

Summer 2020

Immigrant Belonging in Belgium: Laws, Localities, and Living Together

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IMMIGRANT BELONGING IN BELGIUM:
LAWS, LOCALITIES, AND LIVING TOGETHER

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DEDICATION

To my amazing and supportive wife Chanell, who made this possible, and to our wonderful daughters who made this an adventure.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I am grateful to my family for their love and support. I really could not have done this without you. Chanell, you are my everything.

I next wish to thank my committee. I will always be grateful to Dr. Amy Mills for her fantastic guidance both with this dissertation and in my academic career generally. She truly helped me situate my research in geography and connect to the broader discipline. Dr. Alec Murphy likewise offered considerable assistance in shaping my work as a political geographer. Dr. David Kneas shared valuable insight in interpreting my observations. And thanks to Dr. Caroline Nagel for serving as the committee chair.

I wish to thank other who have been there along the way. A great deal of gratitude goes to Dr. Jean Ellis for her mentoring and guidance in navigating the academic world. Thank you as well to all of my friends and fellow students who have joined me on the journey including Ben Sylvester, Beth Nelson, Sahar Derakhshan, Nick Sokol, Chris Krause, Divin Boutros, and so many others.

I also wish to acknowledge and thank the directors of Wallonia's Regional Integration Centers for their engagement with the project and support for my research.

Finally, I wish to thank the Walker Center at UofSC and the Bilinski Education Foundation for providing financial support for this dissertation.

ABSTRACT

Nationalism is rising in Europe and the world. Much of it responds to massive migration, with nationalistic Europeans vocalizing their belief that immigrants do not “belong” in their countries. Many states respond to this influx of people and rising anti-immigrant sentiment by creating laws demanding immigrant “integration.” Yet a clear understanding of what defines “integration” remains elusive. So too does an understanding of how laws aimed at immigrant integration influence relationships between immigrants and local citizens, institutions, and spaces. This research addresses both of these points in Belgium, a politically and culturally fractured country that serves as a microcosm of Europe’s integration debates. This research investigates “integration” laws in Wallonia, Belgium’s francophone region, and understandings of integration and belonging as considered by: (1) workers tasked with implementing Wallonia’s integration laws, (2) migrants affected by these laws, and (3) locals comprising the “host society” into which migrants are to integrate according to the laws.

Findings from interviews with integration workers show that “integration” cannot conceptually be categorized as an either/or proposition set forth by the state along a multicultural versus assimilationist ideological spectrum. Workers simultaneously incorporate elements from normative assimilationist and multicultural models to create a localized sense of integration. Actors implementing integration laws do so differently—at a localized level—based on divergent ideas of belonging and community. Each worker

has his or her own notions of how things should be, or how they are on the ground, and acts accordingly. Laws may dictate one thing; workers may do another.

Findings from interviews with migrants engaging with Wallonia's legally mandated integration programs reveal that migrants' seemingly instrumental decision to acquire legal citizenship is not devoid of emotion. Many maintain an attachment to the country's political culture, meaning safety, personal liberty, and legal institutions, rather than the national culture. Others seek legal citizenship to secure a sense of belonging in their new state. The migrants' emotional attachments to the state are thus real, but perhaps without the full panoply of emotions desired by nationalists.

Findings from interviews with locals considered members of the "host society" provides empirical evidence contesting the idea of uniform host societies and congruity between society and state (or even substate) boundaries. Host societies are not monolithic entities and nationalist ideologies do not necessarily shape immigration, integration, and citizenship policies in any singular way; there is a process that significantly varies across national space. This variance results from fellow community members' competing imaginaries and emotional attachments to place that may be more local in nature. Each person acts according to his or her own notions of who they are and who members of their fellow community are. So while certain ideas/societal conceptions may appear one way, everyday imaginations may be different. This contributes to an increasing literature focused on host society perceptions. And it provides a new framework for considering ordinary persons' perspectives by engaging elements from existing frameworks addressing nationalism and identity (everyday nationhood and belonging).

In sum, this research expands theoretical frameworks regarding belonging, citizenship, and identity while simultaneously providing informed perspectives to those working with immigrants and also officials crafting integration laws.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CRI..... Regional Integration Centers (“*Centres Régionaux d’Intégration*”)

FICCitizen Integration Training (“*Formation à l’Intégration Citoyenne*”)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“Belgians, I think because of their history and their geographic situation, ... never had a nationalist feeling like other nations. The French are truly French. The Dutch have their distinct colors and manner of dress. A German is German. An English is English. By nature Belgians adapt to everything and everyone. That is part of our DNA. That’s how we live. A Belgian is never going to confront, he is going to go around. So you see, in all, Belgians are not really a nationalistic people.”

– Claude, Braine-le-Château, Belgium, July 4, 2018

This narrative by Claude, a native Belgian living in the country’s francophone region known as Wallonia, summarizes what initially seems to be a common sentiment concerning Belgian nationalism, at least in Wallonia. Nationalist parties received less than 0.004% of Wallonia’s vote in the 2019 federal elections. But in Belgium overall, nationalist parties secured 29% of the federal parliament’s seats (the largest single share) after earning over 43% of the Flemish vote in the same federal elections (IBZ n.d.). Nationalist parties acknowledge their position criticizing mass immigration as contributing to their electoral success (*e.g.*, Cerulus 2019; Crisp 2019). Claude’s comment about Belgian adaptation rather than confrontation thus appears disconnected from present realities as politicians in Belgium (including Wallonia) and elsewhere increasingly confront immigration-related issues—particularly those addressing integration.

Indeed, massive migration into Europe in the wake of the Syrian civil war revitalized long-standing debates about immigrant integration. Nationalistic Europeans

increasingly vocalize their belief that migrants do not “belong” in their countries—a position amplified by the terror attacks in Paris in 2015 and Brussels in 2016 since all of the terrorists had migrant backgrounds (Erlanger 2016). Yet a clear understanding of what defines “integration” remains elusive. Many scholars theorize integration as an idealized end-state wherein migrants adapt and become absorbed into a clearly homogenous host society (Nagel 2009). Politicians largely adhere to the predominant scholarly perspective. They actively construct ideas of who the host society is and how “others” are supposed to behave to become like them; and they use laws to achieve their goals (Calavita 2005). Scholars give significant attention to these national philosophies and models of integration (*e.g.*, Favell 2016; Goodman 2014; Joppke 2007a). However, despite similar academic and policy approaches to integration, scholars to date have largely failed to address how laws aimed at immigrant integration influence migrants’ experiences with local institutions and spaces and their relationships with non-migrants. The focus instead is on views propagated by the state, prominent political parties, and/or by policymakers themselves (*e.g.*, Antonsich & Petrillo 2019; Jensen 2014; Joppke 2010, 2007a; Spiro 2008). Research is largely top-down and institutional (Knott 2019). Consequently, scholarship implicitly reinforces political leaders’ assumptions about immigrants as passive objects of law and policy; and these leaders’ beliefs, as legally embodied expectations, may be inconsistent across jurisdictions (national, provincial, municipal) and unequally applied because of the ways local actors implement integration laws (Xhardez 2019; Eggebø 2013). Without adequately analyzing migrant (Pogonyi 2019) *and* non-migrant (Antonsich 2012) perspectives on integration, including how they may differ from/coincide with those in legislative edicts, scholars undervalue non-

migrants and migrants' roles in achieving a peaceful coexistence and instead risk bolstering nationalistic claims that immigrants alone must adapt to politically created social narratives.

This study seeks to remedy this gap by examining enacted integration laws and using them as a reference point in order to more fully illuminate how migrants and non-migrants mutually produce “integration.” Its starting point is integration laws in Belgium, an immigrant hub with a diverse immigrant population and localized integration laws. Studies concerning immigrant integration in Belgium consistently focus on Flanders (*e.g.*, Waerniers & Hustinx 2019; Pulinx & Van Avermaet 2015) or the Brussels-Capital Region (*e.g.*, Xhardez 2016; Swyngedouw 2019) and these regions' respective integration laws. Those that discuss Wallonia's integration laws usually do so in informational terms of comparison with Flanders or the Brussels-Capital Region (*e.g.*, Martiniello & Rea, 2018; Xhardez 2015; Adam & Jacobs 2014; Van Avermaet & Gysen 2009), or they broadly address Wallonia's integration philosophy (*e.g.*, Martiniello 2013, 1995; Adam & Martiniello 2013; Martiniello, Rea, & Dassetto 2006). Studies that consider Wallonia's integration laws more in depth are unfortunately outdated due to changes in Walloon law starting in 2014 (*e.g.*, Adam 2013, 2011; Torrekens et al 2014). Catherine Xhardez (2019) did do an in-depth comparison of Walloon and Flemish laws in the early 2000s, but again there is nothing contemporary. Nor is there a study that considers Wallonia's non-migrant perspectives. The focus here is Wallonia.

Using qualitative methods, including in-depth interviews and participant observation, this study addresses dominant and subordinate discourses and practices relating to integration, and how these understandings do or do not correspond with what

Wallonia's integration laws dictate. It does so by targeting three key populations with differing connections to integration laws. These are: (1) workers tasked with implementing integration laws; (2) immigrants affected by these laws; and (3) locals comprising the "host society" into which migrants are to integrate according to the laws. Considering these varied populations is particularly salient when discussing integration laws as such laws' purpose is presumably to shape migrants and non-migrants alike and their relationships with each other. Yet integration studies typically do not simultaneously consider migrant and non-migrant viewpoints. They instead focus separately on either state (Antonsich & Petrillo 2019;), migrant (Ehrkamp 2005), or local population (Strømsø 2019) perspectives. Segmenting studies in such a way makes it difficult to understand law's influence on integration as a whole rather than a component part. But as shown in the holistic approach considering migrant and non-migrant perspectives applied here, laws may influence integration discourses without necessarily defining those discourses.

Considering the varied populations connected to integration laws reveals three broad points elaborated in this dissertation. First, "integration" cannot conceptually be categorized as an either/or proposition set forth at the state (or even sub-state) level along a multicultural versus assimilationist ideological spectrum. Second, migrants affected by integration laws have emotional attachments to their new place of residence and do not see formal citizenship simply in instrumental terms. Third, the "host society" that integration laws presume exists (and that migrants are to integrate into) cannot be categorized as homogenous or "national" based on the locals living there. This moves away from a monolithic view of a host society by considering how local interactions,

attitudes, and dynamics complicate national approaches and philosophies of integration. This study thus contributes to broader integration discourses by showing the connection – or lack thereof – between integration laws and the localized, coexistent experiences between migrants and non-migrants.

1.1 Research Questions and Approach

The primary questions guiding this study are: *What legal constructs (state and local) are shaping integration? How do local actors interpret and implement these legal constructs? How do immigrants and non-immigrants understand and respond to integration laws?* These questions address integration on a practical, everyday level as migrants and non-migrants live together in a shared space. Focusing on the everyday exemplifies the approach applied in this study that critically examines “integration.” This critical approach considers integration as a set of political processes in which immigrants and host groups together “make sameness” by determining differences that do/do not matter (Nagel 2009). The parties effectively decide who and what “belongs” in a place. This makes the notion of “belonging” a key component in investigating integration politics.

Belonging, as considered by some and as applied here, is a concept that focuses on two aspects (Antonsich 2010). The first is an individual’s personal sense of belonging to a particular place (a feeling of being “at home”). The second is broader societal concepts of inclusion/exclusion considering whether a person or group of persons does or does not “belong” to a particular group or identity (Antonsich 2010; Yuval-Davis 2011). Belonging thus sheds light on the social dynamics between immigrants and native-born

citizens. It reveals how communities produce and regulate boundaries in terms of who is/is not welcome within them. In short, belonging calls attention to both dominant and subordinate groups' perspectives. It is a bottom-up approach to examining integration, including questions of individual identity and emotional attachment. While many scholars appeal to belonging, including geographers studying migration (Gilmartin 2008), they tend to address one aspect of belonging or the other (not both), and they typically focus only on migrants' perspectives (*e.g.*, Staeheli & Nagel 2006; Ehrkamp 2005). Here, however, this study employs the broader understanding of belonging as a conceptual framework to consider the social dynamics between migrants and non-migrants living in Wallonia.

