate the ongoing migratory process. The unquestionable fact that some of these theories cannot be taken out of the historical context in which they were developed and applied, should not devalue their strength in explaining particular aspects of the migratory process during a particular historical period. The failure of these predominantly one-sided approaches to coherently explain migration in its complexity illuminates the necessity of developing and applying a global understanding of migration, applying a variety of methodological tools and developing multifaceted theories.

All these theoretical developments also suggest that one should think of international migration as a system rather than as a series of events. The migration process should be envisioned as a whole regardless of the causes and characteristics of specific flow, whether it is spontaneous or temporary, legally sanctioned or irregular (Papademetriou, 1998). This approach allows for movement beyond the traditional categories of sending and receiving countries, push and pull factors, and gives a basis for studying the migration process in its complexity.

To summarize, despite all the critiques against the drawbacks and narrowness of the existing theories, there is no recent theoretical solution, which could possibly achieve the desired global understanding and prediction of migration. The unanimous consensus that the decision for migration is a result of a combination of economic, social, political, cultural and/or environmental reasons and that, therefore, ideal categories applied for classification of immigrants are increasingly unable to accommodate this complex mix of motives, does not yield a practical solution for finding a way out of the complexity of migratory phenomena. It could be that the multifold nature of migration will never allow for the development of a structured, uniform theory offering a comprehensive explanation of past and contemporary migrations in their innumerable variety. Probably this is also one of the reasons why the predominant body of research on immigration does not rest upon any of the discussed theories. The already presented main lines of research on immigration clearly indicate a tendency towards tackling one aspect of immigration mainly from the

perspective of a specific disciplinary approach, which is often not related to immigration studies at all.

After this concise presentation of existing migration theories, we need to consider how all this theoretical knowledge relates to migration in general and to current research on Eastern European migrations to Brussels. Without repeating again the multiple factors provoking migration, the reader's attention should be drawn to the fact that whatever the reasons for initiating a migratory step are, the process of migration continuation and especially the settlement of undocumented immigrants is highly regularized in terms of immigration control on the territory of the EU and cannot be explained solely in terms of push and pull factors or by means of adopting the explanatory tools developed by traditional theories of international migration, such as neoclassical economics, the new economics of migration, segmented labor market theory, historical structural theory or world systems theory, which all fail to adequately explain the complexity of contemporary migration. Even though these theories successfully account for some aspects of the initiation of certain migratory flows, they fail to offer a reliable explanation of why migration takes place even after the goals set by the migrant are achieved. To continue with the same line of reasoning about the limitations of "old" migration theories, one could mention several questions exemplifying the necessity of new approaches for interpreting current migratory phenomena, especially in Europe. The following questions are just a small illustration of the issue at present: What are the reasons behind the perpetual migratory flows from countries where the wage average is not much lower than that in the receiving country? Why there are significant numbers of immigrants originating from countries with stable political and economic conditions? Why are immigrants settling in countries with clearly anti-immigrants policies, countries where the conditions for accepting immigrants are reduced to a minimum and where no official programs for recruitment of foreign workers exist? Why are migration networks failing to develop and, even when they do, not offering the theoretically expected support for their newcomers?

The wide variety of migration forms cannot be explained by a single theoretical perspective and theories of international migration aimed at offering a comprehensive

explanation of the reasons for and the perpetuation of migration should be flexible enough to incorporate also the historical, economic and political developments in countries of origin and destination in order to account in a reliable way for migratory movements at any particular time and geographical place. Obviously, the theories developed to explain immigration in the middle of the 20th century, when the conditions for immigration were significantly different from nowadays, can no longer serve as a reliable tool for understanding contemporary migration. These theories can serve to elucidate a particular fragment of current migratory movements, but as large scale migrations today are not reducible only to economic and income imbalance between countries of origin and destination, new theoretical insights should also be adopted if one wants to achieve a full understanding of the present state of migration and especially when provisions for legal migration are reduced to a minimum in the European context.

These limitations of older migration theories also apply to a large degree to our research goal of exploring the modes of living and working of undocumented Polish and Bulgarian immigrants in Brussels. As already mentioned, we will not attempt to underestimate the practical value of these theories in explaining certain elements of the East-West migratory flows and, more precisely, migratory movements from Poland and Bulgaria to Belgium. For example, as has been discussed in different theoretical and practical studies, the majority of contemporary migrations from Central and Eastern Europe to Western Europe (aside from the flows of refugees, asylum seekers and displaced people during the wartimes in former Yugoslavia) are exclusively of an economic nature (Frejka *et al*., 1998; Leman, 1997; Leman *et al*., 1994; Okólski, 2000a) and can be, to some degree, explained in the framework of neoclassical economics and new economics of migration theory. Since the fall of totalitarian regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, the migratory movements of the Eastern Europeans can indisputably be explained both in terms of personal motivations for achieving better standard of living and of family or household strategy for maximizing their expected income and minimizing the risks of market failures, so typical for the economies of Central and Eastern Europe during the years of transition to the free market and democracy. The pull factors in countries of destination include clearly

