Chapter 8

Research Methodology, Research Design, and Research Instruments

1. Introduction

The primary goal of this chapter is threefold. Firstly, we will discuss the decision behind our choice of methodology for the present study. Secondly, we will justify the selection of the ethnosurvey as a principal research method. Next, we will proceed to introduce the sampling framework for identifying and recruiting potential respondents. We will conclude the chapter by outlining the development of the primary research instrument: a semi-standardized questionnaire, which addresses the previously described research questions (See Chapter 7).

The process of defining a methodology for the present research is derived from two main considerations. In the first place, we must select a research methodology, which is capable of correctly describing and reflecting the various characteristics of contemporary Eastern European migrations, such as diverse patterns of migration, high circularity of the international movements, and long and short term economic migrations that are no longer part of official work force recruitment programs which respectively result in “irregular” occupational practices in the destination countries, easier access to the EU member states after abolishment of the visa regimes for the majority of the Eastern European countries, acceleration of migration based upon social ties available through expanding migrant networks etc. In second place, we will attempt to provide a broad explanation of the Polish and Bulgarian immigration to Brussels by overcoming the limitations of applying a single research method such as analyzing existing fragmentary data from the censuses, or adopting survey methodology. Before proceeding with elaboration and justification of the research method to be used employed in our study, it should be stressed that we consider

immigration to be a process and not an event. By this, we mean that immigration is a multi-step process beginning with the various subjective and objective factors, which surround the decision to migrate. Next, we must consider why migration to Belgium (versus another country) is chosen, then evaluate the potential for continuity of the immigrants' life and occupational history in the country, and how this further develops under the influence of anticipated changes to the personal immigrants' status because of Poland and Bulgaria's accession to the EU in 2004 and 2007, respectively. The complexity of the migratory process creates a numbers of measurement problems. This is validated by the fact that statistics on international migration are usually the weakest area of demographic measurement (Levine, 1985).

From the described nature of the process of international migrations, we can conclude that is not within the power of a single research methodology to provide an answer to our specific questions addressing the EEI's presence in Brussels. Therefore, our research will rely upon the application of both qualitative and quantitative approaches that allow us to achieve a maximum understanding of the problematic nature of EEI in Brussels, to guarantee a certain level of replicability of the obtained results, and to accumulate the first systematic information about those populations in Brussels. By combining the two methods, we hope to overcome some problems of bias and generalizability inherent in any single methodology, and make the widest use of the collected data. The alleged opposing nature of qualitative and quantitative methods does not prevent them from being constructively used together in a single research framework (King, Keohane & Verba, 1994). On the contrary, since the shortcomings of the one methodology become strengths of the other, a careful selection of diverse research methods will yield the most satisfactory results in our study. When exploring new fields of phenomena such as in our research, quantitative designs that use "representative" sampling strategies to make inferences about the whole population are practically impossible to conduct and survey studies that rely on closed questions are inherently limited to the obtained data and might yield little understanding of the phenomenon under study. Qualitative studies on the other hand, are

nongeneralizable but provide maximum theoretical understanding about a social process (Faugier & Sargeant, 1997).

The process of selecting a specific methodological foundation for the current study of the EEI in Brussels has been guided by numerous theoretical and practical considerations. A detailed justification of adopting the ethnosurvey method or more precisely, how it could be adapted to our particular research on EEI in Brussels will be presented in the fowling paragraphs. The reasoning behind this process would be complete only if some the major problems related to the definition and understanding of what is "international migration" and how it is measured are reported. The questions surrounding the process of defining and recording migration levels are inherently related and to a large degree, will influence the results of all subsequent research on immigration. The lack of uniform understanding as to who the international migrants are in the first place and how their arrival, presence, and departure could be captured gravely hinder any further attempts to describe the phenomenon of migration, to predict its happening, or to explain why certain forms of migration are taking place in one context and not in another. The complexity increases especially when the research is focused on understudied forms of migration or, as is our case, migration involving undocumented and professional migrants, which fall outside the scope of general migration statistics. To elucidate this point, we will start by explaining the wide variety of meanings used to define "international migration", both from an international perspective and in Belgium. Then, based on an explanation of the drawbacks of the major methods for recording migration, we will advance the argument that the research on hidden or invisible populations requires a specific methodological approach, combining both qualitative and quantities techniques if a maximum understanding of the studied phenomena is sought. The specific problems of defining the concept "undocumented migrant" have been presented in Chapter 6 and will not be discussed here.

2. Measuring international migration: definitions and methods

Migration is one of the most complex demographic phenomena, and to determine the population size and structure in an adequate and reliable way remains one of the most difficult tasks. Measuring migration levels is a complex process and in the ideal case, it is influenced by the state control over entry, allowed terms of stay and residence in the country, and departure of individuals. We use the phrase, "in the ideal case," because there are forms of migration such as undocumented migration, that could hardly be registered and because the perfect migration registration system, which is capable of recording all population movements, simply does not exist. The two primary factors impeding the coherent registration of migrants, and that allows for further research on both a national and intra-country level, could be defined as a lack of uniform definitions and a lack of uniform and reliable procedures for collecting information on international migration.

We will commence by presenting some of the major problems related to the definition of international migration. Beyond a doubt, the registered volume of migration depends not only on the mere movement of people, but also on the definitions adopted for measuring its base. These definitions predetermine which part of a large-scale movement will be captured and what is described by the registration system. To exemplify this issue it is enough to look at the wide variety of definitions of "migrant", as adopted by different countries. Despite the fact that there is a total lack of agreement among different countries on who should be considered as a migrant (long, or short-term), it is evident that the comparability of migration statistics is obstructed and that the actual stock and flow of international migrants cannot be estimated in any reliable way. This point has been already exemplified in Chapter 4, where the significant differences in the recorded migration from Poland have been reported. What poses a more acute problem is the seemingly easy question: Who are the subjects of any research on immigration? What criteria govern how a person is selected to be a research respondent? This might be a trivial question, but as it will be illustrated below, in some countries, such as Belgium the criteria for defining a person as an immigrant are loosely formulated (or the existing definitions are not respected), and allow for expanding or restricting the "migrant" population to include, in

certain circumstances, only the newcomers; in others, the children and the grandchildren of foreigners; and in still others, only members of certain nationalities or ethnic groups.

As is the case with the definition of “undocumented migrant”, a standard definition of “migrant” has been proposed by the United Nations, but was not adopted as such unanimously by the UN member states. Nevertheless, the UN definitions can offer a viable solution to the problems related to data incomparability, and to the lack of criteria for defining persons as immigrants in immigration research or policymaking. According to a definition from 1976, an immigrant is “a non-resident intending to stay in the country for more than a year” and an emigrant is a “resident intending to stay abroad for more than a year” (UN, 1980). This definition has proved to be incapable of reflecting the importance of time as a factor concerning population mobility and has been replaced by a definition in which a clear distinction between long, and short-term population mobility is made. According to the latter, “a long-term migrant should be defined as a person who moves to a country other than his or her usual residence for a period of at least a year” and a short-term migrant is someone for whom residence abroad lasts at least three months but less than a year (UN, 2002a). It is evident that according to this definition any person who regularly changes his residence across international borders for a given time, could be considered a “migrant”. Therefore, this would include not only the traditional economic migrants and their families, but also foreign students, researchers, personnel accompanying diplomatic missions, undocumented migrants, asylum seekers, and the like. In this sense, what is important is not the reasons why a person migrates, but the act of migration and taking up residence abroad (with or without being formally registered) for at least three months. Nevertheless, the definitions of what an immigrant is vary significantly in different European countries and at no single time, have the states made an attempt to adjust their definitions in order to make the measuring of international migration internationally comparable, or to allow for a standard basis upon which immigration research can be built. To give a few examples (Salt *et al.*, 1994): in Germany, the length of the stay is not taken into account when defining who is a migrant and the only criterion for distinguishing a person as a migrant is his or her declaration to establish or give up residence in Germany.