Because this study also considers integration as law and policy, it incorporates ideas of citizenship as a legal dimension of belonging. "Citizenship" makes "social, cultural and political distinctions both within and between political communities. Who counts as a citizen depends on relations not only with others outside 'our' space but also with others within it" (Painter and Philo, 1995: 118). In effect, there is no citizenship, no "belonging," absent common identities that contrast with markers of difference.

To more fully explore the relationship between integration laws and belonging (meaning immigrants and locals' perspectives), this study targeted three key populations with differing connections to integration laws (workers, immigrants, and locals comprising the "host society"), as mentioned above. Each population group has different perspectives on integration, citizenship, a "Belgian" identity, and what it means to belong in Belgium based on their lived experiences. These perspectives at times exist in tension with one another. At other moments they are in agreement. Accordingly, the respective

perspectives provide a foundation for better understanding integration by revealing issues of sameness/difference among migrants and non-migrants that do/do not matter (*e.g.*, Nagel, 2009; Erdal & Oeppen, 2013). This dissertation presents perspectives from each group in Chapters 4, 5, and 6, respectively.

A final conceptual consideration guiding this research is that of “locality.” There is no consensus in geography about locality’s definition (Jones et al 2014). Some see locality as “the [physical] setting in which everyday life is most concentrated for a group of people” (Agnew 2002; p. 16), the scale defined by people’s day-to-day activities (Clarke 2013). Localities under this second approach include neighborhoods, churches/mosques, workplaces, schools, and so forth. Geographers studying nations and nationalism tend to adopt this approach (*e.g.*, Mills 2007; Jones & Desforges 2003). So do many migration scholars, particularly those considering transnationalism and migrants’ identifying with more than one space (*e.g.*, Herrmann, R.K., Risse-Kappen, T., & Brewer, M.B. 2004). Other scholars define locality simply as a place or region of subnational scale (Painter 2009). A locality could thus be a city, commune, or even a collection of communes. This understanding is popular among migration scholars who, like urban geographers, tend to use locality synonymously with “city” (*e.g.*, Krawatzek & Sasse 2020; Glick Schiller & Çağlar 2009) or village (*e.g.*, Anghel 2016). Both of locality’s standard definitions are relevant here. First, this study considers integration in an everyday manner by its research questions and study populations, as described above. Localities of the everyday factor in to this study and analysis as shown in the ensuing chapters that consider regional integration centers, citizenship courses, and the Walloon region. Second, this study highlights integration occurring on a regional scale in a divided

state. Belgium grants competence (legislative authority) over immigrant integration to regional parliaments in Flanders, Wallonia, and the Brussels-Capital Region rather than to the central state (Adam and Jacobs, 2014). This division results in integration laws that at times conflict and at others coincide (Adam and Martiniello, 2013; Xhardez, 2019). The subnational locality focus for this study is Wallonia, Belgium's francophone region. To demonstrate why Wallonia is a compelling area to consider integration laws and belonging, I must first contextualize integration politics in Belgium.

1.2 Integration Politics in the Belgian Context

1.2.1 Belgium's contemporary immigrant situation and governing structure

Belgium provides a unique environment to consider immigrant integration, laws, and localities for a number of reasons. First, Belgium's immigration experience relates to broader European security concerns as the country served as the base of operations for the Paris and Brussels terrorist attacks, though not all of the perpetrators were Belgian nationals (Schreur & Bilefsky, 2017). Politicians throughout Europe seized on the attacks to call for stricter laws governing immigrants and mandating integration (Erlanger, 2016). Belgian legislators were no different; lawmakers at all levels responded by proposing and adopting rules ostensibly intended to promote immigrant "integration" (European Migration Network ("EMN") 2016 Annual Report, 2017). One measure requires immigrants to sign a pledge promising to accept Belgium's "local values" (Guardian 2016). Integration laws effectively gained new urgency and prominence in Belgium (and across Europe) following the attacks.

Second, Belgium it is an immigrant hub with a diverse immigrant population. Eighteen percent of its total population was foreign born in 2010 (Petrovic, 2012). These immigrants are mostly European, with roughly 70% of all immigrants who live in Belgium coming from other European Union countries (“A statistical overview,” n.d.). But the country also receives large numbers of immigrants from non-EU countries. For instance, the 2015 immigrant wave into Europe contributed to a greater proportional population increase in Belgium than it did in Germany or France (Connor & Krogstad, 2016), two countries that dominate scholarship regarding immigrants (*e.g.*, Ehrkamp, 2006; Croucher, 2009). Third, Belgium’s broad experience with both European and non-European immigrants alike is distinctive and allows for useful comparisons with more commonly studied countries like France and Germany. Integration studies in these other countries frequently focus on racial and/or religious minorities with non-European origins (*e.g.*, Favell, 2016; Ehrkamp, 2005). Belgium, on the other hand, has large numbers of immigrants that are neither racial nor religious minorities because of their European origins. So integration discourses in Belgium may differ, as might the lived reality for immigrants and local citizens alike vis-à-vis societal expectations and immigrant integration.

Belgium’s federal political system provides perhaps the most compelling reason to consider law and locality in integration discourses. Belgium began in 1830 as a unitary state with French as the sole official language. The country had been part of the Netherlands since 1815, but the predominantly Catholic population resented interference in their territory by a protestant king (*see, e.g.*, Cook, 2004). Following independence, a minority French-speaking elite dominated government and educational institutions, as

well as commerce in urban areas throughout the country, including the country's Flemish-speaking northern half known as Flanders. Much of the country spoke only Flemish, also known as "Belgian Dutch." Starting in the mid-19th century, Flemish speakers, known as Flemings, began advocating for linguistic equality with French. Beginning in the early 20th century, some advocated for complete independence for Flanders (*see, e.g.*, Murphy 1988). This advocacy eventually led to six state reforms between 1970 and 2014 that resulted in Belgium becoming "a federal state, composed of communities and regions" (First Article of Belgian Constitution). The federated entities include three regions and three linguistic communities. Each federated entity has its own parliament equal in authority as the national parliament within their legally assigned competencies (Deschouwer 2012). The regions are: the Flemish Region (Flanders); the Walloon Region (Wallonia); and the Brussels-Capital Region (*see Figure 1.1*).

"Communities" refers to the three official language groups present in Belgium: Dutch, French, and German. Dutch-speakers comprise the Flemish Community and live in Flanders and the Brussels-Capital Region. The French Community consists of Wallonia's residents and all Francophones in the Brussels-Capital Region. The German-speaking Community consists of nine municipalities located in Wallonia near the German border (*see Figure 1.2*). This community represents a tiny fraction of Belgium's total population and does not have a separate region. The Flemish Community and the Flanders Region combined to create one federated entity legislating for all Flemings throughout the country (Adam and Jacobs, 2014). The combined Flemish parliament means that there are five parliaments between the regions and the communities. Laws

from these varying parliaments shape residents' everyday lives depending on where they live within the country.

While the regions maintain “territorial” competencies over socio-economic matters such as employment and economic policies, the linguistic communities’ competencies concern “personal matters” such as culture, welfare, and education, including policies regarding “immigrant integration” (Swyngedouw, 2016). Integration policy had rested with the federal government until 1980 and was uniform throughout the country (Adam, 2007). Following further devolution of power in 1993, the French Community subsequently shifted immigrant integration policy to the Walloon Region and the French-Community Commission of the Brussels-Capital Region¹ (Adam, 2013). While Flemish integration policy remained consistent because of the single parliament legislating for all Flemings (Adam and Jacobs, 2014), the competency split between Wallonia and Brussels made integration laws for Francophones extremely place-based as the different entities created different policies. So Wallonia’s integration laws are distinctly Walloon.

1.2.2 Wallonia’s integration laws and its regional integration centers (CRI) implementing them

Wallonia’s integration laws received their start in 1996. That year, the Walloon government adopted a “decree on the integration of foreigners or persons of foreign origin” (4 juillet 1996 Décret). The law created six “regional integration centers” (*centres régionaux d’intégration* (CRI)) throughout Wallonia and tasked them with specific

¹ Now known as the Federation Brussels-Wallonia

integration objectives. These objectives included “promoting participation by foreigners and persons of foreign origin in cultural, social and economic life” as well as “promoting intercultural exchanges and respect for differences.” Neither assimilationist nor multiculturalist in character, the law’s aim was to provide a coherent integration policy that would, as the decree’s title suggests, target established migrants who had been in Belgium for a long period of time or their Belgian-born children (Torrekens et al. 2013; Adam 2013). The CRI would not take a frontline position vis-à-vis immigrants; they would instead partner with local associations that assisted immigrants on a day-to-day basis. In these partnerships, the CRIs would produce socio-cultural activities for immigrants and encourage civil society institutions to engage with immigrants (Adam 2013). Their actions were similar to the Flemish Community’s creation of integration centers across Flanders in the 1980s. A significant difference, however, was that the Walloon Region did not establish a coordination structure to harmonize the CRIs’ policies (Adam 2013). The CRIs had great autonomy in their undertakings, and with that flexibility each had the ability to adapt to the needs of the localities they served. Some CRI have more Maghrebian immigrants in their service areas, for example, while other CRI encounter more sub-Saharan African immigrants; the “intercultural exchanges” each CRI promote could thus vary depending on the localized host and immigrant populations they serve. So everyday integration policies in Wallonia became more decentralized and determined at the sub-regional level by the CRI workers operating within their respective localities.

Another factor fostering localized applications was that four of the first six CRI already existed as non-profit organizations with their own established objectives and

missions regarding immigrants (cf. Torrekens et al. 2014). Such was the case in Namur, Wallonia's capital city. There, locals started the non-profit Socio-Cultural Center for Immigrants in Namur Province (*Centre Socio Culturel Des Immigres de la Province de Namur*) in 1982 to assist immigrants in the community. The association focused first on immigrants with European origins but then expanded its scope based on the changing nature of immigration to the area. In 1997, the association became one of the CRI and changed its name to the Intercultural Action Center – Namur (*Centre d'action interculturelle – Namur* (CAI – Namur)). But it continues to operate largely in the same manner since becoming a CRI.

In 2009, the Walloon government amended the original decree creating the CRI to give the centers additional responsibilities. For the first time these included “frontline” responsibilities to provide French language instruction and impart “knowledge of Belgian institutions” (*i.e.*, citizenship classes) (30 avril 2009 Décret). But CRIs acting as frontline actors would be limited. The CRIs would assume these duties only when other local associations or public authorities did not provide them or requested that the CRI offer the services. Second, the 2009 law tasked the CRIs with coordinating integration activities considered part of “local integration plans,” defined in the same law as plans created by individual municipalities (*communes*) within the CRIs' localities. The purpose for each *commune*'s plan is to “promote[] the integration of foreigners or persons of foreign origin” by “highlighting their specific needs and defining strategies to be developed to better meet them.” So the 2009 decree further localized Wallonia's integration policies as each CRI assumed greater contact with local political leaders crafting integration policies within that CRI's locality. Each CRI working with local partner organizations also

crafted language and citizenship classes that might differ in a variety of ways, such as content emphasized, target audience (new arrivals versus persons of foreign origin already present in Belgium), participant composition (*i.e.*, catering to specific ethnic groups), and so forth. The CRIs maintained a supporting role in this effort as second-line actors; the frontline actors actually working with migrants were the local organizations partnering with the CRIs or the local communes.

In 2014, the Walloon government issued another decree reshaping the CRIs' missions yet again. This decree was the most expansive regarding the CRIs' roles in integration. It assigned the centers primary responsibility for a newly mandatory "welcome course" (*parcours d'accueil*) intended to "integrate newly arrived immigrants" within the CRIs' territory and that immigrants had to follow (27 Mars 2014 Décret, Article 10). The CRIs became designated frontline actors for welcoming new arrivals. This role includes two parts. The first involves interviewing immigrants individually to better understand their needs and abilities. Second, the CRIs use information from those interviews to then guide migrants to the various local organizations providing French language lessons, citizenship classes (known as "Citizen Integration Training"), and other instructional/training components that comprise the welcome course. So the CRIs' frontline contact with migrants is largely administrative in nature.