higher wages, better standards of living, the possibility of finding jobs in either the regular or black market, the need for cheap labor in advanced economies, to mention just a few, undoubtedly shape the migratory decisions of the Eastern Europeans. However, adopting the explanatory scope of the "old" theories of migration does not offer a comprehensive account of the current state of East-West migration. This is especially the case when we take into account the fact that nowadays there are, in practice, only limited ways of migrating to Europe in a legally permitted way. The explanatory power of "old" migration theories is to a large degree bounded to the political and economic reality of the industrial era. Nowadays, existing restrictive policies on immigration in all European states create limits on entry and allow just a few possibilities for legal settlement. For example, in Belgium, these are limited to recognized refugees, people entering under the provisions of family reunification policies, qualified professionals who have been working more than a certain number of years, usually five to eight, with a temporary work permit and have obtained a unlimited work permit, and for self-employed migrants after five years of uninterrupted and successful business in the country. This present situation produces flows of immigrants entering the receiving countries mainly as undocumented immigrants, false asylum seekers, students, trainees, and "temporary workers" (Massey *et al*., 1998). Migrations from Eastern to Western Europe do not fall out of this pattern either. Taking out the limited numbers of legal immigrants from Eastern and Central Europe who succeeded in achieving legal residence in EU countries mainly under the provisions of permanent settlement after a given number of years of legal work and residence in the EU (primarily comprising of highly qualified professionals) or as a result of marriage with an EU national, the remaining substantial majority of Eastern Europeans in the EU are either residing temporarily or are involved in undocumented work. As nationals of most Central and Eastern European countries are no longer subject to visa requirements for entering the EU, the predominant pattern of migratory movements is one of entering as a tourist, overstaying the allowed period of three months and working without documents. East-West movements are further characterized by high circularity, meaning that immigrants enter the receiving countries for a given time in order to exercise economic activities, return back to their

countries of origin once a desired income is achieved, and then re-enter the destination country when a new income increase is needed (Leman, 1997). In many cases, however, Eastern European immigrants remain as undocumented immigrants longer than the initially planned period and, in some cases, they bring over spouses and children, who are often involved in irregular work as well. Even though the European Union now includes ten new member states, citizens from the new member countries will not have equal rights for settlement and work in the "old" member states for at least three to seven years after accession[5], so one cannot expect any significant change in the current migratory patterns from Central and Eastern to Western Europe. In this context, some of the most intriguing questions include: how do these immigrants succeed in securing employment in receiving countries, how do they gain access to living facilities and how do they manage to survive in illegality? Here it should be stressed that undocumented economic immigrants from Eastern Europe differ considerably from rejected asylum seeker who remain undocumented in the receiving country after their application for asylum has been turned down. While the latter claimed residence in Western Europe as a response to war or armed conflicts, unstable political regimes or situations involving the violation of basic human rights in their countries of origin[6], undocumented Eastern European immigrants in Western Europe undertake international migration from purely economic motives. The choice of living and working illegally (or residing legally but working illegally) is a conscious one and, in most cases, these people do not even perceive themselves as immigrants as they do not plan to settle in the receiving country for the long term (Leman *et al*., 1994).

To conclude, the unique pattern of migration of EEI requires specific theoretical foundations, which must be adopted in order to answer crucial questions of what stimulates

[5] Following EU enlargement in May 2004, only citizens of Cyprus and Malta are permitted to work without restrictions in all the original EU member countries and only Ireland intends to accept workers from all new member states.

[6] Even though many asylum seekers are perceived to only be economic migrants abusing the asylum system, we will not enter into a discussion here of the distinction between genuine and false asylum seekers.

migration from Eastern Europe and how these undocumented EEI succeed in making a life under the precarious conditions related to their non-regularized status. As has already been mentioned at the beginning of the current section, in order to do this, we would adopt two theoretical approaches: social capital theory and the theory of cumulative causation, which offers us the tools for understanding this phenomenon. The choice of these two approaches is based on the fact that they were both developed in particular to account for the perpetuation of migratory movements, disconnecting them from traditional concepts such as wage differentials and "push and pull" factors. Given that social capital theory, like migration network theory, accepts the basic postulate that networks do indeed promote migration, it will be necessary to test whether migrant networks are really the most powerful and valid explanation for international migrations. If the answer to this question is "no", then the validity of social capital theory will need to be reconsidered.

4. 1. 1. The Social Capital Theory

Social capital theory can be viewed as an extended version of migration network theory and is therefore vulnerable to the same critiques that were raised with respect to migration network theory. There are two reasons why this theory was selected for the current research and they will be clarified in the following pages. To begin, however, the two key arguments will be introduced here. Firstly, the theory builds upon a second assumption as to what makes migration possible aside from migrant networks and that is the development of migrant-supporting institutions. Secondly, the wide popularity of the theory and the perception that migrant networks are the ultimate explanation for international migration have become so popular that a critical assessment as to what degree migrant networks and migrant supporting institutions are really the key to understanding migration in all its forms is required as a mechanism for addressing the theory's validity in a global context. Indeed, this is the first theory that recognizes the fact that migration incentives can be quite different, but that their nature *per se* cannot explain why migration persists over time. Nevertheless, the question of whether the theory's hypothesis that migrant networks and social capital are the ultimate and only explanation of all migrations

and especially that of the East-West migrations remains unanswered. We will attempt to contribute to this debate through the following discussion.