In Hungary and Poland, immigrants are considered to be only foreigners who have obtained a permanent residence. Thus, the largest stocks of migrants who are residing in the country temporarily, or who are unwilling to apply for a permanent residence are underreported. According to the regulations in Norway, an immigrant is someone who moves to Norway from abroad with the intention to stay more than six months, a purely psychological definition, since "intention" does not necessarily translate into action. In Portugal, the difference between short and long term migrant is not made either and no uniform definition of immigrant exists, since the only working definition refers to "legal foreign residents", or to those foreigners who have obtained a residence permit. In Sweden, a non-Nordic citizen is registered as an immigrant after obtaining a residence permit and declaring an intention to stay in Sweden for more than a year. This excludes people from the Nordic states from the category "immigrant". In Switzerland, an immigrant is a person who has obtained permission to stay in the country for at least one year or who has permission to settle prior to entering in the country. In Italy and Belgium, an immigrant is someone who intends to be a resident in the country for more than three months; in the Netherlands this period is six months and in the United Kingdom and Ireland, it is twelve months. Additional complications arise from the fact that the terms "resident" and "non-resident" are subject to a variety of interpretations with legal differing connotations. Thus, the comparability of migration statistics and identifying migrants is again hindered (Zlotnik, 1987).

So, in theory one could admit that definitions of who is considered an "immigrant" are existent even though they could be different across countries and could impede cross-cultural comparisons. In practice however, the definitions of "immigrant", as applied in both academic research and by the state institutions, are often quite vague and contextually varying even within the same country. In the very general case, migrants are equated to foreigners, a fact leading to numerous misunderstandings and problematic issues. For example, in some countries, e.g. the Netherlands, Belgium, and France, the children and the grandchildren of immigrants are considered foreigners and are defined as second and third generation immigrants even if they have never migrated in the strictest sense of the word. If

these people have acquired citizenship of their host country, the terminology is sometimes adapted. These individuals are defined as “nationals of foreign descent”.

Another substantial problem is related to the presence of foreign students, researchers, and qualified professionals in the destination countries. According to some unwritten rule, those persons are not counted as immigrants and are not a subject of the immigration research even though they reside abroad for periods of ten or more months and may eventually settle in the host country. In Belgium, these categories of people do not qualify for permanent settlement, nationality, or unlimited working rights since they are not viewed as immigrants even though they clearly fall under the definition of “migrant”. An exception to this general case is settlement and working rights are obtained as a result of a marriage with an EU national, or as a result of establishing a firm in Belgium under the provisions made available for citizens of the PECO countries (BS, 4 February 2000). Many students do, however, use the possibility of studying abroad as the only legal and available channel for migration. In this context, a rather understudied phenomenon is the “false student” or the migrant who registers at an academic institution only to obtain legal entry to a country where he or she can be economically active without first being granted working rights. Eventually some “false” obtain a students work permit, which gives them the right to work a certain number of hours. Thus, technically speaking they are documented. What remains unrecorded is the fact that “false students” often work more than double the numbers allowed (usually 20 per week). A more detailed overview of the strategies and the motivations of “false” students will be presented in Chapter 9. What we want to stress here is that the variety of people who are “migrants” according to international and even national definitions, are often not recognized as such. As a result, they are excluded from traditional migration research or from the provisions for immigrants available in each EU member state. It should be mentioned that it is exactly because of this selective understanding of who a migrant is, and the fact that after the official foreign work force recruitment has been terminated, the Western European countries do not define themselves as immigration countries. What is left are only a few channels for legal entry, according to which the “pure” immigrants would be defined as refugees, the non-EU spouses of an EU nationals or

a permanent resident in EU countries, the persons who have migrated under the provisions for establishing a firm, the migrants recruited for seasonal work under bilateral agreements, and the undocumented immigrants.

A further delicate issue, which must be addressed, is the widespread practice of leaving the term “immigrant” to the intuitive interpretation of the reader. Quite often in the EU context, what is described as a population of immigrants does not include the persons who have migrated from one member state to another and who have an EU nationality. Currently, the persons from other Western European countries are referred to as “foreigners” but not as immigrants even if they reside in the destination countries for extended periods of time. The members of diplomatic missions are excluded from this discussion even though in some cases they remain in the host country after termination of their mandate and thus, they become de facto immigrants.

Those who are considered immigrants are usually non-white, non-Christian, and non-Western European. This could be exemplified by the fact that during the years of recruitment of foreign work force in Europe, Spaniards, Portuguese, and Italians were perceived as immigrants by the receiving countries, but this ceased to be the case especially after these countries joined the European Union. However, the status of those who have migrated or who continue to migrate from the former Yugoslavia (one of the largest providers of working force in Europe) has never changed. Thus, former Yugoslavians are perceived as “immigrants”. The term “immigrant”, even though defined solely on the basis of actual or intended stay abroad for a certain period, is a connotation reserved only for particular groups of people. It would be speculative to say on what basis the term “immigrant” is applied, but a discussion could be opened by suggesting that “immigrants” in Western Europe are mainly those who are perceived as culturally distinct. So for example, a German IT specialist working in any Western European country is less likely to be described as immigrant than an East-Indian (or Asian, or African) IT specialist, even if the latter is a naturalized citizen of the host country or has been born there.

Exploring the previously presented issues in the context of our current research scene of Belgium reveals that the term “immigrant” without definition, is an established

practice rather than the exception. The initial meaning of “immigrant” was reserved to describe “guest workers and their families”. Until the mid-1980s, this included Italians, Spaniards, Moroccans, and Turks (Martens & Moulaert, 1985). Nowadays, the concept of “immigrant” is employed to refer exclusively to the country’s minorities of non-European origin, and an explicit notification about this usage of the word is absent in the majority of academic, journalistic and policy texts, therefore not reflecting the fact that the majority of the foreigners in Belgium, who are “immigrants” according to standard definitions, are from neighboring European countries. “Immigrant” in the Belgian literature is in most cases equal to Turkish or Moroccan. Therefore, if not otherwise specified, the reader should understand that the primary discussion related to migration in Belgium, i.e. the so- called “immigrants problem” refers principally to these two populations, and then to the populations from Congo and Rwanda, and more recently to the migrants from Eastern Europe. It is not necessary to develop a broad argument of why this practice is not justified, but a few crucial points cannot be overlooked. Firstly, attaching the term “immigrants” to only some nationalities is in contradiction with all of the established definitions of “immigrant”, as presented above. Secondly, if the existing definitions are taken into consideration, then the widely discussed “immigrants problem” should in theory, be expanded to include other foreigners in the country. Furthermore, the Moroccans, Turks, Congolese and Rwandans are neither the only nor the largest foreign populations in the country (See Appendix 2). If the definition of “immigrant” is used to describe Turkish and Moroccan peoples in the country, it further imposes a generalizable and expanding “problem” to all non-Western European immigrants in Belgium. It could be suggested that the use and misuse of the words such as immigrants, foreigners, and aliens is highly selective and is dependent upon the specific situation. In legal terms, all non-EU citizens residing in Belgium for more than three months are considered immigrants. In practice, however, the term “immigrant” is reserved only for certain people and because of this it often has a strong derogatory meaning attached to it. A practice, which is also highly inconsistent with the accepted definitions, is the widespread usage of the expression, “second, or third generation immigrants”. Even though on an intuitive level the meaning of

this expression can be perceived as obvious, it is devoid of meaning from a strictly terminological point of view: immigration is in the first place an act involving moving from one country to another. In the case of Belgium, immigration is considered to have taken place if a nonresident remains in the country for more than three months. Those who speak about second or third generation “immigrants” start from a presumption that these individuals are descended of parents who are not of Belgian ethnic origin. This is usually an undeniable fact, but the complication arises in cases when parents have Belgian nationality, which makes their child a Belgian national as well. The lack of a foundation for referring to those children as “immigrants” can be translated into the fact that it is the ethnic origin that determines the terminology use. The “second or third generation immigrants” are residents or even citizens of Belgium and the fact that their parents or grandparents are immigrants is to be reflected, then the term “Belgians of foreign descent” should be applied. That is, it is the most correct term, and although it is used, it is to a much lesser degree.