The 2014 decree maintained the CRIs' principal role as second-line actors ensuring coordination between all of the various local public and private actors implementing Wallonia's welcome courses operating within their respective territories. The 2014 decree also ordered each center to "consult with the other centers in order to carry out coherent policies" throughout Wallonia (27 mars 2014 Décret, Art. 28). The

directive to consult with one another did not mean that each CRI lost its independence; the CRIs retain significant autonomy in developing projects and partnering with local associations who assist immigrants on a day-to-day basis. Rather, the directive provided the government with greater justification to fund a non-profit known as DisCRI (*Dispositif de concertation et d'appui aux Centres Régionaux d'Intégration*) that provides technical, logistical, and education support to Wallonia's CRIs and that had been in existence since 2009. Some nevertheless argue that the enhanced legal requirements in this decree and the one from 2009 made Wallonia's laws increasingly assimilationist (e.g., Gsir, Mandin & Mescoli, 2015) and more similar to Flemish integration laws (e.g., Xhardez, 2019). Yet the 2014 law stated that the region sought an "intercultural society" (27 mars 2014 Décret, Art. 6). The flexibility afforded the CRI in their frontline and second-line responsibilities means that the laws' implementation nonetheless remains highly localized through the CRIs and their workers.

One other decree bears briefly mentioning here. It passed in April 2016, just over one month after the Brussels terror attacks (27 avril 2016 Décret). The decree changed the name of the CRIs' "welcome course" to "integration course" (*parcours d'intégration*). Since the terrorists came from Belgium but had foreign backgrounds (Schreur and Bilefsky, 2017), perhaps the name change resulted from political leaders seeking to appease an aggrieved public as the course's requirements did not substantively change. The name change could have also been a way to appease Flemish politicians at the federal level, and specifically N-VA members. Regardless of the reason, the law was a name change, nothing more.

Today, there are eight CRI throughout Wallonia. Each center's locality contains a varied population of immigrants, host society members, and frontline integration actors (the assorted nongovernmental organizations implementing components of Wallonia's integration course). For example, CRILUX, the CRI whose locality includes 44 communes throughout the Luxembourg province, has a much more rural-based population and coordinates with relatively few frontline actors compared to CRIPEL, the CRI centered in Liège, Wallonia's largest city. CRIPEL works with 55 urban communes. Brabant-Wallon, CRIBW's locality, includes thousands of European immigrants drawn to Belgium because of EU institutions headquartered nearby and who are not subject to Wallonia's integration laws. The localities thus create different everyday engagements and negotiations for CRI workers implementing integration laws and the immigrants and host groups they work with.

The increasing obligations for immigrant integration in Wallonia has not corresponded with an increase in nationalism. Nationalist parties received less than 0.004% of Wallonia's vote in the 2019 federal elections, for example (IBZ, n.d.). But it does not mean that nationalism is not affecting the Walloon government's actions. In 2012, nationalist and other parties at the federal level pushed for including integration as a condition for legal citizenship (Adam, Martiniello, and Rea, 2018). The national parliament retains competence over legal citizenship while integration remains at the regional level. The result was a revised national citizenship law demanding proof of one's "social integration" as a condition of citizenship (*see* Loi du 4 décembre 2012). So Wallonia's actions towards immigrants in mandating certain actions could be efforts to placate nationalists at the federal level. Or it could be that nationalism is growing in

Wallonia but remains unspoken politically while receiving tacit approval legislatively. Indeed, Wallonia's demographics and socio-economic situation largely mirror those just across the border in northern France where National Rally,² France's most prominent nationalist party, enjoys a significant base of support (*see e.g.*, Aisch et al, 2017). I do not make a determination on the issue on way or another here as the legislators' purposes behind the laws is not the point of inquiry. I instead maintain focus on examining how integration laws shape interactions among migrants and non-migrants in localized contexts.

Finally, integration in Wallonia remains relatively unexplored despite its distinct legal status. Studies consistently focus on integration policies in Flanders (*e.g.*, Pulinx and Van Avermaet, 2015) or the Brussels-Capital Region (*e.g.*, Xhardez, 2016). Those that do discuss Wallonia usually do so in informational terms of comparison with these other regions that are the primary focus of analysis (*e.g.*, Adam and Jacobs 2014; Van Avermaet and Gysen 2009). I detail this prior work in Chapter Two.

1.3 The Arguments

This study's focus on laws and the localized, coexistent experiences between migrants and non-migrants reveals three key points. First, "integration" cannot conceptually be categorized as an either/or proposition set forth at the state (or even sub-state) level along a multicultural versus assimilationist ideological spectrum. Actors implementing integration laws do so differently—at a localized level—based on divergent ideas of belonging and community. Workers have their own notions of how

² The party previously was known as the "National Front."

things should be, or how they are on the ground, and act accordingly. Integration laws may dictate one thing; workers may do another. This moves away from the idea that migrants can be objectively successful or unsuccessful in integrating.

Second, immigrants affected by integration laws have emotional attachments to their new place of residence. But their attachments are not necessarily to the national culture. Migrants interviewed here focused their emotional attachments on Belgium's *political* culture, meaning its legal system and rights related to formal citizenship that they previously lacked. While seemingly suggesting that migrants see citizenship in purely instrumental terms, the overall picture is more complex. Indeed, some interviewees see formal citizenship as a means of securing social acceptance—belonging—in Belgian society (*e.g.*, Eliassi 2016). These findings may be at odds with what nationalists expect, but consistent with Wallonia's seemingly relaxed attitude towards migrants (Pulinx & Van Avermaet 2015; Adam 2011; Martiniello 1995). This complicates current understandings of citizenship as state-centered and with migrants making citizenship decisions devoid of attachments to the host country.

Third, the “host society” that integration laws presume exists (and that migrants are to integrate into) cannot be categorized as homogenous or “national” based on the locals living there. These persons, as fellow community members, have competing imaginaries and emotional attachments to place that might be more local in nature. Each person acts according to his or her own notions of who they are and who members of their fellow community are. So while certain ideas/societal conceptions may appear one way, everyday imaginations may be different. This suggests that scholars should rethink their assumptions about host societies and that nationalist ideologies do not

necessarily shape immigration, integration, and citizenship policies in any singular way; there is a process that significantly varies across national space.

1.4 Organization of This Dissertation

Chapter Two of this dissertation reviews theoretical approaches to the state, nationalism, place (locality), and emotion. This review includes considering related concepts of integration, belonging, and citizenship. The chapter also provides an overview of literature addressing Belgium and past work addressing integration in the state. This literature review creates the theoretical framework guiding the empirical analysis.

Chapter Three outlines this study's methods. It describes the qualitative methods used to gather data and my experience in the field, including researcher positionality. The chapter also details the study participants and methods used to recruit them. It explains the rationale for focusing on certain participants over others when authoring this study's three manuscripts.

Chapters Four, Five, and Six examine the key study populations bound together by integration laws. Chapter Four examines those tasked with implementing Wallonia's integration laws. It focuses on key workers at all eight of Wallonia's CRIs, including the CRIs' directors. Focusing on CRI workers comes because the CRIs serve as the port of entry in implementing Wallonia's legally mandated (yet definitionally vague) "intercultural" vision regarding integration, and because the CRI ultimately oversee all integration efforts in Wallonia. The chapter focuses on 13 key workers and their perspectives on citizenship, belonging, and integration as learned through semi-structured

interviews. The chapter also addresses localized variances in integration discourses as reflected in each CRI's stated objectives and missions.

Chapter Five considers the perspectives of immigrants affected by Wallonia's integration laws. It addresses the different ways that migrants engaging with a legally mandated integration course to secure formal citizenship actually envision citizenship. Legal citizenship is a focus because it is often a central feature in integration debates. The mandatory integration program at issue in Chapter Five is the civic integration course known as "Citizen Integration Training" (*Formation à l'Intégration Citoyenne* ("FIC")). This chapter examines FIC and the class participants' diverse perspectives learned through semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, and approximately 55 hours of participant observation in two FIC courses.

Chapter Six focuses on locals comprising the "host society" into which migrants are to integrate according to the laws. Drawing on in-depth interviews with sixty-seven locals, this chapter addresses perspectives on the "Belgian society" at issue in integration discourses as well as what it means to be "Belgian." These perspectives derive from locals who may be considered cultural "insiders" through their connections to the broader community by ancestry, kinship, and/or legal status.

Taken together, Chapters Four through Six provide new ways of seeing integration in both legal and spatial terms. The first two cases explored in Chapters Four and Five originate directly from legislation as the CRIs and FIC's entire existence rest on legal mandates. The third case, consistent with Wallonia's legal perspective considering integration on a subnational, localized scale, provides for a useful cross check on the

assumptions CRI workers and FIC participants may make about the national community and those outside of it.

Finally, Chapter Seven synthesizes the arguments made in this dissertation and explains the findings' contributions to broader discourses in political and cultural geography as well as migration studies. The chapter also addresses areas of further research and exploration based on the data collected during fieldwork.

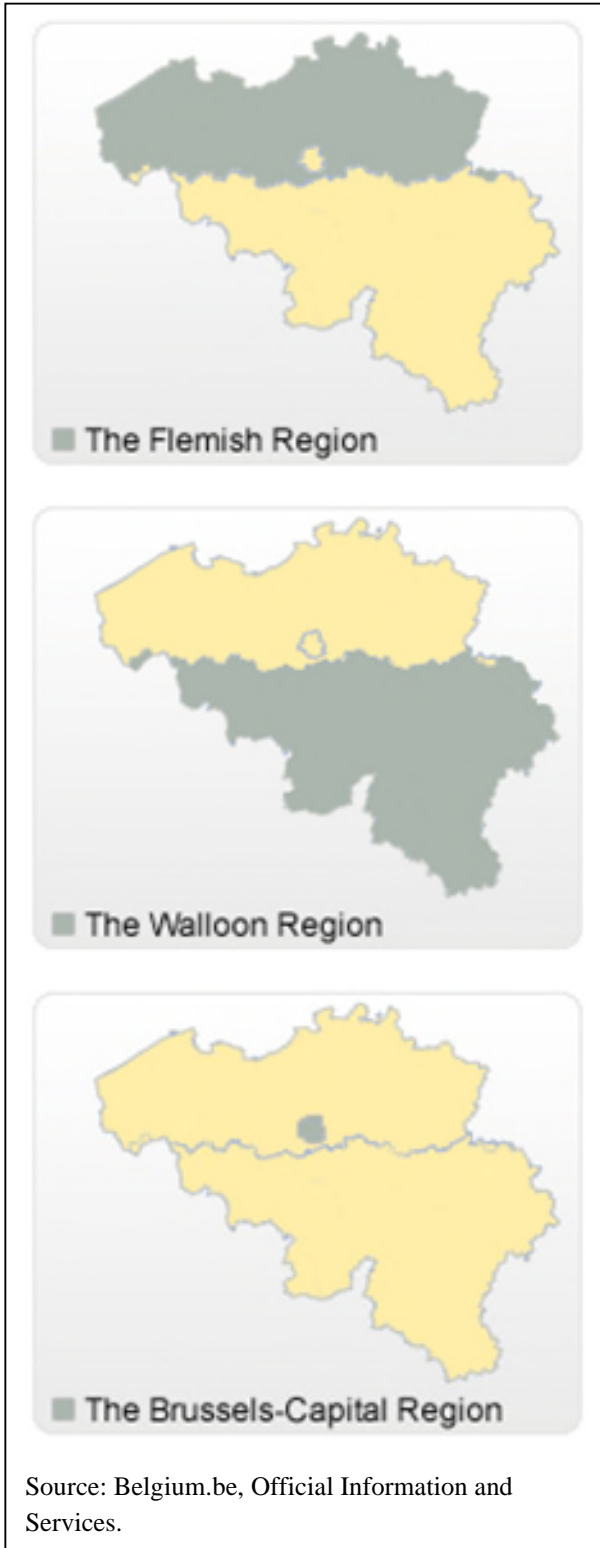


Figure 1.1. Belgium's Regions.