The primary postulate of social capital theory defines migration as a possible and ever expanding phenomenon because of the availability of migrant networks that develop over time and make migration possible to achieve at lower costs and risks. Once migration has begun, migrant networks in a destination country expand and this in turn usually leads to the formation of numerous formal and informal immigrant-supporting institutions, which offer additional support to newcomers and already settled immigrants. Thus, both immigrant networks and immigrants organizations are viewed as a form of social capital, which as described by Bourdieu and Wacquant is "the sum of resources, actual or virtual, that acquire to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (in Massey *et al*., 1998, pp. 42). The importance of migrant networks, defined by Massey *et al*. (1998: 42) as a "set of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through ties of kinship, friendship, and shared community of origin", can also be defined as a form of social capital, which can be accessed by immigrants to gain information about migration opportunities, housing and working possibilities, and practical support in the initial stage of immigration (the latter usually extends to after the immigrant has settled and found employment). In the same line of reasoning, Massey predicts that each act of migration creates social capital among the people to whom the migrant is related, thereby raising the odds of their migration (Massey *et al*., 1994). This is so due to the fact that the potential costs and risk for the future migrants are significantly lowered by existing friendship and kinship ties with the factual immigrant, ties that according to unwritten social rules, oblige the successful immigrant to provide assistance with employment and housing to future newcomers.

To recapitulate, social capital theory, which views migration as both an individual and/or household decision, assumes that migratory movements systematically influence and alter the context within which future migration decisions are made by taking into account the fact that each incidence of migration leads to the creation of a migrant network or the

expansion of an already existing one, thus increasing the probability that prospective migrants will decide to undertake migration with the development of migrant networks in the destination country. A further outcome of this assumption is that the availability of migrant networks in turn becomes a more important factor in shaping international migration than the mere difference of wages and employment possibilities between countries of origin and destination. This is because, over time, the reduced cost and risks of movement and the envisaged success offered by migrants support networks start to overshadow the relevance of purely economic factors (Massey *et al*., 1998).

Furthermore, social capital theory argues that the development of migrant networks also leads to the creation of formal and informal institutionalized systems for supporting immigrants, which begin to act as migration propellers independent of the factors that might have originally caused the movement of the first migration pioneers. These migrant-supporting institutions could be private institutions or voluntary organizations that have come into existence due to a growing imbalance between the number of people who wish to migrate and the limited possibilities for legal long-term or short-term migration. Migrant-supporting institutions can act as intermediaries for placing migrants in seasonal work, assisting them in obtaining entry visas, or guiding those who are intending to immigrate permanently to countries that still have migrants recruitment schemas such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. Other organizations are active in promoting the right to migration or lobbying for the rights of undocumented migrants to housing, work, and social security. Humanitarian groups and NGOs assist migrants with counseling on how to regularize their status, by providing social services, shelter, food, and medical assistance and offering free legal representation in numerous cases ranging from protection from deportation to nationality acquisitions. This institutional support is a specific form of social capital that can be relied upon by immigrants to get access to foreign labor markets or to minimize the risks of migration.

Another specific outcome of the imbalance between the number of prospective migrants and the lack of regular migration channels is the development of illegal networks, exploiting the situation resulting from the zero-migration policies of industrialized

countries and thriving on the realization of large trafficking and smuggling operations. Even though the nature of such operations is criminal and prosecuted by the states, at the end of the day, from the migrant's perspective, they are still the only option for migration.

The conclusion to be drawn from the theory's postulates is that migration is a self-sustaining process once support networks and migration institutions are established. A major implication from this is that migration becomes difficult, if not impossible to control at the governmental level, as the creation of informal migrant networks obviously takes place beyond the reach of any policy measures designed to control or combat unwanted migratory flows.

4. 1. 2. The Cumulative Causation Theory

Cumulative causation theory (Myrdal, 1957; Massey *et al.,* 1987; Massey, 1990b) is the second theory, which can also be examined as a perspective, offering a partial explanation of the research questions posed by our study on Eastern European immigrants in Brussels. Adopting a second theoretical approach in our research reflects the fact that while social capital theory offers an insightful interpretation of the continuation of migratory flows, it still fails to explain under what conditions social capital acts as a propeller for migration. In other words, social capital theory does not provide a tool for determining in what contexts a potential immigrant's access to networks or organizations will in fact result in initiating migration. We cannot take for granted that migration networks will develop in the first place or develop fast enough to act as a trigger for further migrations. In Chapter 2, we pointed to the fact that migration was forbidden during the period when Eastern Europe was governed by totalitarian regimes and the families of migrants were prosecuted. The two implications from this fact are that migration levels were kept low and, indeed, did not allow for the establishment of strong communities of co-nationals abroad. Moreover, communication and contact between successful migrants and their family at home was reduced to a minimum. It is not an exaggeration to say that the first contact between separated families was possible only from the mid-1980s onwards. Thus, is it reasonable to expect that after years of interrupted relationships, networks would

suddenly develop in a such a way as to strengthen and promote new migration and then become so powerful as to perpetuate migration in the way stipulated by social capital theory? In the case of Polish migrations, we can hypothesize that indeed some strong networks did develop since in the past, Poles were recruited as foreign workers by Belgium. The liberalization of Poland, which began in the early 1980s was much earlier than in other CEE countries and therefore allowed for the earlier establishment of migration traditions.