The purpose of the aforementioned argument is not only to raise the issue about the correct application of terminology, but also to show how the differential understanding of who an “immigrant” is has an enormous impact on who is recorded as an immigrant and who is recruited as a respondent, or included in the target group in our research on immigration.

The second factor impeding the measurement of international migration and cross-country comparisons is the absence of uniform and reliable procedures for collecting information on international migration. Scattered data on international migration are available in many forms such as population registers, registers of foreigners, numbers of residence permits issued, work permits, visas and exit clearances, arrival and departure records, as they are collected by border statistics systems, formal immigration procedures, recorded asylum applications, censuses, and in a few cases, by migration surveys. Unfortunately, all these methods are often inadequate for taking a true measurement, even if they manage to capture some of the occurring migration flows. The problems related to each method of data collection are numerous and will not be discussed in detail here. Instead, the most important drawbacks will be summarized.

One major problem to estimating the number of legal immigrants is the fact that the incidences of exiting a country are usually not recorded. The state's concern is primarily related to the number of individuals who enter it, and is not focused as much on who leaves the territory. However, the outcome of this practice is that the actual size of the immigrant population is never accurately estimated and tendencies in migration movements are even more difficult to trace. Some will object to this by saying that the system of issuing residence or work permits is designed to address these problems. Nevertheless, even the most elaborate system of registering immigrants cannot provide an exact figure of the immigrant population, if it is not related to statistics collected at the border, such as the number of entries and exits. If the foreign population is to be estimated by the number of residence permits issued, the statistics will misrepresent the people who have left the country before their residence permit has expired, or those who have overstayed the legally allowed period. There are people who are not motivated to obtain a residence permit, or who do not qualify for one and who circulate on a regular basis between to their home country, but remain unrecorded by any migration statistics. Considering the fact that this type of migration is exactly the predominant pattern of migration for people from Central and Eastern Europe clearly reveals that in fact one of the most massive migration flows is non-existent, according to the migration registration systems. Based on residence permit statistics, another misreported group of immigrants appears: this includes all those individuals who have left the country before the residence permit has expired. The situation of misreporting will not be so grave in the cases when migrants with a short-term residence permit leave the country, but it is substantial when longer-term permit holders emigrate.

Similar arguments could be raised against estimating the immigrant population based on the issued working permits. Firstly, only a few migrants can currently enter the EU as non-self employed economic migrants and holders of work permits are the exception more than the rule. Secondly, the date the work permit was issued does not necessarily coincide with the actual entrance of the immigrant into the country. And to conclude, in the case of Belgium, one huge segment of temporary work permit holders (or the so-called

working permit B[1]) are not considered immigrants at all, and traditionally are rejected when attempting to apply for a permanent work permit (e.g. working permit type A) or for Belgian nationality.

One might expect that border statistics could be used as a method to provide direct measurement of international migration flows but in practice, this method suffers from many drawbacks. Primarily, accurate border control numbers are achievable only at the main points of entry, such as airports or at strictly controlled road checkpoints, and only if the border control officers are willing to record the passenger flow. However, the process of migration registration at the borders is often selective depending on the citizenship of the passengers, and is subject to the whim of the border control officer to inspect each particular immigrant[2]. Secondly, the accurate documentation of international migration is

[1] Foreigners who are not citizens of the European Economic Area willing to work in Belgium must be a holder of a valid working permit. There are three different types of working permits depending on the type of the job and the years of previous working experience in Belgium: 1) Working permit C is granted for one year to and gives the right to 20 hours of work per week (the group of people mostly benefiting from this working permit are for example the foreign students); 2) Working permit B is only valid for employment by one employer and has a maximum validity of 12 months. The employee obtains the permit after the prospective employer is issued an employment authorization for the respective foreign worker; 3) Working permit A covers all kinds of salaried employment and has an indefinite validity. Only a limited number of applicants qualify for this type of permit (e.g. applicants having a work permit B and working in Belgium for more than four years, applicants residing legally in Belgium for an uninterrupted period of at least five years, etc.). If the foreign worker has a work permit A, the employer does not have to apply for an employment authorization. The numbers of issued working permits for the past 5 years indicate that the population benefiting from the least precarious working permits (e.g. A and B) is rather limited (the Working Permit B holders are: 5.191 in 2000, 5.421 in 2001, 6.268 in 2002, 5.402 in 2003, 5.269 in 2004 (Geets *et al.*,2006), and around 5.500 in 2005 (Hoge Raad voor de Werkgelegenheid, 2006). The Working permit A holders are 833 in 2000, 509 in 2001, 124 in 2003 and only 35 in 2004) and that the majority of the candidates to join the labor market are pushed towards the least secure provision for legal work in Belgium: Working permit C (the numbers of Working permits C is 9.779 in 2002 and 12.581 in 2003), (Geets *et al.*, 2006).

[2] In this context, we would like to give only one example, which however summarizes the most straightforward way for transforming regular passengers into undocumented migrants or into foreigners

hindered by the fact that there is a delay in updating the border databases which define what type of control upon exit and entry is applicable to a passenger of a different nationality, or who has a different residence status abroad[3]. Thirdly, in the EU context, the internal border control is practically non-existent and at least in the Schengen countries leave the movement of many immigrants unregistered.

The insufficiencies of these methods for recording international migration are widely recognized. Moreover, in an attempt to diversify or rather, to secure more complete information about international migrants, the surveys on international migration are another method for studying the phenomenon of migrations. Due to their design and advanced particular goals, the surveys cannot be compared in the strictest sense of the word to the previously described migration recording and data collection methods since the latter is mainly designed to collect statistical information about the volume of migration stocks and the size of migration flows mainly for administrative purposes. Conversely, the surveys are usually designed to study one aspect of a migration flow and in an in-depth way. But

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who have overstayed the allowed period: two statuses, which are prosecuted by the states. A citizen of the United States legally residing in the United Kingdom has traveled to Belgium for three weeks to participate in a summer school and has obtained an entry stamp in her passport. Leaving Belgium to return to the United Kingdom, her passport has not been stamped in Belgium and in Great Britain, the passport is not stamped upon entry even after an explicit request from the passenger, since she has to travel several more times to Belgium in the future. The border officer refuses to stamp the passport with the argument that he is not obliged to do this for American citizens residing legally in the United Kingdom. Upon her next trip to Belgium some months later, the passenger's passport has not been stamped at any border but on leaving Belgium, she is accused of overstaying the allowed 90 days and has received a fine for all the days of "overstay".