Figure 1.2: Belgium's Communities

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW: CRITICALLY CONSIDERING INTEGRATION

This dissertation explores “integration” amid rising nationalism and increasingly stringent integration laws in Europe. It does so by considering the case of Belgium, a politically and culturally fractured country that is a microcosm of Europe’s integration debates due to its differing, region-based integration laws. I provide a critical perspective on integration by considering dominant and subordinate discourses and practices relating to integration, and how these understandings do or do not correspond with what the Walloon region’s integration laws dictate. Broadly speaking, I thus address how migrants and non-migrants mutually produce integration and membership in “society”. To frame this discussion, I draw from literature regarding the nation-state, national identity, citizenship, assimilation/integration, and place. These themes successively build upon each other as set forth in the sections below. I then use the theoretical concept of belonging as an analytical tool to integrate these themes and to inform the overall critical perspective applied in this dissertation looking at key populations with differing connections to integration laws (workers, immigrants, and locals comprising the “host society”). Next, I contextualize these themes in this research by discussing Belgium’s political and cultural cleavages. I conclude this chapter by reiterating this dissertation’s research questions.

2.1 The Nation-State and National Identity

The “state” or “nation-state” is a central conception in modern politics. The term refers to a form of political organization over a sovereign territory that encompasses a relatively homogeneous population claiming common history, ancestry, and/or language (Heffernan 2012; Murphy 1996). The nation-state is a primary unit of analysis in social science research (Murphy 1996). In fact, the nation-state holds such conceptual sway that it is a sort of conceptual hegemon (Murphy 2010, 2008). The idea is that states are societal containers to be studied individually or in relation to others, causing some to consider nation-state analysis to be a sort of “territorial trap” (Agnew 1994). Because of its historical presence and significance, however, the nation-state conception greatly informs the current political landscape and so must be considered when seeking to understand contemporary issues (Agnew 2015). It is particularly salient when exploring immigration; indeed, the idea of immigration and integration depend on a nation-state system where people move from one state (and national society) to another.

The nation-state did not always exist in Europe (Heffernan 2012). Prior to the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, for example, territorial control primarily came in the form of feudal organization, free cities, and proto-absolutist states (Murphy 1996), although some republics existed in a pre-Westphalian world including the Old Swiss Confederacy, Venice, and the Dutch Republic. The complementary concepts of territoriality and nationalism fostered the nation-state’s rise in Europe. Territoriality is a “spatial strategy to affect, influence, or control resources and people, by controlling area.” (Murphy 2008). Applied, the strategy simplifies the task of enforcing control and reifies power in the governing authority (Murphy 1996). In Europe, the inhabitants considered territory in

alternative views. At times, they saw the entire area being unified in singular characteristics, such as being home to “Christendom” (Heffernan 2012). Or the people’s sense of territory was geared towards a combination of local communes, ruling elites, and broader ecclesiastical ideals (Murphy 1996). Following the Peace of Westphalia, however, leaders began to sweep away attachment to community in favor of state-defined national identities (Murphy 2018). Reasons for this include leaders’ exerting control over larger portions of territory, the emerging international regime resulting from the varying Westphalia treaties, and the growth of the idea that government should be an instrument of the people (Murphy 1996).

As territoriality expanded and intensified, so did nationalism. “Nationalism as an ideology was premised on the link between people and territory” (J. Anderson 1986; p. 97; *see also* Williams & Smith 1983). The people linked to the territory constituted the “nation” (Jones & Fowler 2007). Indeed, the word “nation” comes from the French term “naissance,” meaning “birth” or “place of origin.” The concept of a territory “belonging” to a people furthered internal unification of culturally and economically diverse regions into a more homogeneous state territory (J. Anderson 1986). It also created grander ideas of “us” and “them” with some states pitted against others (Murphy 1996). Nationalism served to divide one political community or “nation” from another, thus determining the geographical boundaries of the state in many instances (J. Anderson 1986). The creation of education and social systems then perpetuated the cultural and historical norms associated with the dominant “nation” (Murphy 2008). In effect, the nation-state was the “territorial order that could reflect and accommodate nationalist ambitions” (Murphy 1996; p. 100).

The “nation” in nationalist discourse is territorially limited and mutually exclusive. Broad literature exists concerning the idea of the nation, its relationship to the state, and relationships between religious, ethnic, and national identities (*see, e.g.,* B. Anderson 2006; Breuilly 1993; Gellner 2008; Renan 2002; Smith 1983, 1986). Even though considered limited and exclusive, the nation is not static or unitary (Mills 2010). Benedict Anderson (2006) describes it as an “imagined community.” Members create a mental affinity for their imagined “fellow community members,” most of whom they will never know or meet face to face. And membership is open only to a certain group of people (described as sharing a common origin and/or destiny) living in a certain place. A closure exists vis-à-vis those outside of that place (Brubaker 1992), with those inside maintaining a sense of “one nation” based on ideals of common origins, ancestry, and consanguinity, as well as a common destiny (Dekker, Malova, & Hoogendoorn 2003). Persons not fitting within this mold or living in the territory do not belong (Soysal 2001; Gustafson 2005). National identity thus changes as persons create new imaginations, making nations fluid and continually re-created (Mills 2010).

Starting in the mid-1990s, scholars started considering nations in new ways; a nation was not only a territory-based ideology, but also as a set of social practices reproduced in everyday life. Perhaps the most famous of these new approaches, and one that has significantly influenced political geographers (Koch & Paasi 2016), is social psychologist Michael Billig’s (1995) *Banal Nationalism*. This concept considers everyday representations and practices that create a shared sense of national identity, and it sees the nation reproduced in everyday circumstances. The focus is on national symbols such as flags hanging in public buildings, national songs, and daily rituals that

presumably create a shared sense of identity in everyday life. Banal nationalism is a top-down approach because it emphasizes the role of the state and its elite members in dictating the nation's identity through these everyday images and practices that people passively consume and repeat (Antonsich 2016, 2020).

Sociologists similarly began studying nations and nationalism through everyday life (*e.g.*, Brubaker 1996; Thompson & Day 1999; Thompson 2001). Their approach sees nations as social creations: persons seeking to situate themselves in relation to others create the nation in everyday contexts (Thompson & Fevre 2001; Brubaker et al 2018). The “nation” simultaneously results from state-level forces and “ordinary people engaging in routine activities” (Fox & Miller-Idriss 2008, p. 554). It is a bottom-up approach because, while nationalism is a mass phenomenon, this everyday approach seeks to understand the individuals constituting the “masses.” (Strømsø 2019; Smith 2008). Sometimes referred to as “sociology of nationalism” because of sociologists’ lead in advocating its use, this perspective is often labeled “everyday nationalism” in geographic literature (*see* Jones & Merriman 2009).

The insistence on, and assumption of, national homogeneity in the modern nation-state gives rise to the idea of “minorities” and creates the “problem” of minority rights. Minorities are those deemed to differ from the nation due to traits such as “race,” religion, or language; they do not always have equal rights and obligations in a state. Since the nation-state’s rise, state governments have “sought to maintain the national character by making full access to rights contingent on one’s conformity to national values and moralities” (Nicholls 2012). So those who do not conform to the notion of the “national” identity do not achieve equal status, with this “national” identity now

presumed to be that of the state (Murphy 1996). The minorities who do not fit this identity—including migrants or those with migrant origins—then become ethnic underclasses in the state (Kofman 1995). The experience of Europe’s Jewish population over the centuries exemplifies this situation. A more contemporary example is London’s Muslim community, which built its first mosque in London’s suburbs in the 1920s. The local majority community initially welcomed the mosque as an instance of Britain’s imperial reach (Naylor & Ryan 2002). Following decolonization, however, residents increasingly protested the mosque’s presence as “foreign” and out of place within national space. So when the local Muslim community (many of whom were British citizens) sought to expand the mosque in the late 1990s, local officials denied their request. The minority population did not fit within the national ideal and so did not receive the same rights.

Nationalist ideologies’ pursuit of a uniform nation often shapes integration demands that are imposed on migrants and other minorities. Migrants are an apparent minority in the state, and the integration demands can come from the state (Mitchell 2003), members of the national community (Antonsich 2012), or both. Such demands center on the nation, or what integration discourses and many scholars label the “host society” (Antonsich & Matejskova 2015). While cultural geographers and others often consider the nation as variegated and contextual (*e.g.*, Mills 2010), many nationalism scholars do not. Banal nationalism, for example, “operates with an unrealistic notion of a uniform, homogenous national audience” (Antonsich 2016, p. 33). Everyday nationalism likewise presumes “an undifferentiated ‘ordinary people’” within a state (Smith 2008; p. 565). Nationalists demanding migrant integration also presume host society homogeneity;

they expect uniformity (and conformity) from migrants despite many nationalists continually marking migrants as foreign to the nation.

Notably, mainstream migration scholarship similarly tends to treat the national “host society” as a monolithic given. It generally imagines “integration” as a process wherein immigrants incorporate into a uniform and immediately apparent nation/host society (Antonsich & Matejskova 2015; Nagel & Staeheli 2008). This perspective views the fading of differences between the immigrant minority and the resident majority as both measurable and desired, and the adaptation to a seemingly monolithic “host society” to be migrants’ responsibility (Nagel 2002). I return to this point below in section 2.3 when describing the “assimilation canon” in integration literature. First, however, I address notions of rights and obligations that nations have. These rights and obligations come by way of state “citizenship” in the nation. And in the nation-state context, the nation-state concept’s primary role in the political order is its promoting citizenship attached to notions of territory and the nation living there (*see* Kofman 1995). So the idea of state citizenship plays a large part in understanding migrants’ situations in Europe today. I thus review citizenship in the next section.

2.2 Citizenship and the Nation-State

“Citizenship” is a mode of membership conventionally associated with the modern state. Historical understanding of citizenship dates to the Greek city-state, when citizenship was a mark of belonging and commitment to a particular place (Painter & Philo 1995; Desforges et al. 2005). The rise of the nation-state and ideas of national citizenship in the late eighteenth century, however, weakened citizenship’s local, city-

based focus and changed it to more of a national ideal (Desforges et al. 2005). The scale change from the local to the national did not necessarily remove the idea of rights and obligations. Indeed, long-established citizenship conceptions, and the study of them, did not begin changing for an additional two centuries after the nation-state's rise (Ho 2008). Territory was considered the dominant citizenship factor throughout this time (Waite 2012; Murphy 2013). Citizenship thus focused on the formulation of political relationships within the nation-state territory.

Citizenship is at once a legal category, referring to formal relations between insiders, outsiders, and the state (Steil & Ridgley 2012). It is also a social and cultural construct (Staeheli et al. 2012). As a legal category, citizenship highlights notions of rights and obligations that are encoded in laws and constitutions. As a social and cultural construct, citizenship suggests values and virtues associated with participation in a national community—values and virtues that are imparted in the spaces of everyday life by various actors including parents, neighbors, clergy, and educators (Nagel & Ehrkamp 2016). These societal and cultural conceptions may coincide with citizenship's legal conceptions, meaning that local actors act in concert with defined laws, or they may conflict with the legal understanding such that local actors' membership and participation remains partial, localized, and/or informal in nature. This is evident in cases where undocumented immigrants claim citizenship despite the lack of legal membership in the polity (Nicholls 2013).