The case of Bulgaria, however, was different. Restrictions on migration were strong until the late 1980s; emigration from the country was never significant except for ethnic migrations and in there is no literature account of any strong Bulgarian community in any destination country. This reality raises at least two questions: Were the migrations so insignificant in number that the establishment of a community and a network supporting migration could not develop? Is it possible that Bulgarians abroad do not form migrant communities even when their presence in a host country is significant? This second question is indeed especially relevant in the case of Bulgarian migrations to Belgium as this is the country where the majority of asylum seekers fled after 1990, and where Bulgarians are among the numerically most significant migrant groups from Eastern Europe.

The decision to borrow explanatory tools from cumulative causation theory is based on the main postulate of the theory, which broadens the basis for explaining the process of migration continuation. This theory suggests that international migration perpetuates over time regardless of the conditions that initially caused it due to the following factors, all of which affect migration in a cumulative way: the expansion of migrant networks, distribution of income, distribution of land, organization of agriculture, culture of migration, regional distribution of human capital, and social meaning of work (Massey *et al*., 1987; Massey *et al*., 1998).

As described in the previous section, the expansion of migrant networks limits the costs and risks of migration, thus making more people migrate. This people, in turn, become involved in the network support structure. Since each act of migration creates the social structure that is needed to sustain it, over time broader segments of the sending community become prone to undertake migratory steps.

Distribution of income in the sending society is considered another major trigger for migration, sometimes surpassing by importance other factors for migration such as the desire for improving one's personal or household income. The mechanism for this lies in the fact that residents of sending communities are aware of the financial success of migrant households and they then become motivated to improve not only their absolute income, but also their income relative to other households in the reference group. Hence, the increased sense of relative deprivation becomes positively related to the motivation for migration.

Distribution of land and organization of agriculture are additional factors encouraging further migration from sending regions by making larger proportions of the local agricultural labor force redundant and, therefore, increasing the pressure for migration[7]. This is because international migrants are more likely to purchase land upon return, while at the same time, they are also more likely to abandon it, since working in immigration tends to offer better returns than local agricultural activities, which naturally lowers the need for local labor force. Meanwhile, if immigrants remain in their countries upon return, they are more prone to employ capital-intensive methods, which also diminish the need of local labor.

Over time, perpetual movement from one region of residence leads to a change in the local values and perceptions, including seeing international migration as a self-understandable way of improving one's living standard[8]. The experiences of successful

[7] The influence of these two factors was discussed in the case of post-1989 Polish migrations presented in the research of T. Frejka, M. Okólski & K. Sword (Eds.) "In-depth Studies on Migration in Central and Eastern Europe: The Case of Poland". *United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, Economic Studies, No. 11*. United Nations: New York and Geneva.

[8] As a review of local press releases in Bulgaria for the last 5-6 years reveals that the main aspiration of most young people who witness the emigration of relatives, friends and classmates, is to successfully complete their education and emigrate abroad as soon as possible. Data from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) from 1997 suggest that this tendency is also discernible in cases where parents stimulate their children to emigrate abroad. The 1997 survey results from the IOM study "Profiles and Motives of Potential Migrants from Bulgaria" reveal that at the time of the research 74% of the parents would clearly support their children to undertake international migration (IOM, 1997).

migrants, on the other hand, also change their tastes and increase their motivation for maintaining a higher quality of life, which in most cases is to be achieved only by further migration. In other words, once someone has migrated, the odds for that individual to undertake additional trips rises and this is positively related to the number of trips already taken (Massey, 1986). The validity of this assumption should however be questioned, especially in the case of contemporary East-West migrations when the educational status of the migrating population has been recorded as decreasing (See Chapter 4 on Poland).

One of the final assumptions of cumulative causation theory is that immigration is a selective process in the sense that it is predominantly well-educated, skilled and highly motivated people who undertake migration. This assumption is labeled "distribution of human capital" as it refers to the fact that, with increased migration outflows, sending areas are depleted of human capital, which subsequently lowers their productive power and produces stagnation which the stimulates further migration from an affected area (Myrdal, 1957).

Finally, the concept of "social meaning of work" refers to the well-documented tendency of labeling certain jobs as "immigrant jobs" in many receiving societies. Immigration changes the social meaning of work and many "immigrant jobs" such as those in heavy industry, construction, car manufacturing, the cleaning and catering sectors, to mention just a few, are difficult if not impossible to filled with native workers, despite high unemployment rates in many developed countries at present. The traditional recruitment of foreign workers and the present predominance of undocumented migrants in these sectors has resulted in changes in the perceptions of native populations, who naturally view themselves as having a higher social standing than migrants workers, which does not allow them to be employed in the "immigrants' sectors" for reasons of social prestige.