[3] In two consecutive cases in 2004, the border control officers at two different international airports in Spain did not allow a legally residing in Belgium non-EU citizen from a country exempted from Schengen visa requirements to return to Belgium with the argument that the person needs a visa to enter Belgium, according to the database of the airport. The passenger is accused of residing illegally in Belgium, because the Belgian residence documents are not recognized by the border officers and the entry to Spain has been declared as "illegal" as well. The cases have been resolved after the intervention of a higher instance at the airport.

although the surveys cannot come up with the exact numbers of the size of the foreign populations in a given country, they are capable of offering an estimation of the immigrant populations and more importantly, the types of immigrants and the factors determining why certain migrations occur. In this sense, there are many advantages to using the surveys over using “ready-made” datasets, such as censuses or other border crossing statistics (Fawcett & Arnold, 1987). Some of the advantages inherent to the survey design are the flexibility of matching the research process to the research goals, and the possibility of designing a survey to test a specific theory, hypothesis, or to answer a specific research question. This is something that is virtually impossible to do by using already collected data. Additionally, surveys can also be designed to be longitudinal. In the case of a phenomenon such as migration, which is a process that occurs over time and not a single event, the longitudinal perspective could reveal many aspects of the migration process, such as probability for further movement, adaptation of immigrants, the subjective meanings of migration, etc., which normally cannot be traced by cross sectional studies. Surveys also facilitate the collection of data on different levels of aggregation. In the case of immigration, surveys also reveal the influence of the household and family networks and the degree to which they are involved in the initiation and implementation of a migratory step or phase. Migration is often not an individual project and it is commonly influenced by migratory movements of other family members. Insofar as migration involves two or more places, surveys allow for multi-side designs and thus, offer possibilities for analyzing the dynamics of a migration system, including the linkages between origins and destinations. Immigration, as a response to particular events such as change in the immigration policy, rapid labor market shifts, or political conflicts are crucial pieces of data that remain unrevealed in census data or border cross statistics. That is to say, migration waves triggered by such events are not captured by censuses, which are conducted in five or ten year intervals.

Another advantage to surveys is related to the quality of their content. They can be designed to reveal life history changes or to elaborate upon family and social networks that exist, which are often critical to understanding the migration process. Moreover, surveys

can document and analyze various micro-level linkages between places, including visiting patterns, correspondence, phone calls, and media connections. An important determinant of the immigration decision is the subjective perception about a place and the evaluation of the migratory destination. These perceptions about a place are formed by personal experiences, linkages with the place of destination, or contacts of family and friends. Surveys are also able to describe and analyze the relationship between the characteristics of places and typologies of motivation that can be further used to predict future immigration flows. Last but not least, surveys can be used to reveal the household economic status before and after migration, and the use of public services and facilities at the household level.

Although surveys are helpful tools, drawbacks to using them do exist. These include, the impossibility of generalizing the obtained results, because in many cases, the sample consists of immigrants identified as belonging to specific social organizations or church groups; this is not representative of the immigrants population as a whole. This issues is even more prominent in the case of studying undocumented immigrants.

Surveys also fail to encompass all circumstances under which people decide not to immigrate or when immigrants return to their home countries, or move to another destination. In research survey, it is also impossible to cover all topics relevant to the study question of particular interest.

Finally, the cost and intense labor required to conduct a large-scale survey should not be underestimated. The financial and labor resources needed to successfully execute and finalize a research survey are often beyond the budget and the human resource capital of the researchers.

To summarize, the existing data sources about immigration flows seldom are a perfect measure of the immigration process. They omit variables crucial to the immigration process; they do not adequately measure immigrants' traits, and fail to capture data about the return of migrants. These data sources underestimate the role immigrant networks play in the process, and their cross-sectional design precludes the analysis of migration as a dynamic developmental process (Massey, 1987b). Beyond this, national statistics do not provide complete detail about the information needed for precise understanding and

prediction of the immigration phenomenon. In the ideal case, international migration could be estimated most reliably if all types of data recording systems were used in a complementary way.

Compared to other EU countries, Belgium has one of the most coherent immigrant recording systems: all foreigners intending to stay more than three months are recorded in the population register. Despite the thoroughness of the Belgian recording system, all of the afore-mentioned arguments continue to apply.

3. The ethnosurvey method

Considering the complexity of the issues described, it is of primary importance to exercise caution when choosing a research methodology to accurately capture research on professional and undocumented Polish and Bulgarian immigrants in Brussels. We have to select a tool that can achieve a number of outcomes. It must be able to adequately define and identify respondents, and estimate the proportion of Polish and Bulgarians living Brussels relative to the city's entire population. Furthermore, it must be able to explain immigrant migration patterns and to allow researchers to draw conclusions about the group's future migratory plans.

In attempt to circumvent some of the shortcomings of the described methodological approaches, by using a research specific adaptation of the *ethnosurvey method*, a method developed especially to combine qualitative and quantitative techniques. Douglas Massey first advanced this method as a response to the weakness of U.S. federal immigration statistics in the to reliably reflect the immigration movements into the country and secondly as a tool for providing multifaceted information about the immigration process (Massey, 1987b). It is expected that by combining multiple data sources and supplementing them with a particular research method is the only way to achieve a broad understanding of the Polish and the Bulgarian immigrations to Brussels.

The originality of the ethnosurvey design stems from the way it combines a single study quantitative survey methods and qualitative investigation. The basic argument underlying the elaboration of the ethnosurvey is that no single method by itself could

wholly offer a coherent and detailed explanation of a social phenomenon. For example, survey methods yield generalizable and replicable results by generating reliable quantitative data for statistical analysis. However, they are unable to capture the multiple causes and the substantive richness of complex phenomena such as international migration. Qualitative studies, on the other hand, are able to capture the richness of life and can reflect the phenomena under study in their historical depth, but lack of quantification hinders the research replicability and makes subjective elements in the results interpretation more difficult to detect and control. The ethnosurvey attempts to overcome the weaknesses of the two methods by combining them into a single research design by elaborating on the following research techniques: multimethod data collection, representative multisite sampling, multilevel data compilation, life history collection, and parallel sampling (see further). Indeed, these basic concepts are not unique by themselves and are widely applied in a variety of social-science research. What is unique is the way all these methodological approaches are combined into a single study. This interactive multimethod design is believed to provide maximum understanding of the migration phenomenon by avoiding the pitfalls of using a single research methodology.

The first goal of an ethnosurvey is to gather detailed information about the immigrant society under study by collecting both quantitative and qualitative information. The quantitative data is collected through questionnaires or standardized structured interviews. These research methods are designed to provide standardized information about the demographic and economic characteristics of immigrants and provide a formal record of the history of immigration. In contrast, the richness of specific immigrant's experiences, the variety of motivations for emigrating and the detail and complexity of the entire process of migration can only be understood with the help of qualitative methods. This includes, recording the observations of immigrants, intensive interviewing, collecting life histories, through case studies and archival work. Qualitative methods of data collection are usually adopted in the beginning of the research, when the information about the particular research group is largely fragmentary. Based on the information provided by initial respondents

through observation, unstructured interviews, archival or literature reviews, the researcher could proceed with the design and development of quantitative research instruments.

The representative multisite sampling, or the careful selection multiple sites and the use of representative sampling within them, is considered to enhance the generalizability and the internal validity of the obtained results' strength of inference. For each kind of research being conducted, sites must be selected according to predetermined criteria that will allow for data comparison.

A third feature of the ethnosurvey is multilevel data compilation, developed to reflect the fact that immigration is usually the project of a household or a family, but also one that is often influenced by a larger community. Therefore, the complexity of the decision to engage in the immigration process can be better understood by applying multilevel analysis of data compiled at the individual, household, and community levels.