Citizenship's social and cultural construct connects with nationalism conceptions in various ways. For example, many social scientists (including sociologists and political scientists) categorize nationalism as "ethnic" or "civic" in nature (*e.g.*, Leong et al 2020;

Tamir 2019; Sharma 2016; Smith & Hutchinson 1994). Ethnic nationalism presumes a community based on ideas of common origins, ancestry, consanguinity, and so forth (Dekker, Malova, & Hoogendoorn 2003). This is similar to what Painter and Philo (1995) observed regarding citizenship, specifically that “who gets defined as a ‘true’ citizen within the city-state or the state-area depends in part on who carries with them what is deemed to be the correct baggage of history, culture, ethnicity, language and religion” (p. 113). Civic nationalism, on the other hand, similarly coincides with civic models of citizenship in that it focuses on sharing common political norms and values. Civic nationalism and citizenship both suggest a distinction between majority “culture” applying to only some persons and the political-constitutional system shared by all citizens (Antonsich & Petrillo 2019).

Political geographers make similar ethnic/civic distinctions but use different terminology based on two scalar expressions (Koch 2016). The first is at the state level; the second is sub-state in nature. State-centered notions equate “the nation” with the residents of the state (similar to civic nationalism/citizenship) while sub-state expressions point to the existence of ethnic or regional groups who might make claims of sovereignty within or beyond the territorial state’s borders (akin to ethnic nationalism/citizenship) (*see* Herb & Kaplan 1999). In Belgium, there may be a mixture of both. Nationalist parties in Flanders currently promote a “Flemish” nation (ethnic nationalism) (*see e.g.*, Cerulus 2019; Crisp 2019), for example, while Wallonia historically favors civic nationalism (Martiniello 1995). Notions of nationalism (and thus citizenship) are not necessarily either civic or ethnic; they may be a mixture of both (*see, e.g.*, Brubaker 1999; Medved 2009; Reeskens & Hooghe 2010).

Rapid globalization and large-scale global migration in the late twentieth century prompted some scholars to rethink nation-state citizenship in various ways. Globalization rescaled notions of citizenship to also include those *above* the nation-state such as group identities based on religion, ethnicity, and culture (Waite 2012; Desforges et al. 2005). Migration similarly changed ideas of citizenship because, while not formal citizens, migrants in many contexts maintain certain rights and are subject to similar obligations attendant to citizenship within those areas where the migrants live (Ehrkamp 2010). So citizenship is now understood to play out at different scales (local, national, global, etc.) and across many social identities (Waite 2012). In other words, citizenship is multilayered and context-dependent, hinging on concepts of nation, religion, ethnicity, and the like (Desforges et al. 2005).

Regardless of the applicable scale and the conceptual changes over time, distinctions among people remain central to citizenship conceptions (Ehrkamp 2010). Citizenship necessarily makes “social, cultural and political distinctions both within and between political communities. “Who counts as a citizen depends on relations not only with others *outside* ‘our’ space but also with others *within* it” (Painter & Philo, 1995: 118). In effect, there is no citizenship, no “belonging,” absent common identities that contrast with markers of difference. This production of identity categories and the formulation of the terms of membership in these categories unfolds both on the “national” level (in national policy and constitutional law, for instance), as well as everyday spaces (churches, neighborhoods, schools, etc.) where migrants and locals negotiate membership and what it means to belong in the community of citizens (Nagel & Ehrkamp 2016). Identity and membership can thus be uneven within a national

territory. And because making sameness and difference are bound up in a legal process of distributing rights, citizenship becomes central to integration discussions.

2.3 Identity and Integration

While nationalism assumes a uniform and undifferentiated nation (Billig 1995; Smith 2008), and citizenship considers the distinctions between those inside and outside of that national community (Steil & Ridgley 2012), integration investigates how outsiders can become members of that homogeneous host nation (Nagel 2009). Much of the literature over the past century thus addresses integration in assimilationist terms. Indeed, key literature frequently uses integration and assimilation synonymously (Modood 2005). I use the terms “integration” and “assimilation” somewhat interchangeably in reviewing relevant literature as much of the integration research stems from what is commonly referred to as the “assimilation canon.” But in discussing Belgium’s specific context in subsequent chapters, I use only “integration” as that is the term European politicians use in legislating immigrant behavior (Joppke 2007). To better understand contemporary integration perspectives assuming this host-society homogeneity, I outline below literature known as the “assimilation canon.” I then set forth some critical perspectives in integration literature that inform the perspective applied here.

2.3.1 The “assimilation canon”

Integration’s formal theorization in the assimilation canon dates to early twentieth century America, with the Chicago School of Sociology’s myriad treatises on immigrant identities, settlement patterns, and behaviors. Chicago School scholars articulated assimilation theory at a time of increased emphasis on “Americanization” in response to

European immigrants who allegedly created “ethnic colonies” in American urban areas (Draschler 1920). Amid political and popular debate about mass immigration’s implications on the nation’s cultural integrity and racial purity, scholars began exploring the idea of assimilation as the gradual disappearance of differences between immigrants and the host society. “Assimilation” meant the process of an immigrant abandoning “old ways” seemingly incompatible with, or perceived as inferior to, the modern, industrialized, urbanized host society (Wirth 1927; Draschler 1920). The immigrant changes his or her perspective to that of the host society’s, at least in the public realm, without any sort of explicit reciprocal adjustment (Young 1928). And the assumption is that the host society has a highly cohesive, national identity (*see* Alba & Nee 1997).

Two early works elaborating on these ideas of the absence or disappearance of difference focused on Jewish communities. Louis Wirth’s *The Ghetto* (1927) examined Jewish immigrants in the United States and the attempts by some to move away from Jewish neighborhoods. Wirth observed that Jewish immigrants became more “American” in the public realm when they lived apart from other Jews and Jewish ghettos. And the more they experienced life away from other Jews, the more these immigrants changed over time to no longer seek association with Jews. Wirth stated, “Scarcely does the Jew get a glimpse of the freer world that looms beyond the ghetto when he becomes irritated by the presence of his fellow-Jews, more Jewish than himself; he is bored, disgusted, and resumes his flight” (p. 70). Pauline Young (1928) observed the assimilation tensions within Jewish families as second-generation children increasingly abandoned Jewish cultural traits in public while adhering to them at home. These second-generation members lived in two different worlds, with home, religious and communal life being

one culture while public school and the larger community was another. The host society, Young observed, tolerated the Jewish immigrant children so long as they made these adjustments in public life. And a Jewish child “may appear assimilated in his public life, but he remains hyphenated in his private life.” (Young 1928; p. 244).

These and other conceptualizations adopted by many early assimilation theorists suggested that assimilation was an “either/or” proposition. That is, persons were either part of the host culture, or they were part of a foreign culture. This can be seen in Julius Draschler’s comment that those within the first generation (*i.e.*, foreign-born immigrants) “are really unassimilable. Transplanted though they are in body, they live in spirit in a traditional world of their own. They must die out to make room for their native-born children, who will need no ‘Americanization’” (1920; p. 192-193). The children were assumed to be in a different culture, shaped by mainstream American society (Young 1928). As such, there was presumed to be “a death-struggle between two worlds, two cultures, two civilizations” within every immigrant home (Draschler 1920; p. 79).

Draschler’s language suggests that he viewed the elimination of past cultures as vital for assimilation. Park and Burgess, while not maintaining as rigid of a distinction regarding immigrant assimilability as Draschler, held similarly minimal expectations for foreign-born immigrants and believed that a much greater degree of sameness was inevitable for the immigrants’ children. They said, “The second generation of the immigrant may share fully in our memories, but practically all that we can ask of the foreign-born is participation in our ideals, our wishes, and our common enterprises” (quoted in Rumbaut, 1997, p. 484).

Early theorists, in short, all assumed changes over time and through the generations. The second and subsequent generations would gradually become completely part of the host society as they cast off certain cultural elements and adopted others. Young assumed this to be the case for children of Jewish immigrants who she said would lose their Jewish identity over the generations (1928; p. 243). Robert Park assumed the same regarding the second and subsequent generations. He viewed the second generation members as those who had become “emancipated” by adopting the new culture. He claimed that the second-generation individual, “learns to look upon the world in which he was born and bred with something of the detachment of a stranger” (1928; p. 888). Statements like these give credence to criticism that assimilation was thought to be a “homogenizing” process completed by the third generation (*e.g.*, Rumbaut 1997; p. 483).

Despite what it might seem based on the above statements and viewpoints, however, early assimilation theorists did not necessarily expect a complete abandoning of one’s immigrant heritage. Rather, theorists expected abandonment of only “inferior” cultural elements. Julius Draschler, for instance, commented that if a culture “lacks vitality and melts away in contact with other superior cultures, then it has surely merited its fate” (1920; p. 165). Such statements support critics’ contentions that assimilation theory rests on “arrogant presumptions of ethnic superiority and inferiority” (Rumbaut 1997; 484). Yet, Draschler and other theorists did not necessarily contend that the host society’s culture was superior over the immigrants’ culture. Rather, they maintained that the superior culture was one *created by* the immigrant and host society *together*. As Draschler stated, the created culture was to be one:

broad enough to embrace full political equality human enough to make room for industrial self realization generous enough to welcome all culture groups dwelling in the midst of America to join as perpetually creative forces in the building of a synthetic civilization that shall bear the lasting imprints of the genius of many peoples. (1920; p. 238)

Draschler was not the only early theorist to expect that some cultural elements from immigrants would become part of the host culture. Robert Park and Ernest Burgess, for instance, defined assimilation as “a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons and groups and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life.” (quoted in Alba & Nee, 1997; p. 828). In other words, immigrants made contributions to their new homeland; assimilation was not one-sided (Kivisto 2004). Those adopting the “Chicago School” conception, as Park and Burgess’s ideas came to be known, understood assimilation as a process that did not require social or cultural homogeneity (Nagel 2009). Rather, assimilation served to create a shared national identity, including shared language and core cultural values, while sub-cultural affiliations persisted (Kivisto 2004). Achieving this goal of a new, shared culture was to be “a cooperative undertaking in the highest sense of the word” (Draschler 1920; p. 237).

Notions of a new, shared culture amid persistence of ethnic identities and affiliations fell from focus for a time following publication of Milton Gordon’s *Assimilation in American Life* in 1964. Gordon’s piece outlined what scholars later termed the ‘canonical account of assimilation’ (Alba & Nee 1997). He claimed that a one-way process of conformity existed between migrants and America’s dominant Anglo-Saxon society. Migrant communities, Gordon argued, would gradually adopt/conform to the dominant culture in nearly all ways, with migrants adopting some

traits sooner than others. The dominant culture remained unchanged by this absorption other than insignificant variations “in cuisine, recreational patterns, place names, speech” and so forth to merely “add flavor and piquancy” to the dominant culture’s totality (p. 110). Yet Gordon also emphasized that total societal homogenization would not occur. Racial differences would persist. So too would religious distinctions; immigrants tended to maintain their pre-migration religious beliefs. Gordon considered that since Americans lived and worked within broadly categorized religious communities (Catholic, Jew, and Protestant) from cradle to grave, immigrants would operate within one of these communities according to their faith and consequently not have full entrée into the dominant group’s spaces. Some measure of assimilation was inevitable as migrant groups at least “acculturated” to the dominant culture.

Gordon’s portraying assimilation as a one-way process with the immigrants adapting to the dominant “core culture” departed from earlier researchers’ ideas even as he adhered to these researchers’ concepts of considering assimilation to be the absence of difference between groups. Gordon noted that some could “acculturate” to the host society without ever assimilating based on their public and private behavior. This effectively reiterated Young’s (1928) position about the public/private distinction between behaviors. Different from Luis Wirth’s perspective on Jews in the United States (1927), however, was Gordon’s conclusion that some immigrants and their generations will never become full members of society. These persons were “acculturated” rather than “assimilated.” This coincided with Robert Park’s earlier claim that some groups face

greater difficulty in assimilating (1928).³ Following Gordon's work, "classic assimilation theory" came to signify the idea of assimilation as a "straight line," teleological process bringing minorities into mainstream society. Building on the simple teleology purportedly laid out by Gordon and the Chicago School theorists, scholars subsequently developed derivative assimilation theories, including the "racial/ethnic disadvantage" model,⁴ "bumpy-line" integration, and "segmented" integration (*see* Alba & Nee 1997; Brown & Bean 2006; Gans 1992). While disputing the degree to which immigrants and their descendants retain ethnic differences, the theories generally presume the existence of "successful" and "unsuccessful" measures of assimilation based on factors like language acquisition, socio-economic activities, and marriage (Nagel 2009). Ironically, by maintaining the question as to whether an immigrant has "integrated" into the host culture, these efforts to complicate teleological assimilation theories actually perpetuate essentialized and homogenized understandings of migrant groups and host society groups (Ehrkamp 2006). In other words, scholars reinforced societal assumptions that migrants are "other" by maintaining the focus on the migrant group as the one "integrating" and adapting while leaving relatively unexamined both the host society and everyday social dynamics that create understandings of difference and sameness.