4. 1. 3. Social capital theory and cumulative causation theory in practice

The assumptions and implications of social capital theory and cumulative causation theory have been systematically tested in numerous research settings drawing on various datasets and methodologies. In the following pages, we will present an overview of the most exemplifying studies conducted in United States and Europe, which testify to the explanatory powers of these theories.

Some of the clearest examples of the implications of these theories include studies examining migratory movements from Mexico and Central America to the United States. Various research suggests that the likelihood of immigration increases if a person has a relative with migration experience. It is only the migratory experience and the availability of social ties that serve as final predictors of future migration, meaning that over time the availability of migrant network in the destination country plays a more important role in shaping migration decisions than economic conditions in the country of origin. In fact, social ties with people who have had a previous migration experience turn out to be the most important factor predicting if a person will decide to emigrate or not (Massey, 1987a; Massey & Espinosa, 1997; Chavez, 1990).

The existence of migrant networks is also shown to affect migrant pattern of commuting in the sense that migrants with access to these networks are more prone to undertake shorter and more frequent trips, relying on their relations with other immigrants to find jobs and accommodation during each consecutive trip. On the contrary, immigrants who lack this resource tend to stay longer in the destination country fearing that upon return it will be difficult to initiate new migration (Kossoudji, 1992).

European studies examining the importance of migrant networks as one of the crucial factors allowing migration to perpetuate across time and space, provide further evidence that the principle factor making migration to the EU countries possible is the availability of established migrant communities in the countries of destination, and this is especially true in the case of undocumented immigrants. For example, research conducted in The Netherlands illustrates that new undocumented immigrants arriving in the country depend for their survival, in terms of finding a job and accommodation, escaping from

police control and coping with stressful events such as illness or unemployment, solely on already established migrant communities (Burgers, 1998; Starring, 2001; Leun, 2001). It is not overstated to say that the fate of undocumented immigrants in Europe is in fact related to their access to these networks. Research on the main groups of undocumented immigrants in Rotterdam (Turkish, Moroccan, Cape Verdean, and Eastern European) reveals that the migration of undocumented workers nowadays cannot be connected to purely economic factors, but is a result of the knowledge that a migrant network is available to offer in terms of support to the new arrival (Burgers, 1998).

The importance of migrant networks as a crucial factor in triggering prospective migrants, the linkage between sending and receiving communities, and the facilitating role that migrant communities play upon arrival, adaptation and integration of immigrants, has also been examined and justified in studies from Germany (examining patterns of Turkish migrations) (Wilpert, 1992), Belgium (questioning the migratory movements of immigrants from Morocco, Latin America, Poland, and the Philippines) (Cammaert, 1986; Leman *et al*., 1994; Leman, 1997), Great Britain (in the case of Irish-Britain migrations), Finland and Sweden (Pohjola, 1991), to mention just a few. These are just some of the examples that stress the explanatory power of the assumptions developed by social capital theory. For a detailed analysis of other research results and a comprehensive summary of the main lines of scientific interest, please refer to the comprehensive work of Massey and his coauthors entitled "Worlds in Motion" (Massey *et al*., 1998).

To recall, cumulative causation theory postulates that migration tends "…to perpetuate itself over time and space, regardless of the conditions that originally caused it…due to the fact that each act of migration alters the motivations and the perceptions [of the immigrant] in ways that encourage additional migration" (Massey *et al*.,1998: 100). The assumptions of cumulative causation theory are to a certain extent related to those of social capital theory in that one of the reasons for migration perpetuation is attributed to access to migrant networks. Further, the theory stipulates that proneness to migration and the probability of taking repeated migratory moves are strongly related to previous experiences

of migration and to the changes in personal values and tastes that occur after immigration (even though this last assumption appears to be rather understudied in empirical research).

The assumptions of cumulative causation theory have been tested in various studies and, by far and large, have been proved to hold in different geographical locations. For example, the relation between prior migrant experience and probability of future migration is clearly shown in studies examining the pattern of migrations from the Philippines and Mexico to the United States (DeJong *et al*., 1983; Stark & Taylor, 1991; Root & DeJong, 1991). Maybe one of the most important implications of this theory is that proclivities for cumulative causation at the individual level lead to changes at the social structural level that is exemplified by the creation of migrant communities in the destination country, which over time transform into ethnic enclaves, a factor that acts as an additional stimulus for future migrations (Massey *et al*., 1998).

Income distribution, another factor causing migration cumulatively, has also been empirically shown to act as a migration trigger. Research in Mexico, examining the proclivity for migration to the United States illustrates that once migrant remittances are brought to Mexico, income inequality in the community of the emigrants increases, which creates a perception of increased relative deprivation, which in its turn leads to more emigration (Massey *et al*., 1998).

The assumptions of cumulative causation theory, referring to land distribution and land ownership and organization of farm production, as factors producing perpetual migration movements, are still not equivocally proven to hold as explanatory principles of emigration movements. For example, not a single study has been conducted to show the relationship between land inequality and an increased tendency for migration.