A further element of the ethnosurvey design is the collection of life history, which allows for in-depth analysis of specific aspects of event life histories such as migration, occupation, family history, etc. Life history collection can be implemented by applying both survey and qualitative methods. The selection of a research method depends on the studied situation, but a careful combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches is likely to yield the most detailed results.

Finally, the parallel sampling technique is recommended in cases when a social process transcends two distinct geographic areas (Massey, 1987b). Parallel sampling involves the sampling of migrants in both the sending and the receiving countries. The only way to obtain unbiased results about the nature of the international migration is to study both immigrants and return migrants. This assumption is grounded in an understanding that takes into account only the migrant's personal characteristics, migration experiences. Motivations for migration are not sufficient in illuminating the complexity of the migratory movements. Since the decision to stay abroad or to return is highly dependent upon the characteristics and experiences of different individuals, there is no particular class or group of immigrants, which is representative of the population of interest.

3. 1. The ethnosurvey method in the present study of undocumented EEI in Brussels

The implementation of the ethnosurvey method in our research of undocumented EEI in Brussels requires that the method be adjusted to fit the needs of the current research. Although the ethnosurvey method was developed to explore one particular type of migration movements (e.g. migration patters from Mexico to the USA), it is clear that the method cannot be applied in its pure form in our research setting. In addition, in its original version the ethnosurvey was implemented by a research team, which was comprised of several researchers in both the USA and Mexico. In our particular case, there is only a single researcher conducting the fieldwork. Therefore, to utilize the ethnosurvey in its original form would be a difficult, if not impossible task. In the process of adjusting the method to fit our research needs, we will take into account all elements of the ethnosurvey method but will elaborate on them in a way that will allow us to depict as accurately as possible, the current state of undocumented migrations from Eastern Europe to Brussels. Furthermore, this will allow us to achieve maximum understanding of the phenomena under study by circumventing the limitation of our research conducted solely in the country of destination. In our work, we are guided and inspired mainly by the work of Tomas Frejka, Marek Okólski and Keith Sword (1998) who adopted the ethnosurvey approach in their study on the migrations from Poland, modified the method in order to reflect the specific characteristics of the Polish migrations and to cope with the practical limitation of conducting the research exclusively in Poland.

It should be stressed that we would not diverge from the first premise of the ethnosurvey approach, which requires the gathering of detailed information about the group under study, by collecting both quantitative and qualitative information. As it has already been mentioned, our study will be implemented by adopting a format, which utilizes both semi-standardized questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. We will collect extensive qualitative and quantitative information about the population under study, which will allow for both generalizability of the results obtained, and for a detailed understanding of particular individual experiences. The previously collected information will further serve to generate research questions for the future and to improve the research methodology.

We will also be able to satisfy the second premise of the ethnosurvey method by utilizing multisite sampling. As it will be described in the following section, by applying snowball sampling, we will sample individuals from various geographic regions and will adopt different criteria to include an individual as a starting point in a referral chain.

The next feature of the ethnosurvey method - multilevel data compilation – will not be reflected in our research, as the present research design involves data collection at an individual level from migrants who are already living in Brussels, but does not account for information about one's family or community who are in both the destination country and the country of origin. To avoid this obstacle, we have designed the research instrument for the current study (see Section 5 of this chapter and Appendix 4) in such a way to allow for the extensive collection of information about the degree to which migration was a result of an individual or household decision, or the influence of the migrant communities to implement a migratory step.

Even though the fourth element of the ethnosurvey - life histories collection - is not explicitly envisioned in our research, it should be stressed that by adopting a qualitative-quantitative research design, by conducting semi structured in-depth interview and by collecting information using the comprehensive questionnaire, we will be able to further leverage the richness of the data collected, by applying a pure life histories collection method.

Insofar as the ethnosurvey (multisite sampling) method is concerned, we will adopt some adjustment measures. The original ethnosurvey method requires representative sampling in both communities in the country of origin and in the destination country. Our research, however, is designed to investigate the issue of undocumented immigrants in Brussels, but due to many practical and financial constraints, research in the country of origin is difficult to implement. Therefore, we will initiate extensive multisite sampling in the destination country, in the hope that we are able to extend our work to include the sending communities at some point in the future.

4. Sampling procedure: theoretical and practical consideration for selecting snowball sampling as a sampling technique

Considering the specific characteristics of the undocumented and legally residing Eastern European populations in Brussels and the lack of official data about these immigrant groups, we opt for a snowball sampling or chain referral technique[4] to identify respondents for our research[5]. We are cognizant of the fact that only a random sample could theoretically guarantee the trustworthiness of the studied universe. However, a random sample is not always possible and existing practical constraints often call for obtaining non-probability samples. The virtues of the probability sampling procedures have been described at length in the literature on social science methodology, but this is not the appropriate forum to engage in a detailed discussion on this topic (Simon, 1969; Denzin, 1970; Black & Champion, 1976; Kish, 1995). What is relevant to our research is to provide a justification for our rationale for adopting non-random sampling procedures. This is due to the peculiarities of the studied population and the impossibility of complying with the requirements for drawing a probability sample. Therefore, throughout the following sections, we will proceed by presenting the essential features of the snowball sampling procedure and the specific research situations in which the technique is applied. Subsequently, we will concentrate on presenting arguments for why selecting the snowball sampling method is appropriate for our study. Finally, we will describe the specific methodological problems that could be encountered in our research and what measures exist for coping with them.

[4] The terms "snowball sampling" and "chain referral technique" will be used alternately.

[5] The present chapter will elaborate on snowball sampling of undocumented immigrants but the same procedure will be applied for identifying qualified professionals in Brussels since the latter population is also highly invisible, understudied, and difficult to identify and recruit for research. Many of the problematic issues of sampling undocumented immigrants apply as well to the sampling of qualified professionals (e.g. there are no lists or available for research use population registers distinguishing the professional migrants from other migrants' categories; the size of this population is not known, etc).

In the literature, snowball sampling is described as a sampling technique which is applicable to two kinds of research situations One the one side, snowball sampling is recommended when it is necessary to obtain knowledge about diffusion of information and informal social relations in a small group or in a small organization (Denzin, 1970; Black & Champion, 1976). Additionally, snowball sampling is considered the only technique suitable for sampling "hidden" populations. The term hidden populations, which is synonymous for *very rare human populations* or *hard to reach populations*, is used generally to refer to populations about which no official information exists, or which represent less than 2% of the population (Sudman, 1972; Eland-Goossensen *et al*., 1997; Faugier & Sargeant, 1997). In other words, because of their rarity, these populations are difficult to identify, to reach, and to recruit for research purposes. Furthermore, additional complications in reaching the target populations are due to the social stigma of their legal status. Consequently, there is a lack of visibility of their members. It is clear from the previous definition that there is no suitable sampling frame to account for hidden populations and that most of the probability and non-probability sampling techniques commonly cannot be applied. Conducting research with members of hidden populations is a cumbersome process and scientists working in the field are often satisfied with merely being able to locate their respondents (Eland-Goossensen *et al*., 1997).

In both cases described, conducting research of informal social networks in a small group or organization, and studying hidden populations, the core of the snowball sampling procedure is based on yielding a sample through referrals made among people who share or know of others who possess some characteristics that are of research interest (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). Briefly said, the procedure is based on asking individuals from an organization or group to identify and to provide contact with their friends, associates, or people with whom they share a common characteristic that is under study. The technique, however, should not be misinterpreted as being simple and self or one in which researchers start "rolling" through personal contacts or through an informant and then simply sit back and allow the resulting chain to follow its own course. In other words, it is not "a self-contained and self-propelled phenomenon, that once started somehow magically proceeds

on its own" (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). The utilization of the snowball sampling method reveals a number of methodological problem areas that will be discussed later on in their specific relevance to our research on undocumented EEI in Brussels.