Later researchers pushed back against Gordon's work and its derivatives within the broader assimilation canon. Considering assimilation's presumption (and even

³ Park considered race to be the factor causing difficulty in assimilation based on the host society's prejudice towards certain racial groups. Even so, Park believed that such difficulties would eventually subside due to "interbreeding," thus making his perspective more like Luis Wirth's and other, earlier theorists who saw assimilation as inevitable.

⁴ Ethnicity and race are often considered deviations from the national norm, with ethnicity including all things that fail to be subsumed and assimilated into national life such as social practices, religious beliefs, and so forth.

objective) to be one of wiping out previous ethnic characteristics and ties, these researchers adopted an “ethnic retention” model instead, one also labeled “multiculturalist,” “postacculturationist,” and “pluralist” (Gans 1997; 876). The ethnic retention model focuses on immigrants’ ethnic identities, the barriers they face in assimilating into the broader culture, and also the adaptations ethnic groups make within the host society. Researchers following this model consider how persons and groups constantly reconstruct, or even invent, ethnic culture (*e.g.*, Yancey et al. 1976). Considerations of how groups are able to become part of the broader mainstream culture, they argued, depended more on one’s experience in an “urban American-ethnic community” rather than one’s original point of departure (p. 397). So multicultural literature came to examine how immigrants adapted ethnic practices – themselves presumably a mix of handed-down family, community, and regional practices – to America. Examples include Italian immigrants holding Thanksgiving dinner with turkey and Italian pasta dishes (thus adapting an American tradition to their native cuisine), as well as the practice of a *bas mitzvah* (a religious ceremony for girls similar to the *bar mitzvah* for boys prevalent among Jews worldwide) that American Jews created based on their experience in American culture where women assumed a greater role in than they did in traditional Jewish communities (Gans 1997). A dichotomy thus resulted between multiculturalists, who emphasized groups retaining ties to ethnic heritage, and classical assimilationists, with those among the latter group who adhered to the straight-line theory “becoming the villains” as multicultural models gained prominence (p. 876). This all occurred despite classical assimilation literature primarily focusing on discussions of becoming American culturally but not socially (what Gordon termed “acculturation”)

(Ibid). Indeed, early classical assimilation theorists recognized certain ethnic retention and so anticipated “ethnic stocks” rather than racial homogenization within the broader culture (*e.g.*, Draschler 1920; p. 222). In the end, there may be more similarities between multiculturalists and classical assimilationists than the latter’s critics might concede. Just as classical assimilationists like Draschler and Park and Burgess saw host societies as changing based on immigrants’ arrival, so too do multiculturalists. This is evident in the following observation by Ruben Rumbaut (1997):

Neither assimilator nor assimilatee are fixed, static things, in any case, but permanently unfinished creations with vexing degrees of autonomy. The ultimate paradox of assimilation American-style may well be that in the process, what is being assimilated metamorphoses into something quite dissimilar from what any of the protagonists ever imagined or intended, and the core itself is ineluctably transmuted, even as it keeps its continental name: America (named for an Italian geographer, at that). (p. 505-506.)

Such similarities mean that modern migration studies may benefit from classical assimilation theorists and the broader assimilation canon. This is particularly true in Europe, where nationalistic fervor among an immigrant influx results in calls for greater assimilation, much as what occurred in America 100 years ago when classical assimilation theory began.

2.3.2 Rethinking the “assimilation canon”

Debates regarding assimilation theory abounded from the 1960s through the 1990s with the disputes primarily centered on how much immigrants retained distinctive identities. Starting in the early 2000s, however, scholars began to rethink assimilation/integration theory in creating an alternative, critical approach. Intersecting with critical approaches to nationhood and citizenship that see these categories as social

creations and sensitive to power dynamics (*e.g.*, Brubaker et al 2018; Staeheli et al 2012), this critical approach to integration deconstructs taken-for-granted categories like “ethnicity” and “race” to focus instead on how social actors continuously produce, reproduce, and police group boundaries. In this way, “integration” is more of a political process of determining who belongs and how they belong. It is a process of “making sameness” by creating, reproducing, and enforcing collective understandings of who/what is different or the same and by identifying criteria of difference/sameness that matter (Nagel 2009; Erdal & Oeppen 2013). In practical terms, this critical approach examines issues such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender, language, and even music preferences to assess areas of making sameness between the migrants and what may be perceived as the dominant culture (*e.g.*, Leitner 2012; Yeh & Lama 2006; Nagel & Staeheli 2005). This alternative approach considers *both* the host-society’s and immigrants’ imaginations of what immigrants must do/be on each of these issues to become members of society, *i.e.*, to “belong.”

Yet by privileging the politics of assimilation, the assimilation canon and critical perspectives alike tend to assume a uniform host society as tied to a place, and more specifically the boundaries of a nation-state (Wimmer & Schiller 2003; Antonsich 2012). In other words, researchers recognize the perceived/imagined dominant societal group and assume it as reflective of the whole of a national territory in their integration assessment (*e.g.*, Leitner 2012) rather than acknowledging and addressing localized variances in national space. This is not to say that the researchers themselves believe in a containerized, undifferentiated view of the host society. Rather, it is to note that the researchers’ assessments on host societies simply treat them as such, likely due to the

researchers' focus on immigrants' perspectives as a counterpoint to the broader nation. For example, studies regarding immigrant integration in Germany discuss "German" society as national and undifferentiated within Germany (*e.g.*, Ehrkamp 2006), those examining immigrants in France envision "French" society coterminous with the state's borders (Brubaker 1992), and so forth across numerous states (Antonsich 2012). In many respects, the persistence of a fixed host society within integration literature (regardless of approach employed) is indistinguishable from the "territorial trap" (Agnew 1994) confounding political geographers wherein states are "containers" of societies with analysis centering on the nation-state.

Efforts to move beyond methodological nationalism in integration scholarship can conceptually benefit from political geographers' efforts to escape the territorial trap. These scholars broke free from nation-state-based analyses by problematizing territory and prioritizing place (Murphy 2010; Agnew 1994, 2015). Indeed, focusing on territory and place rather than the nation-state reflects a trend in political geography over the past few decades (*e.g.*, Agnew 1994; Herb & Kaplan 1999; Elden 2005). A primary point in this is to not treat place as a given (Murphy 2010; Elden 2010). I address place in the next section.

2.4 Place and Integration: Locality

Place is a geographic location with human attachment and meaning (Cresswell 2014; Tuan 1990). Place as a combination of location and meaning is a key concept in geographic thought since the 1970s (Tuan 1977; Agnew 2015; Cresswell 2014). Place "refers to how everyday life is inscribed in space and takes on meaning for specified

groups of people and organizations” (Agnew 2002; p. 16). These are everyday spaces where people conduct their lives and socially engage with one another (Agnew 2015). Accordingly, “[p]lace can be considered ‘bottom up,’ representing the outlooks and actions of ordinary people.” (Agnew 2002; p. 16). It differs from space, which “can be considered as ‘top down,’ defined by powerful actors imposing their control and stories on others” (Id.) Place is a meeting point that considers networks of associations stretched across different scales (Massey 1994). The scale of focus in this dissertation is locality.

There is no consensus in geography about locality’s definition (Jones et al 2014). Some see locality only as “the [physical] setting in which everyday life is most concentrated for a group of people” (Agnew 2002, p. 16), the scale defined by people’s day-to-day activities (Clarke 2013). Localities under this first approach include neighborhoods, churches/mosques, workplaces, and schools, among other sites. Geographers studying nations and nationalism from a critical perspective tend to adopt this approach (*e.g.*, Mills 2008; Jones & Desforges 2003). So do many migration scholars, particularly those considering transnationalism/translocalism and migrants’ identification with more than one space (*e.g.*, Herrmann, Risse-Kappen, & Brewer 2004). Other scholars define locality simply as a place or region of subnational scale (Painter 2009). A locality could thus be a city, commune, or even a collection of communes. This understanding is popular among migration scholars who, like urban geographers, tend to use locality synonymously with “city” (*e.g.*, Krawatzek & Sasse 2020; Glick Schiller & Çağlar 2009) or village (*e.g.*, Anghel 2016). Cultural geographers often contend that localities are *relational* and “not simply spatial areas you can easily draw a line around” (Massey 1991, p. 277). In other words, locality considers social interactions

connected to varying spatial areas (cities, schools, etc.) regardless of the scale. This contention is not necessarily a separate definition but instead a perspective that can connect with either of the former definitions (the everyday or a subnational space).

Both the everyday and subnational aspects of locality are relevant here. Locality varies for each of the three populations examined in this dissertation. For the CRI and their workers implementing Wallonia's integration laws, locality is a collection of communes designated as working with each CRI for local integration plans and other frontline actors implementing the mandatory integration course. For immigrants in legally mandated civic integration courses (FIC), locality is the participants' everyday spaces. This includes FIC classrooms as well as their neighborhoods, churches/mosques, workplaces, schools, places of employment, and other everyday spaces. And for the locals comprising the "host society" into which integration is supposed to occur according to the laws, locality is similarly everyday socio-spatial contexts and spaces. Locality in this dissertation is both spatial and scalar according to the situation.

Locality plays a role in creating an identity. To be sure, territory comes with identity (Murphy 2010), and individuals interacting in everyday spaces create notions of national identity (Mills 2010). Locality shapes identity through the feelings of belonging to a place, and so to the nation as an imagined community (Mills 2008; *see also* Tuan 1990). Megoran's (2006) study of the Ferghana Valley straddling the border between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan provides an example. There, ethnic Uzbek and Kyrgyz persons have lived alongside each other within the valley for centuries with no perceived divisions among them. Intermarriage is common, and residential segregation by ethnicity is nonexistent. The primary distinction between the two groups is the maternal language

spoken. The everyday for persons living in this valley was thus a localized, peaceful coexistence. Yet the Uzbek government erected a border in the valley nearly 10 years after the countries became independent from the Soviet Union. It did so based on a more elite notion of the nation-state ideal. In other words, the everyday for persons living outside of the Ferghana Valley mandated separation by language. Valley residents, on the other hand, considered the division nonsensical and separate from who they are. Their everyday remains one that differs from the Uzbek elites and possibly even from other ethnic Uzbek and Kyrgyz peoples living elsewhere. It is localized in nature. Locality thus plays a part in nationalism as the nation becomes real and material in localized contexts. The identities migrants might aspire to in becoming part of the nation may vary based on locality.

Place's connection to the nation and national identity requires that it play a prominent role in how migration scholars conceptualize host societies and so study integration. Integration scholars should also critically consider the population living in places where integration is an issue. They should recognize that people may have localized understandings of community and belonging that are different from the broad, nationalist narratives set forth in laws or policies as to what constitutes the "host society." And some of these people may have personal attachments to place that shape everyday interactions and thus integration (Huot, Dodson, & Rudman 2014). So using a framework addressing place helps move beyond methodological nationalism in integration studies. Belonging is that framework.