As the concept of "culture of migration" is concerned, contemporary research, even if it were not specifically designed to test the specific assumptions of cumulative causation theory, indicates that the experiences of immigration reshape migrants' motivations for maintaining higher standard of living in comparison with their co-nationals and fosters the feeling that working abroad is one of the most significant criteria for one's personal success, which naturally stimulates people to continue working in immigration. On the other hand, if

one examines the perception that non-migrants have about their emigrating co-nationals, one can observe that emigrants are by far and large admired and envied for their better purchasing power, for their improved standard of living and increased consumption levels. Continuous exposure to migrants' success makes people in the local community of origin, and especially the young ones, see emigration as one of the major ways for improving their living standard as well (Leman *et al*., 1994; IOM, 1997; Frejka *et al*., 1998; Massey *et al*., 1998).

Concluding the presentation of the theoretical approaches that will be adopted in the current research we will translate these theoretical assumptions into more precise research questions, which will be applied to the situation of undocumented Polish and Bulgarian immigrants in Brussels. We will begin by exploring the issue of the existence of developed migrant networks of undocumented EEI in Brussels. Having detailed information about the structure of these networks we will proceed by investigating to what degree they are relevant for initiating further migrant movements on the one hand and for facilitating immigrants in their living and working activities in Brussels, on the other. Consequently, we will broaden our research scope by posing the question of whether one can speak about the initial creation of Polish and Bulgarian enclaves in Brussels. Some other questions that we will attempt to answer include: Are undocumented EEI in Brussels capable of making their living without relying on migrant networks? Are the immigrants' plans for return migration or for remaining in illegality related to their migratory experience and, more precisely, to the belonging to a migrant community in Brussels? Could network existence/non-existence be adopted as a basic parameter for predicting future migration flows from Eastern Europe to Brussels? To what degree do people continue living in immigration in order to support a level of consumption to which they have been accustomed? Are there new arrivals who took the decision to migrate as a response to a pattern provided by successful immigrants? This last question will be dealt with from the perspective of immigrants who are already settled in Brussels, as in our research there are no provisions for conducting field research in the sending countries. For this reason, the

expected results will be interpreted with caution, as they may be subject to bias as they were created by the personal opinion of respondents who will be interviewed in Brussels.

4. 2. Theoretical foundations for the third research stage

As indicated in the introduction of the present chapter, the main theoretical concern for addressing the questions raised in the third research stage of the present study will be the identification of a concept, which is capable of correctly describing the social and occupational position of undocumented migrants in Brussels. Since the undocumented status of the respondents and their respective exclusion from mainstream society could easily misguide us to denote the undocumented population as an "underclass", we will approach our research question by firstly resolving the terminological issue as to what degree the term "underclass" is the correct one to describe undocumented EEI in Brussels. After presenting widely circulating definitions of the term "underclass" and its particular connotations, it will be recommended that the term "marginalized group of people" be used, firstly, because it describes better the EEI and, secondly, because it is less stigmatizing. As it will be illustrated through the next paragraphs, the concept of underclass has been developed in the United States and is currently charged with strong negative behavioral and moral components, while originally it was designed to refer only to people of low economic status. This evolution of the use of "underclass" makes it highly inapplicable in the European context of undocumented migration, unless some structural changes in the content of the term are introduced. Since the latter is highly difficult to achieve and it is unrealistic to expect that a conceptual redefinition of a so deeply rooted term is possible, we propose the introduction of a new term instead of simply applying "underclass" and thus transferring all the negative connotations and meanings to a population, which is cardinally different from the populations described as "underclass" in the United States.

Here is the moment to emphasize that the purpose of this section is not to enter into a broad discussion of how correct the definitions of underclass are and to what degree the existence of the term "underclass" is justified at all. Our goal is to present impartially the

core of the definitions of underclass and from there to reason why the term should not be applied to undocumented EEI in Brussels.

A literature review on "underclass" reveals rather large variety of definitions, which nevertheless share one common element: extremely low socio-economic standing. For example, "underclass" was used to refer to women in the Jewish society of Latin Europe and to the "common folk" in Christian society during medieval times. A major characteristic of this underclass is that it does not have any power to dictate social and political norms in their society due to their marginal position in society, which is a direct outcome of their economic deprivation and it is also related to their social exclusion (Malkiel, 2002).

The most widespread present day understanding of underclass is however derived from studies or descriptions of the most poor and disadvantaged population of Americans, usually, but not exclusively, of Afro-American origin. Referring to those populations, underclass denotes people living on permanent welfare, those surviving in highly unstable low-wage employment situations, including jobs outside the formal labor market (Menahem, 2000).

Some authors build upon this definition and conclude that the creation of an underclass is the outcome of individual behaviors and is therefore composed of all those who suffer from both behavioral and income deficiencies and who operate out of the mainstream or commonly accepted values, including street criminals, drug addicts, school dropouts, welfare single mothers, chronically mentally ill, etc. (Auletta, 1982).

Kasarda (1989) describes as urban underclass immobilized and spatially isolated group of black residents in the inner cities, who are characterized by having low educational levels, if any, as coming from single-mother households, being highly involved in criminal activities and depending on welfare for extended periods of time. The living conditions of these people tend to become aggravated, despite public assistance programs and different measures taken by the government.