Before presenting in detail the specific problem areas related to our research, it should be stressed that similar to other sampling techniques, snowball sampling has its on advantages and disadvantages. To start with the advantages, the technique is very useful for studying small social organizations. It facilitates the researcher in the process of revealing informal group structures, tracing the direction of the information flows within a given social structure, and discovering specific communication patterns between members of the community under study. As previously mentioned, up until now, the snowball sampling technique is the only available method for identifying research subjects from rare populations for which there is no available numerical or substantive information. Snowball sampling also offers clear practical advantages in obtaining information on difficult-to-observe phenomena, in particular areas that involve sensitive, deviant, or "illegal issues". It provides efficient and economical ways of finding cases that otherwise are difficult or impossible to locate and contact (Faugier & Sargeant, 1997).

The main disadvantage of the snowball sampling technique is that it is a non-random procedure. The results of the sampling will depend highly upon the subjective choices of the originally selected respondents and on their sincerity in providing reliable information about their contacts. Therefore, generalizability of the obtained results is often difficult to achieve.

Another disadvantage of the snowball sampling is that the technique is not feasible for sampling large populations. Some authors suggest that the technique is not applicable in situations when the studied population is comprised of more than 100 individuals, as the referrals provided by each of the 100 respondents will add up to an immense sum of contacts that would be difficult to control (Black & Champion, 1976; Denzin, 1970). However, this disadvantage is not insurmountable in all social research. First of all, the alleged inapplicability of snowball sampling might be valid in situations where research is conducted in large organizations or social groups, especially when the researcher has

limited human resources, time and budget to conduct the study. Still, this will not be necessarily the case with all populations that are difficult to reach or to identify. An example of a successful application of snowball sampling in a numerous population is the study of Welch (2001) testing the sampling possibilities in a dispersed population by selecting as a target group, Mexican Americans residing in Omaha, Nebraska. This particular research demonstrates that snowball sampling is applicable in situations in which the target group was to be discovered out of 2500 households only by applying a chain referral method. The method was good for discovering 77% of the Mexican American population, which amounts to 226 out of the estimated 290 Mexican-American households.

To return to our research on EEI in Brussels, it seems that snowball sampling is the most appropriate sampling technique for identifying the Eastern European populations who are of interest. The decision to apply this sampling technique is based on the fact that probability-sampling is virtually inapplicable in our research framework. Theoretically, applying probability-sampling in most social science survey research is considered possible under the following conditions: a) if the size of the population from which the sample will be drawn is known; b) if the desired sample size is specified in advance; and c) if each individual of the studied population has an equal chance to be included in the sample (Black & Champion, 1976).

Using probability sampling in our research is hindered by the lack of available systematic information about the composition and the numbers of EEI in Brussels. The only systematic information about some EEI in Brussels is available in the National Register of Belgium and the Aliens Register of Belgium. However, there is a practical disadvantage to using those sources because they are not made freely available for scientific research. Even if these lists were available for free use, they still would provide only partial information about the EEI in Brussels. The National Register only includes a minority of EEI, e.g. those who have permanent residence in Belgium and those who have obtained Belgian nationality. On the other hand, The Aliens Register provides only a rough picture of the EEI in the city, because it is based upon immigrants' "free will" to register, meaning that

even if EEI are supposed to register in their community of residence if the intended sojourn in Belgium is longer than three months, immigrants do not necessarily register, especially if non-registration will not have negative consequences for them. To give only a few examples of the inability of The Aliens Register to depict reliably the foreign population in Belgium, we could mention the following groups that are not recorded correctly or that hardly have ever been recorded: undocumented immigrants that have never been recorded; the tourist remaining in the country more than the allowed three months or after their visas expire; the pendular migrants who enter legally and remain in the country within the allowed period of three months, but are "illegally" involved in profitable economic actives; the immigrants who were once registered but who changed community of residence without notifying the authorities; and the immigrants who were registered but who left the country without notification. These are just a few groups, but more do exist.

To summarize, the use of probability-sampling technique does not adequately provide for the undertaking of research on understudied and unidentified Eastern European populations in Brussels. Thus, snowball sampling appears to be the most appropriate alternative from the non-probability sampling designs available. Since presenting into detail the essence of all available non-probability sampling designs falls out of the scope of the current text, we will restrict the discussion only to the features that make those sampling designs inapplicable to our research: Systematic sampling, which is based on drawing every n^{th} person from a predetermined list is impossible to apply in our case because of the lack of reliable list of EEI in Brussels. Quota sampling or conducting the research with a group of people who possess a given characteristic (for example education, age, ethnicity, etc.), and who are at the same time the most easy to identify and access by the researcher, is also not appropriate in our study because except "nationality" no other selection criterion of respondents will be specified in advance. The method is viewed as inappropriate because it also stimulates the researcher to approach only the most accessible respondents, who are not necessarily typical for their population. The existing bias in that selection procedure will progressively accumulate throughout the sampling process and any attempt for further classification of the respondents based on additional characteristics will result in a rather

large classification error. Accidental sampling, in reality far from being a sample procedure at all, is the crudest selection method based on conducting research with respondents who are most convenient to identify. The definition of this procedure by itself is more than enough evidence for its inapplicability in our research framework. Judgmental or purposive sampling is also an impractical solution for our study since it is based on selecting respondents in a way, which ensures that specific elements will be included in the sample. This sampling method requires the availability of extensive information of the studied population before the sampling occurs, and a high degree of researcher expertise that will guarantee professional identification of the respondents displaying the needed characteristic. Clearly, beginning a research on understudied populations such as the undocumented EEI residing in Brussels does not allow for utilizing judgmental sampling.

As was already mentioned, adopting non-probability sampling techniques in the course of conducting research on "hidden" populations raises a number of specific methodological problems, usually absent from research involving known populations that should be explicitly addressed and considered when the procedure is utilized. The main problematic areas identified in snowball sampling include the issue of finding respondents and starting a referral chain; verifying the eligibility of potential respondents; engaging respondents as research assistants; controlling the types of chains and numbers of cases in every chain; and finally, controlling the speed of chains developments and the data quality (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). Henceforth, these problems will be discussed and we will emphasize their substantive value to our current research of EEI in Brussels.

The first problematic issue in the current study surrounds the identification of potential respondents and starting referral chains. The complication, however, stems from the low social visibility of the studied population and the previously discussed lack of systematic information on EEI in Brussels. Additionally, the more sensitive the topic under study, such as in the present research, which focuses to a great extent on "illegal" working activities and undocumented sojourn to Brussels, the greater the probability is for potential respondents to be unwilling to reveal their presence. Thus, sampling is likely to be more

difficult to achieve. The application of the snowball sampling technique should be, in the first place, aimed at identifying the diverse and often "floating" population of EEI. The anticipated mistake in the sampling procedure is its failure to encompass the whole variety of immigrants' legal and occupational statuses in Brussels. Our sampling procedure has to insure that the study will reliably depict all groups of undocumented immigrants such as immigrants who reside legally, but who work illegally, unemployed immigrants residing illegally, immigrants in process of regularization, or documented immigrants who exercise working activities in the gray economy, to mention a few. The sampling method should allow us also to reveal the precise geographical distribution of the immigrant groups in Brussels and to insure that the studied population is identified as accurately as possible. To achieve this goal, the snowball sampling procedure will be implemented by initiating diverse respondents' chains with different origins reflecting the described distinct immigrant statuses of the respondents. In terms of practical implementation, the ideal respondent is identified as a result of contacts provided by the respondent and through contacts provided by institutions. In the first case, we will gain access to immigrants by asking initially identified respondents to provide contacts with their acquaintances or relatives and we will explicitly ask for contacts with people with both the same and different occupational and legal status of the respondent. We will initiate referral chains by also taking into account the gender, and the family status of the primary individual in the referral chain. Finally, we will attempt to start a chain in each of the 19 communities of Brussels to assure that the geographical spread of the studied population is also depicted in a reliable way. In the second case, we will approach respondents by relying on contacts provided by various immigrant-related institutions, such as churches, non-profit organizations, clubs of interest, and embassies.