2.5 Belonging as an Analytical Framework

Belonging brings together nationhood, citizenship, and place—elements shaping integration as discussed above—in a single theoretical concept separate from assumptions about the national state and a homogeneous host society. Marco Antonsich (2010) created an influential framework for examining belonging. His framework considers both “place-belongingness” and the “politics of belonging.” As discussed in this chapter’s introduction, the former refers to feelings of being “at home” in a place, while the latter is seen as “discursive resources that constructs, claims, justifies, or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion” (Antonsich 2010, p. 645). Antonsich notes five factors relating to place-belongingness. The first is autobiographical matters such as past history, personal experiences, or relations. By way of example, Antonsich refers to author bell hooks’ descriptions of the Kentucky hills (her girlhood home) where she feels at home. The second factor is relational and refers to matters such as personal and social ties. But Antonsich does not include everyday encounters with this relational construct. The third factor is cultural; it considers things such as language, religion, and food production/consumption. The fourth factor is economic and considers one’s integration into the economy. Antonsich’s final factor for “place-belongingness” is legal, such as citizenship and residency permits because of their connection to security, which Antonsich sees as vital for belonging.

Antonsich’s (2010) politics of belonging centers on boundary discourses separating “us” and “them”, which he says are “the very essence of any politics of belonging.” (p. 649). So membership (in a group) and ownership (of a place) become key

factors in politics of belonging. Yet achieving a politics of belonging is not enough for one to also have place-belongingness (2010, p. 650).

Antonsich's framework Antonsich bears similarity to one proposed by Nira Yuval-Davis, who also sees belonging on both an individual level and in connection with a larger population separated into "us" and "them" (Yuval-Davis 2006; p. 204). Like Antonsich, Yuval-Davis refers to the collective belonging as the "politics of belonging." Yuval-Davis considers place-belongingness (what she simply labels "belonging") to be made up of three parts: (1) social locations, (2) identifications and emotional attachments, (3) and ethical and political values. Social location refers to membership in a specific group like age, profession, race, gender, and class. These may occur on multiple axes, as a black woman will have a different locational axis than a white woman (2006, p. 199). Identifications and emotional attachments, Yuval-Davis's second aspect of belonging, centers on who people are/are not, what it means to be a member of particular groups, an individual's construction of identity, and so forth. (2006, p. 202). The third aspect, ethical and political values, concerns an individual's personal considerations (2006, p. 203).

Antonsich (2010) acknowledges his framework's similarity to Yuval-Davis's model. Indeed, the fundamentals of both models (individual considerations and connections with a larger population) are the same (*compare* Antonsich 2010 *with* Yuval-Davis 2006). One difference is that Antonsich's model considers citizenship within the individual sphere ("place-belongingness") while Yuval-Davis categorizes it with the politics of belonging (Yuval-Davis 2006). Other than this observed difference, Antonsich attempts to distinguish his framework by stating Yuval-Davis's model overlooks notions of place (Antonsich 2010). But the claim is an oversimplification. Yuval-Davis does

consider space; she notes that citizenship comes in forms of political rights, civil rights, and social rights (*i.e.*, access to welfare), and to that she adds “*spatial rights*,” meaning “the right to enter a state or any other territory of a political community and, once inside,” stay there (Yuval-Davis 2006; p. 208). Her observations regarding citizenship and spatial rights, however, effectively remained bound by the “territorial trap” of the nation-state (*see* Agnew 1994).

Other studies ask similar questions as those put forth in the Antonsich/Yuval-Davis framework even if guised in different terms. A study of immigrants in Italy, for example, considered belonging to be “made up of different layers: (1) admittance, (2) involvement, and (3) identification” (Colombo et al. 2011; p. 342). The approach at first seemed to be parallel to Antonsich’s ideals. Yet the study’s ultimate conclusions maintained the notion of its conceptual “belonging” (meaning “admittance, identification and involvement”) as emphasizing “different aspects of the meaning attributed to citizenship.” (p. 344). Several others adopt similar, if not parallel, approaches in considering belonging; Nelson and Hiemstra (2008) do so in discussing migrants in Colorado and Oregon, while Van Riemsdijk (2014) does the same in studying highly-skilled migrants in Oslo. Huot et al (2014) adheres to a similar approach in discussing francophone residents in Toronto, although they bring in notions of place’s interaction in shaping migrants’ integration. Leitner (2012) similarly stresses place (specifically places of encounter) in discussing belonging in Minnesota. And Trudeau (2006) emphasizes the politics of belonging in considering the case of a slaughterhouse in rural Minnesota while largely overlooking elements associated with Antonsich’s place-belongingness.

Gilmartin (2008) points out the need to consider place in the context of migrant belonging.

Elements of Antonsich's framework can thus be seen in many studies regarding belonging. And while his framework patterns Yuval-Davis's, it goes beyond her work in moving towards a smaller, more localized understanding of belonging. Antonsich's considering citizenship with "place-belongingness" and otherwise bringing in more concrete discussions regarding space creates a solid foundation to further emphasize space and place's importance in belonging. That is where this proposed framework builds on Antonsich's work and so provides greater understanding regarding migrant belonging.

The approach I consider in this dissertation examines integration through belonging *and* localities rather than simply relying on Antonsich's two-pronged approach involving place-belongingness and the politics of belonging. The reason is that localities bring together both of Antonsich's elements in definite spaces and in connection with other places. And just as belonging is a process in becoming (Antonsich 2010) that is continually being remade (Wright 2011), so too are localities, as spaces and places (Massey 2005), such that localities and belonging may remake each other.

Specific "localities" in this context refers to definite spaces and places involving people, including cities (Nelson & Hiemstra 2008), workplaces (Van Riemsdijk 2014), homes (Delaney 2015), churches (Cresswell 1996), community centers (Matejskova & Leitner 2011), and so forth. Localities may change by the moment. One might feel belonging (both place-belongingness and political belonging) while worshiping with fellow believers in a church (one locality), for instance, but not feel belonging in a store

immediately adjacent to the church (a different locality). The same individual may similarly experience belonging at localities including their workplace, their home, and their neighborhood, but exclusion in localities within the same city such as a park, the town hall, and commercial office buildings. So where does the individual belong? Would the exclusion from some localities within a city be such that the individual no longer claims “belonging” there? Likely not. So the agglomeration of localities, and their proximity to one another, contributes to a greater sense of belonging. In other words, the greater number of localities where one feels belonging, and their proximity to one another, the greater overall sense of belonging in a place. Belonging is not evenly experienced spatially. Nor is it necessarily evenly experienced temporally as one might have feelings of belonging and non-belonging, or being in/out of place (Cresswell 1996), as they move throughout their day.

Antonsich left open this possibility of belonging by localities when he acknowledged the possibility of seeing “belonging as a mode of affective community-making based on *physical proximity* rather than a common identity.” (Antonsich 2010; p. 652 (emphasis added)). Examining belonging based on physical proximity is what the proposed model does. The closer in proximity of the various localities making one’s community, the greater one’s sense of belonging. Consider the following example regarding migrants in Leadville, Colorado (Nelson & Hiemstra 2008). Latino immigrants in that city lived clustered in a trailer park 10 minutes outside of the city, worked dozens of miles away in a neighboring resort community in the opposite direction from the city, and entered Leadville only to attend a church in the city center or to purchase groceries. The Latino immigrants, even those with American citizenship, did not feel belonging in

the city of Leadville. Some did not feel belonging outside of the trailer park or even their own homes (among other Latinos). The low number of localities where the immigrants felt belonging, combined with the tight proximity of those localities where they did feel at home (primarily in a single trailer park away from the city), explain why the immigrants did not have a greater sense of belonging to the city.

Examining belonging through localities requires consideration of boundaries. Boundaries—both metaphorical and material—are a critical component of the politics of belonging (Antonsich 2010). The boundaries focused on using the localities analysis are those that the people individually set for themselves on a day-to-day basis. Their boundaries create their localities, and their localities together create belonging. The Latino immigrants Nelson and Hiemstra (2008) examined in Leadville, for instance, drew boundaries around specific localities where they had both a sense of feeling at home (place-belongingness) and inclusion by those within those same spaces and places (the politics of belonging). Another example of creating and changing localities by drawing boundaries can be found in Amanda Wise's (2005) study of Ashfield, a suburb of Sydney, Australia. There, long-term, Anglo-Celtic residents no longer went to certain shops or other areas of the city. The long-term residents withdrew from these localities (adjusted their personal boundaries) because they did not want confrontations with those who they saw as different (Asian immigrants who represented an increasingly significant share of the local population). The residents voluntarily reduced their boundaries. Both the Leadville and Ashfield examples demonstrate that boundaries create a shifting social space that polices and creates distinctions (Crowley 1999). Both those who claim belonging and those who seek it have power to grant belonging through these boundaries

(Antonsich 2010). The politics of belonging is essentially the “dirty work of boundary maintenance” (Crowley 1999) tied to localities.

Focusing on localities is integral to examining belonging because localities do not provide for broad-scale generalizations. Doreen Massey (1995) recognized this in her seminal essay “A Global Sense of Place” when she observed that her neighborhood did not have single, coherent identity that everyone shared. Rather, multiple identities existed.

Another reason to examine belonging through localities is because one’s sense of belonging to a place, the place-belongingness referred to by Antonsich, can change. Yet Antonsich’s framework does not seem to consider this. He used as an example bell hooks’ writings of her feelings of being “at home” in the Kentucky Hills. The localities these hills occupy presumably had not changed over time. More often than not, however, places change. As an example, a co-worker attended Hollywood High School in Hollywood, California, over fifty years ago. While the high school building stands, the co-worker has no connection whatsoever to the school at present. He does not feel at home there or otherwise have an attachment. Current students would similarly not see him as being part of their community.

Finally, localities are important because they recognize that laws, which shape the politics of belonging, do not always achieve their intended effect. For example, despite the Multiculturalism Act in Canada permitting the use of French, many Francophones living in Ontario must learn English to advance in their society (Huot et al. 2014). And sometimes laws can achieve their intended effect for the public broadly, such as

antidiscrimination laws in the United Kingdom, but not achieve the accompanying change in mentality for those within the area (Valentine & Harris 2016). Examining localities will inform what a law's effect is because of the visible presence on the landscape. Landscapes reflect the law (Delaney 2015).

In sum, belonging is a powerful analytical tool for examining integration. Its focus on both personal belonging and place-belongingness allow researchers to consider nationhood, citizenship, and place together in a single framework separate from the confines of the nation-state. And by considering belonging along with localities, researchers can address integration in a localized manner to better understand integration laws and the perspectives of migrants and non-migrants concerning integration.

2.6 Contemporary Cleavages in Belgium and Literature Regarding Immigrant Integration

This section contextualizes the critical perspective applied in this study by considering the themes discussed above (the state, national identity, citizenship, integration, and place) in Belgium. To do so, it briefly addresses Belgium's fractured status as a multi-national state with localized political and economic cleavages. These cleavages primarily derive from the linguistic divide present in the country. This section also addresses immigration into the state. It then concludes by reviewing literature concerning immigrant integration in the country.

2.6.1 Language, politics, and a fractured state

Language is an important factor in modern nationalism and providing unity in a nation-state (*see* B. Anderson 2006). But language is complicated in Belgium. The

country has three official languages: Flemish (Dutch), French, and German. Flemish is primarily spoken in the northern half of the country, an area known as Flanders. French dominates the south, known locally as Wallonia. And German is the primary language in Eupen-Malmedy, an area in the country's east bordering Germany, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. With only around 75,000 German speakers in Belgium, however, the German community does not prominently factor into the country's linguistic battles. Rather, the division is between Flemish and French speakers. Strained relations between Dutch-speaking Flanders and French-speaking Wallonia complicate notions of national identity (Adam & Martiniello 2013; Murphy 1988).

The country's linguistic division is apparent in the Belgian landscape. Street signs and other posted literature in the Brussels capital region, for example, are bilingual in French and Dutch as the capital region is officially bilingual. Yet in Flanders street signs, billboards, and other public signage are only in Flemish, just as in Wallonia the signage is only in French. Belgian law mandates this unilingualism. Strict linguistic separation between the regions is such an issue that in the late 1960s Flemish authorities forced French speakers at the Catholic University of Leuven in Flanders (faculty, administrators, and students) to relocate to Wallonia despite French speakers having been present at the university for well over a century (Murphy 1988).