For other authors, the term underclass refers only to those who are unemployed (Reischauer, 1989). Still others do not offer a definition of underclass but indeed use the

term to describe certain groups of people. For Wacquant and Wilson (1989), this is the group of poor-Afro-Americans, who are economically and socially marginalized. For Sullivan (1989) this is the group of poor single mothers and especially teenage mothers.

Reviewing the literature on underclass, McLanahan and Garfinkel (1989) conclude that all definitions of underclass have two elements in common: a) persistent weak attachment to the labor force and b) social isolation from the rest of society in terms of lack of connection to mainstream social institutions and their values. Social isolation is advanced as the major factor for creating and maintaining an underclass status, since permanent concentration in impoverished city quarters reduces knowledge of professional opportunities, diminishes the influence of the community as a form of social capital and subsequently any forms of support or information networks tend to disappear, which in turn leads to a persistently weak attachment to the labor force. Underclass status is also highly related to cultural isolation, understood as deviation from social normative standards, absence of work ethic, and devaluation of family commitments. Despite the fact that three elements are introduced as constituents of "underclass", the authors nevertheless summarize the concept of underclass as synonymous with being at the bottom of income distribution.

The understanding of "underclass" would not be complete without looking at the reasons for its creation and existence. External structural factors such as labor market division and structural changes in the inner cities resulting from industrial restructuring are one set of causes that provoke the establishment of an underclass (Wacquant & Wilson, 1989; Menahem, 2000). Urban restructuring processes in the big cities result in polarization of the employment market in terms of increasing the demand for both high-level and low-level jobs, while at the same time, reducing the demand for personnel with mid-level qualifications. This process reduces employment possibilities for a large group of people who no longer meet the requirements to enter high-level jobs and, at the same time, are reluctant to work in the lowest-level jobs. Urban development has also reduced the number of channels for entering into unionized and structurally secure working sectors (Menahem, 2000). The situation is additionally aggravated for those of distinct ethnic origins and who

usually face reduced employment opportunities and respectively reduced chances for upward social mobility.

According to Kasarda (1989), structural changes in industrial societies have created an underclass not by reducing middle-level positions, but by reducing lower-skilled jobs where the urban class usually finds employment, thus leaving big segments of society unemployed. The author presents evidence that the transformation to an underclass is a tendency affecting predominantly poorly educated Afro-Americans. Education is identified as the strongest factor determining if underclass members will be able to improve their socioeconomic situation in restructuring economies, where advanced education and skills are increasingly required. It is concluded that most Afro-Americans just do not have the educational qualifications, which would permit them to participate in the new urban economy.

Another structural factor reinforcing the status of "underclass" and not allowing for improvement of one's social and economic standing is the differential residential proximity to jobs. Urban restructuring has resulted in pushing lower-skilled jobs to the city periphery or out if the cities, while the underclass remains housed in the city center ghettos and has limited chances to get access to those jobs (Kasarda, 1989). This spatial concentration of impoverished people creates a closed opportunity structure, which is another obstacle for moving out of the underclass stratum since one of the possibilities for improving one's situation is through relying on social capital for securing a job, but ghetto members are shown to have weak social connections and kinship ties (Wacquant & Wilson, 1989).

Structural factors are however not the only explanation for why the underclass come to a stable existence. Some authors view the roots of the phenomenon to be based exclusively on personality and individual behavior and speak in this sense about a culture of the underclass (Auletta, 1982; Murray, 1999). The underclass according to this perspective, which is indeed sustained by proponents of political right wing views and ideologies, is not marked by extreme poverty but by criminality, deviant behaviors, social disorganization, and illegitimacy or out of wedlock child bearing. Single motherhood is easily stamped as correlated to one's intellectual, emotional, and financial deficits and from

this presumption, the argument that children raised by single mothers are the next generation of underclass is advanced as self-understandable. A further factor nourishing underclass development is welfare support for single parents, support that is viewed as creating a dependency culture and preventing people from seeking paid employment.

From these various definitions of underclass and factors for its creation, it can be concluded that the underclass exists if the following elements are present:

a) Deteriorated financial situation: Underclass members live on permanent welfare; or have permanently low income. The economic situation is such that the person lives below the poverty level and cannot foresee or achieve any economic advancement.

b) Lower occupational status: Underclass members are employed in highly unstable, low skilled and low-wage jobs. The employment is often outside of the formal labor market usually involving some form of criminal activity. Periods of employment are as a rule followed by long-term unemployment.

c) Lower social status: The underclass members live in social isolation, alienation and in the margins of society. They have low education, they are not acculturated, they are socially excluded, and have no access to mainstream institutions.

d) Bad housing conditions: The underclass members occupy run-down housing, which is small and provides shelter for many people; and is located in dilapidated and dangerous city districts. The underclass lives in ghettos and has no resources to move to a better neighborhood with a better social environment.