In the course of the research development, we will try to keep track of other possible sources of contacts with EEI in Brussels while actively maintaining contacts with those previously identified. These steps are important to consider because they will possibly prevent us from running into two other anticipated problems: a) exhausting one or more existing referral chains and at the same time non-availability of other chains; b) initiating

referral chains that are expected to yield high numbers of respondents that turn out to provide only a few contacts.

A second methodological problem of our sampling procedure concerns guarantee of the eligibility of potential respondents, as it is not self-evident that all identified respondents from Eastern Europe are eligible for our study. For example, genuine students or trainees fall outside the scope of the present research, but “false” students and “false” tourists are indeed immigrant category types, which are interest to us. The study will not focus at Eastern European expatriates and diplomatic personnel in Brussels either. The research will concentrate on documented immigrants insofar as they are related to undocumented immigrants by assisting them with support, help in finding work and accommodations, or helping undocumented immigrants in another specific way (such as lending their health insurance, signing renting contracts on their name, providing their bank accounts etc.). Another related problem is that EEI in Brussels might present in an imprecise way their status in the country or may misreport the reasons for their stay in Brussels. One example of this is the not uncommon situation in which immigrants working illegally in the country, but who also registered at an academic institution just to obtain an official residence status in Belgium. A misreport related to the working status of the EEI in Brussels is also the case when a person cohabitates with an EU national in Brussels, but performs economic activities without entitlement to a work permit, or when a person enters the country as a tourist and resides in the country within the legally allowed period of three months but is involved in work activities. These few examples justify why it is necessary to carefully screen the referred respondents and to verify their actual legal status in the country.

Another problem arises when people are deemed ineligible for inclusion in the study. By rejecting some respondents, it could prevent the future development of an existing referral chain. Additionally, respondents who are rejected from the study but who could to refer us to other immigrants, may refuse to cooperate with our request for referrals. One way to avoid this obstacle is to present eligibility criteria and the objectives of the

study as clearly and as early as possible. This will help to insure maximal cooperation among all individuals involved in the study, perhaps even among those we reject.

This problem is closely related to the third problematic area in our study e.g. engaging respondents as research assistants. As Biernacki and Waldorf put it: “respondents that are enlisted to find other potential respondents become de facto research assistants”. Using snowball sampling inherently means that we will be relying principally upon immigrants in Brussels to connect us with other immigrants. A main problem that will arise is the extent to which we can trust these individuals to present our research to others in acceptable and serious manner. It is of primary importance that all immigrants who are already interviewed and asked to provide further contacts present our research to the possible future interviewees in a credible way. To guarantee this, we will have to assure that all people “employed” as assistants understand clearly our research goal and the eligibility criteria. At this point, we should make clear to respondents that the study is anonymous and that no personal information will be revealed to third persons. It is anticipated that undocumented immigrants or people involved in “illegal” working practices in Brussels will be highly reluctant to participate in the study or to reveal information, which might threaten their continued sojourn in the country, if their whereabouts is known to the public authorities. We will ensure that especially these immigrant groups and respondents who recruit from within such groups are cognizant of the pure scientific goals of our research and the lack of connection, which exists between the research team and state bodies.

A fourth methodological problem is controlling the types of chains and the numbers of cases in each chain**.** Snowball sampling is not a self-developing process and the sample’s initiation, progress, and termination should be actively controlled throughout all phases of research. At the beginning of the research, our aim will simply be to begin from different referral points. Later, once initial data are gathered, we must ensure that all immigrants under study are adequately represented in our sample. In other words, the sampled respondents should represent the general characteristics of the population under study as much as possible. Using a non-probability sampling procedure will not allow us to

generalize about the large immigrant populations in the country. However, the careful selection of respondents will possibly allow for some generalizations about the Polish and Bulgarian immigrants in Brussels to be made. Therefore, the data gathering should be based upon ongoing analysis of the obtained results that in turn, will directly lead to the identification of new referral chains or new respondents, if needed. Once the identification of respondents has started, we will apply selectivity criteria at later stages so that the sample includes respondents who represent diverse immigrant statuses, and demographic characteristics. With the development of the study, certain referral chains could be interrupted or others could be further developed until the needed numbers of respondents with given characteristics is achieved. At each stage of the research, we will control the sample to avoid collecting information that only reflects the experiences of one subgroup of EEI. On the other side, by providing a full and extensive record of all steps taken in the sampling procedure and by presenting in detail the obtained results, we hope to ensure a certain level of replicability for the study.

A further consideration in the current research is the process of pacing and monitoring the referral chains and data quality in order to provide the most extensive and at the same time, the most relevant information to our study. In the first place, the speed with which referral chains are initiated and developed has to be deliberately controlled. The simultaneous process of adequate evaluation of the respondents' eligibility, the interview process, and the timing of initiation of referral chains should be well balanced in order to extract maximum information without deteriorating the data quality. For example, one problem is posed by the fact that if follow-up of referrals is not immediate, important contacts may be lost or the whole referral chain may be destroyed. The situation is further exacerbated if several referral chains develop simultaneously at the same speed. In anticipation of the problem, we will try to overcome it by precisely scheduling the start of each referral chain and by clearly explaining our research goals to all interviewees who will be providing additional contacts.

The opposite problem could also be expected, if there is a lack of, or an insufficient length of the referral chains, or if there is an under-representation of respondents with given

characteristics. If this were the case, we would assure adequate replacement of the missing respondents by actively searching for new possibilities to start a referral chain.

Monitoring the data quality at each step of the research is another important issue in our research. Adopting semi-structured interviews as a research tool at the broad exploratory phase of our research raises the question whether or not the correct information is collected. The data quality in our case could be influenced by several factors that should be kept in mind and reflected objectively upon at each stage of the research. For example, deteriorated data could result from the imprecise presentation of the research goal to the respondent; failure to guarantee respondents' confidentiality will impact if they answer the questions honestly; growing fatigue and disinterest among some respondents; slow pace of analyzing the collected materials in order to find clues for improving the interview technique, etc. We will take precautions to avoid such problems by conducting several pilot interviews with EEI of different statuses in Brussels, by improving the interview quality, and by duly recording and interpreting the interviews, which may suggest that the research framework be altered or changed more significantly.

A final methodological problem that we anticipate in the process of creating an EEI's sample is the bias that is expected to prevail within the social networks in which the referral chains will develop. In the course of our research, we will explicitly consider and control for bias stemming from the social distances between individuals. The probability of one individual being connected to the other is, to a degree, a function of the social distance between them. To avoid this source of bias and to guarantee that the research will depict as precisely as possible the variety of immigrants who exist in Brussels, we will initiate multiple referral chains with EEI of different immigration and occupational statuses, who are of a different gender, age and family composition structure, or of various length of residence etc.

Another complication in the sampling procedure might stem from the overlapping of acquaintance circles or the fact that some individuals belong to more than one social network and therefore, some respondents may be identified more than once. A related problem is the so-called "reflexive bias", or the high probability that a connection from an

original individual to a target individual enhances the likelihood of a connection from the target respondent back to the first individual. Theoretically, those referrals should not cause problems as far as the individual is only interviewed once. However, in all likelihood, the speed of the research might decrease when additional effort should be invested in identifying and contacting persons who have already participated in the study.

5. Questionnaire construction

Beyond doubt, a multifaceted and complex phenomenon such as international migration cannot possibly be studied by simply applying a single standard methodology over time, or a set of research tools implemented in previous research settings. Moreover, the particularity of each migratory flow such as forced migrations, undocumented migrations, legal migrations, pendular cross border movements, to mention just a few, does not allow for borrowing of research methods developed for one specific research framework and then directly employing them in another research design. The diversity of the migratory flows poses numerous theoretical and practical questions, which is the reason why most of the ongoing research on immigration relies on developing specific research tools particular to a specific research setting. The research tools utilized are based on previously existing techniques in the practice methodology, but are adapted specifically to fit the particular framework of the ongoing research.

The necessity to create a new research tool is even more acute in the case when a new or understudied phenomenon is to be explored, which is exactly the case in our research on EEI in Brussels. As it has already been mentioned, the research on EEI is still in an initial stage of development. The knowledge about undocumented EEI in Brussels is limited, and is based on the results of only a few qualitative studies, in which no standardized methodology was adopted. The research on EEI in other European and non-European countries is also not abundant and is far from being able to offer any sufficient methodological tools. It is not an exaggeration to say that the state of methodological development is also not quite as different for EEI than it is for other groups. The major volume of reported research results about various countries around the globe and different

immigrant groups are seldom explained and interpreted in relation to the method of data collection. In most cases of empirical research, the generally preferred method of data collection is the non-structured or the semi-structured interview designed especially for the purposes of the undertaken study. Surprisingly, however, the content of the adopted interviews is virtually never reported by researchers, which leaves the reader to make assumptions as to what the interview questions were.

Considering the previously presented issue of methods availability and accessibility and also the possibility for applying uncritically the methodological tools developed for other research designs to our study, we reached the conclusion that a specific questionnaire should be designed and developed particularly for the research on Eastern European immigrants in Brussels. As it has already been indicated, the empirical research on Eastern European Immigrants in Brussels will be accomplished by adopting semi-standardized questionnaire as a main research method. The questionnaire is composed of both standardized closed questions and open-ended questions that are presented to respondents in a face-to-face interview setting.

The step towards constructing a specific instrument for our research goals was therefore made as a response to the lack of available standardized instruments for studying the particular type of East-West migration and was suitable for answering to our research questions.

The process of the questionnaire construction began with a thorough literature search for instruments that could be used to provide some basic insights for creating a measurement instrument for our purpose. The final result of this initial step, lead to identifying three research tools, which could serve as model for formulating one part of our research questions. The first existing instrument adopted as a practical guideline, is the semi-structured interview applied in an in-depth study of Polish migratory movements conducted by T. Frejka, M. Okólski and K. Sword within the larger framework of migration/mobility studies initiated and coordinated by the Population Activities Unit of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (Frejka, Okólski & Sword, 1998).

The second instrument is a questionnaire used in a study exploring the living and working practices of undocumented Bulgarian workers in The Hague (Kloosterboer, Potmis, Wedad & Terlemis, 2002).

The third instrument is the semi-structured questionnaire applied in the Dutch research project "The Unknown city" which explores settlement, living and working practices of undocumented immigrants in Rotterdam.[6]

The semi-structured interview is designed to explore the international mobility experiences of the Polish immigrants and the questionnaire adopted in the "Unknown city project" provided the particular basis for drafting the questions related to the following topics; a) immigrants' living conditions in Brussels; b) employment history; c) migration history; d) existence of established social contacts in the destination country before immigration, which were used as assistance channels in the process of initiating and implementing the trip; e) social contacts after immigration with the native and other non-native residents; f) remittances and other resource flows; g) saving practices and intentions for future investments.

The research on the living conditions and working practices of the Bulgarian undocumented workers in The Hague provided a methodological basis for outlining the questions about a) immigrant's accommodation; b) working conditions, payment agreements versus actual income, existing problem of nonpayment or underpayment; c) health problems and coping strategies in case of illness; and d) migration history.

Finally, in order to facilitate the process of generating the answer categories of the closed questions and to improve the question wording, we consulted extensively the questionnaire from the 1995 ISPO survey over the attitudes of Belgians towards politics (ISPO, 1995), the questionnaire from the 1999 General Election study in Belgium conducted by ISPO/PIOP[7] (Billet *et al*., 2002), the questionnaire adopted in the European

[6] This questionnaire is not published and has been obtained in a personal communication with one of the authors: Johanne van der Leun.

[7] ISPO/PIOP: Interuniversitair Steunpunt Politieke Opinieonderzoek, K. U. Leuven (Prof. J. Billiet, Prof. M. Swyngedouw)/ Point d'Appui Interuniversitaire sur l'Opinion Publique et la Politique, U. C. Louvain (Prof.

Social Survey (ESS, 2002/2003), and the questionnaire from the HIVA research over the attitudes of Belgians towards asylum seekers and refugees (Billiet, Cossey & De Witte, 2002).

The final version of the questionnaire is composed of 160 closed and open ended questions divided in 13 sections and cover all areas of research as specified before: 1. Questions 1 – 10: background and demographic information; 2. Questions 11 – 21: education; 3. Questions 22 –32: living conditions; 4. Questions 33 – 52: relationships and social networks; 5. Questions 53 – 63: Migration history; 6. Question 64 – 104: occupational status and work history; 7. Questions 105 – 112: health status and work accidents; 8. Questions 113 – 121: remittances and other resource flows between the immigrant and the household in the home country; 9. Questions 122 – 126: stimulating further migration; 10. Questions 127 – 133: legal aspects; 11. Questions 134 – 149: children of immigrants in Brussels; 12. Questions 150 – 155: anticipated impact of the EU enlargement; 13. Questions 156 – 160: Positive and negative aspects of life in the city of migration.

Answer categories have been provided for the majority of the questions. Questions, referring to the personal migration history, present occupational activities, advising prospective migrants, perceptions of the positive and the negative aspects of life in Brussels have been left open, in order to avoid restricting the full variety of respondents opinions on these subjects. A previous version of the questionnaire proving answer categories to those questions has been tested in a pilot study with 25 undocumented immigrants from Poland and Bulgaria and has shown that respondents avoid providing answer to those questions because no answer category reflects their experiences or opinions. Therefore, by making these closed-questions, reduces the quality and the quantity of the gathered information gathered reduces significantly.

A. P. Frognier, Prof. A. M. Aish-Van Vaerenbergh) (Interuniversity Centre Political and Public Opinion Research).

The constructed questionnaire has been translated into Polish and Bulgarian language in order to facilitate the data collection process with Polish and Bulgarian immigrants. To ensure accuracy, the questionnaire has first been translated by the author (in Bulgarian) and then, by Markieta Domecka[8] in Polish. A back translation from the Polish and Bulgarian languages into English has been kindly provided by Elena Paspalanova[9]. During the back translation process three items of the Polish version and two items of the Bulgarian version were identified as differing from the English language version and have been respectively corrected. The final versions of the questionnaire in English language can be found in Appendix 4. The Polish and the Bulgarian version of the questionnaires are not included in the current contribution and can be provided by the author upon request.

[8] Markieta Domecka is PhD candidate in sociology at the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium. She is a native Polish speaker.

[9] Elena Paspalanova is Professor in psychology at the New Bulgarian University, Sofia Bulgaria, and a senior researcher in psychology at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. She is a native Bulgarian and a fluent Polish speaker.