This concise presentation of the dominant understandings of "underclass" and the reasons for its existence was introduced in order to reason if it is justified to view undocumented EEI in Brussels as members of the "underclass". As noted at the beginning of the current section, the typical American concept of "underclass" cannot be transplanted directly to refer to some members of the contemporary European migrant stock and the so presented definitions are by themselves a sufficient confirmation for this argument. At least three particular constituent elements of the definition of underclass support our thesis: dependency on social welfare, poverty, and long-term unemployment. Indeed, none of these three elements can be ascribed to the population of undocumented EEI in Brussels for

several reasons. Firstly, for the simple reason of having an undocumented status the migrants have no relationship with the state whatsoever and are not recipients of any financial state support. Secondly, undocumented Polish and the Bulgarian undocumented migrants are economic migrants, who have migrated and settled in Brussels, or are commuting between countries of origin and Belgium on a regular basis, because they have better employment opportunities and better income than at home (See Chapters 4, 5 and 6). The fact that the employment is illegal and the payment is lower than for natives is only an outcome of the Belgian and European migration *status quo* and in this sense does not have a role in transforming migrants into an underclass. On the contrary, it testifies to the migrants' ability to find jobs, to secure employment and to have a stable income, an endeavor impossible for the underclass as defined in the American context.

Because of their legal status in Belgium, the undocumented migrants are excluded from any form of institutional participation. In addition, for reasons of security, undocumented migrants tend to reduce their social contacts but here we would pose the question of whether social and institutional exclusion are sufficient criteria for defining a group of people as an underclass? Moreover, once migrants regularize their status the so described *de jure* provoked conditions for social and institutional exclusion cease to exist and migrants can join mainstream society.

Taking into account these considerations, we would argue that it is more justified to test the hypothesis that undocumented migrants are indeed a marginalized class of people but not an underclass.

The main elements considered as relevant for defining undocumented EEI as marginalized people, and for outlining our hypothesis, are as follows: a) their non-regulated occupational practices on the black market and the often related to this impossibility for achieving economic stability, which by no means implies life in poverty; b) their social isolation from the rest of the society in terms of lack of connection to the mainstream social institutions and related institutional, social, and political exclusion (Chile, 2002; Kronauer, 1996; McLanahan & Garfinkel, 1989; Tienda, 1989).

In the first place, the undocumented status of EEI by definition closes all channels for entering structurally secure and regulated working sectors and consequently diminishes possibilities for upward mobility to mid-level and high-level occupations even if the immigrants under study possessed the required qualifications, degrees and skills. This situation pushes undocumented immigrants to find sustenance in the gray economy and more precisely in the household maintenance and cleaning sectors, in construction and industry, and as blue collar workers in numerous factories and in restaurant and the catering sector in Brussels, where practices of exploitation, non-payment and putting the workers in dangerous working setting are not rare. Working in the gray economy is further related to unstable and low-paid job positions, which in turn do not offer a prospect for securing long-term employment that could guarantee persistent financial stability. The so sketched working practices of undocumented immigrants are by themselves a strong indicator of the possible marginalization of the group under study.

Working status, however, is not a single factor positioning undocumented EEI at the "borders" of society. As already specified, the legal status of immigrants and the job possibilities associated with it are often connected to different forms of exclusion and social isolation, factors which further aggravate the social status of EEI. One form of exclusion is the immigrants' lack of access to most of society's mainstream institutions such as financial institutions, medical care, welfare provisions, and sometimes access to education. Living in illegality naturally leads also to some form of social isolation, as immigrants are unable or reluctant to sustain close contacts with mainstream society for reasons of security and non-willingness to reveal their status in the country. The majority maintain contacts by far and large with co-nationals and moreover with co-nationals with the same legal status. A factor further contributing to social isolation is also related to the living conditions of the undocumented immigrants who are often to be found concentrated in the worst inner city areas usually occupying run-down and overcrowded housing.

Not in final place, it should be stressed that undocumented immigrants do not enjoy any form of political participation, which leaves them again at the margins of the society. Moreover, though claims for the protection of the rights of undocumented immigrants and

their recognition in the society may be raised by some NGO's and trade unions, and by regularization campaigns carried out by governments on an irregular basis, undocumented immigrants in fact have no other chance to have their position recognized in society.

To summarize briefly, the impossibility of undocumented immigrants to exercise all rights enjoyed by the majority of the population, their levels of exclusion and occupation practices will be assessed in a way that will guide us to conclusions as to what degree this population of EEI could be described as being marginalized and bounded to low social standing. This research will offer and answer the question of whether the situation of marginalization is different for Polish and Bulgarian undocumented immigrants, as a reflection of Poland's entry into the European Union. Here we will advance the hypothesis that accession to the EU will, in fact, have no or limited impact on the social status of undocumented immigrants and on their prospective for upward social mobility in the short term, especially in a situation in which no legal provisions for accepting Polish or Bulgarian nationals to the Belgian working market are envisaged. We base this hypothesis mainly on the observation that as a rule even documented immigrants in Brussels have almost no opportunities for upward spatial, cultural and social mobility (Martens & Verhoeven, 2005). Migrant groups in Brussels are shown to be concentrated in only a few municipalities and exercise professional activities in the lowest paid manual jobs. Martens and Verhoeven show further that even the higher educational level of some immigrants is rarely a guarantee to access to better jobs. Even if the so presented results are indicative for non-EU immigrants in Belgium, it can be expected that only the fact of being a Polish or Bulgarian national (i.e. a national of a new and a future member state), will in fact not change the social standing of undocumented immigrants unless there is at least a legal regulation allowing for legal work in Belgium.