Flanders and Wallonia's unilingual structure, as well as the Brussels capital region's bilingual nature, are also evident in government services. In the Brussels capital region, for example, government occurs in both languages. The capital region's governing structure guarantees representation by French and Flemish speakers alike based on their respective presence in the area. As 80% of the capital region speaks

French, roughly 80% of the region's representatives are French speakers, with the remaining 20% of representatives reserved for Flemish speakers (Deschouwer 2012). And as one can expect, government services in Flanders and Wallonia are unilingual. The issue is non-negotiable. By way of example, it is so extreme that in the city of Linckenbeek, located within Flanders, the Flemish interior minister barred an elected mayor from serving because he sent out election literature in French, not Flemish as required. In the same city, if the town council's proceedings occur in French (13 of the 15 council members are French speakers), then the session is deemed invalid (Traynor 2010).

The national government is officially bilingual. The constitution requires equal numbers of French-speaking and Flemish-speaking ministers to serve in the government in hopes of helping to bridge divides. Elected representatives, however, are placed together according to their language. Most elected members of the national government are Flemish by virtue of Flemish speakers accounting for the majority of Belgium's population (Deschouwer 2012).

As this example indicates, Belgium's linguistic division shapes its current political cleavages. There are no national political parties, for example. Whereas historically three political parties dominated Belgian politics (the Catholic (now Christian-Democratic) party, the socialists, and the liberals), since the 1960s these parties have split along language lines (David & Van Hamme 2011). So it is that there is both a Walloon socialist party and a Flemish socialist party, but there is little to no consistency between their platforms. The same is true for the other parties. Socialists remain the strongest party in Wallonia, while the Christian-Democratic party has remained one of

the strongest in Flanders. The large number of political parties, combined with the lack of consistency between the Flemish and Walloon parties, often results in difficulties forming national governments. In 2010, for instance, Belgium went without a government for an unprecedented 18 months largely because of ongoing divisions between Flanders and Wallonia (Deutsche Welle 2010). The political crisis ended in part because of an agreement to devolve more power to the regions.

Granting increased power to the regions is something that has occurred on a growing scale since the 1970s. Since that time, Belgium modified its constitution to become a federal state and began granting certain competencies to the regions. Unlike the United States where a federal government received limited powers and the others remained with the states, in Belgium all powers resided with the national government (it was a unitary state like France) and only some were adjusted down to the regional level. This has been increasing as a way of dealing with the divides between the regions. The exclusive competencies explains why, in the example above regarding the city of Linkenbeek, there was a “Flemish interior minister” dictating what occurred rather than a “Belgian interior minister.” As it is today, Flanders and Wallonia have differing competencies that permit them to act unilaterally regarding certain functions, including entering international agreements with other states. This can be summed up by the principle “*in foro interno, in foro externo*” (if the Belgian region has the competence internally, it has it externally too).

In 2014, Belgium again did not have a functioning cabinet. This time the lack of a government occurred for five months. The inability to form a government in 2014 came in part because of differences becoming more political than linguistic (Deutsche Welle

2014). This is because Flanders increasingly leans right politically while Wallonia leans left, as mentioned above with the most popular political parties in the regions. The 2014 national election resulted in the New Flemish Alliance (Flemish: Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie or “N-VA”) winning the most votes and holding 22% of the federal parliament’s seats. N-VA is a regionalist and separatist party seeking greater autonomy for Flanders and a hoped-for secession from Belgium (*see* Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie (N-VA). (n.d.)). N-VA entered a coalition government that same year that excluded socialists from the governing coalition for first time since the 1980s (Deutsche Welle 2014).

The primary economic division in Belgium map onto these linguistic and regional political divisions. Flanders is a wealthier area. It contributes 60% of Belgium’s GDP despite having only 55% of the country’s population. Unemployment is also much lower in Flanders at around 5% than in Brussels or Wallonia, where unemployment stands near 17% and 11%, respectively (Financial Times, n.d.). Flanders may have more contact with United States economically, in part because AB InBev, the owner of Budweiser, is based in the Flemish city of Leuven. Finally, educational attainment also differs between the areas. Flanders maintains higher educational attainment, and it has two of the world’s top universities in Leuven and Ghent. Part of the difference may result from the different curricula adopted by the Flanders and Wallonia regional parliaments, as education is one of the competencies left to the regions. The socio-economic divisions inflame political tensions as Flemish nationalist parties seek to keep more of the wealth generated in Flanders within the region as opposed to sharing it with Wallonia.

2.6.2 Immigration, nationalism, and linguistic/regional cleavages in Belgium

Nationalist parties like N-VA reflect another cleavage facing Belgium, that of immigrants. Belgium is host to tens of thousands of immigrants. Nearly 70% of these come from other countries within the European Union under the Schengen Agreement. France and the Netherlands contribute the largest share, largely due to the linguistic similarities between the countries. Scores of wealthy Dutch residents live in affluent suburbs north of Antwerp in their efforts to secure lower costs of living (Kesteloot et al., 1999). But their presence causes some resentment by native Belgians.

There are also large numbers people with Turkish and Moroccan origin. Turks and Moroccans originally came to Belgium as guest workers following World War II. Many remained in the country, developed social networks, and raised families in Belgium. Liberal citizenship laws permitted most of the third generation to claim Belgian citizenship. Many did so. However, their presence has not always been welcomed. Unemployment among persons with Turkish backgrounds exceeds the national average in Wallonia, for example, while in Flanders Turkish unemployment is lower than for Belgian citizens although some studies suggest that Turks face far more discrimination in Flanders than in Wallonia in terms of education, housing, and employment (Wets 2006; Phalet & Swyngedouw 2003; Heylen & Van den Broeck 2016).

Immigration, especially from the non-European periphery, has become an especially contentious issue in Belgium because of terror attacks that have occurred over the past few years. The 2015 Paris attackers and the 2016 Brussels terrorists had used

Belgium as their base of operations (Schreur & Bilefsky 2017). And certain areas of Belgium, such as the Molonbeek area in Brussels, are often seen as jihadist training grounds, causing scores of Belgian citizens to oppose immigration even though many of the Molonbeek residents have Belgian citizenship themselves due to Belgium's previously liberal citizenship laws. Indeed, Belgium provides the largest number of foreign fighters to ISIS (U.N. News 2015). These dynamics resulted in Belgian legislators at all levels proposing and adopting rules ostensibly intended to promote immigrant "integration" (European Migration Network ("EMN") 2016 Annual Report, 2017). One measure requires immigrants to sign a pledge promising to accept Belgium's "local values" (Guardian 2016). Integration laws effectively gained new urgency and prominence in Belgium due to terror concerns.

Research on Belgian immigration politics notes the differences in integration philosophies between Flanders and Wallonia (*e.g.*, Adam 2013; Martiniello 1995). For years, Flanders has had clearly defined integration legislation and policies known as *inburgering* (Flemish term approximately meaning 'citizenization') (Martiniello 2013). Scholars and policymakers alike see *inburgering* as assimilationist (Adam 2011; Swyngedeouw 2016). Wallonia also has well-defined integration legislation that some describe as striking a balance between assimilation and multiculturalism (Torrekens et al 2014). But some consider Wallonia's attitude towards migrants to be more relaxed (Pulinx & Van Avermaet 2015; Adam 2011; Martiniello 1995).

Beyond broad philosophies, studies concerning immigration and integration policies in Belgium consistently focus on Flanders (*e.g.*, Waerniers & Hustinx 2019; Pulinx & Van Avermaet 2015) or the Brussels-Capital Region (*e.g.*, Xhardez 2016;

Swyngedouw 2019). Those that do discuss Wallonia usually do so in informational terms of comparison with these other regions that are the primary focus of analysis (*e.g.*, Adam & Jacobs 2014; Van Avermaet & Gysen 2009).

Concerning Wallonia's integration laws generally, Ilke Adams (2011, 2013) provides perhaps the most comprehensive account in describing the laws' historical background as part of her work comparing and contrasting integration models present in Flanders, Wallonia, and the Brussels-Capital region. Yet her work predates and thus fails to include significant legislative changes in 2014 and 2016 that have dramatically reshaped Wallonia's integration policies, including CRIs' role in the integration process. Other accounts regarding Wallonia's laws tend to examine them in the context of general integration philosophies (*e.g.*, Martiniello 1995; Martiniello 2013; Adam & Martiniello 2013; Martiniello, Rea, & Dassetto 2006), in informational terms of comparison (*e.g.*, Adam, Martiniello, & Rea 2018; Adam & Jacobs 2014; Van Avermaet & Gysen 2009), or only superficially when contrasted to Flemish policies that are the primary focus of a study (*e.g.*, Xhardez 2015; Pulinx & Van Avermaet 2015). Catherine Xhardez (2019) did nevertheless do an in-depth comparison of Walloon and Flemish laws in the early 2000s. In-depth research concerning Wallonia's current integration laws is limited.

There is some research regarding Wallonia's CRIs. Corrine Torrekens et al. (2014) studied the CRIs, primarily focusing on assessing 'Europeanization' within Wallonia and its CRIs, meaning the extent of the European Union's effort to 'harmonize' member states' integration policies. In terms of the CRI directly, the account also briefly considered each CRI director's philosophy on a continuum ranging from a willingness to work with religious groups to one eschewing any relationship with religious

organizations. The article derived from previous work considering the same issue, and one that provided greater information and background to CRIs generally (Torrekens et al. 2014). But both articles examined CRIs prior to the Walloon government's 2014 decree revamping the CRIs and their missions, and which placed CRIs in more active roles in integration. These significant legal changes require renewed analysis of CRI and their legally mandated role in Wallonia's integration politics.

This dissertation addresses the limitations in the literature concerning Wallonia's current integration laws and its CRIs.

2.7 Conclusion

To recap, this dissertation critically examines immigrant integration in national "host societies." This approach considers integration as a set of political processes in which immigrants and host groups together "make sameness" by determining differences that do/do not matter (Nagel 2009). The parties effectively decide who and what "belongs" in a place. This makes the theoretical concept of "belonging" a key component in investigating integration politics, and more broadly, nationhood, citizenship, and place.

Belonging rests on differing academic traditions. Elements of "place-belongingness" draw upon humanistic traditions, while those relating to the "politics of belonging" are more conventionally located within political/legal traditions. This dissertation weaves these different traditions by considering them together in localities marked by immigration. Doing so departs from traditional approaches to integration that emphasize the nation-state or use the nation-state as the primary unit of analysis even when critically appraising integration policies and politics. But it does not dismiss the

nation-state. Rather, it shows how national space consists of countless places—localities—in which migrants and non-migrants encounter one another and negotiate membership and belonging, and how these actors construe membership in ways that complement, bypass, or undermine national narratives.

Locality is the scale defined by people’s day-to-day activities (Clarke 2013), “the [physical] setting in which everyday life is most concentrated for a group of people” (Agnew 2002; p. 16). Locality is also a place or region of subnational scale (Painter 2009). Both aspects are relevant here. This study highlights how belonging and experiences of integration—of becoming a member of a spatially defined community or society—occurs in specific contexts *within* the nation-state. It does so by asking the following questions:

- ***What legal constructs (state and local) are shaping integration?*** How do integration laws shape immigrants’ and non-immigrants interactions; what mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion are embedded in integration laws; what do these embedded assumptions have about the national community and those outside the community (i.e. immigrants); and (d) how local/municipal actions differ from national ideals and policies?
- ***How do these legal constructs manifest in localized spaces?*** How do migrants and non-migrants brought together by these laws at specific spaces understand and interpret the stated legal requirements, including how local actors communicate these requirements to immigrants; how do local actors enforce or subvert dominant integration discourses; and how

do migrants manifest their own views about society in interacting with non-migrants?

- ***How do immigrants and non-immigrants respond to integration laws?***

How immigrants and non-immigrants interpret “integration”; what do people think about integration and what the laws state; and how do people (migrants and non-migrants) see themselves “practicing” integration in their everyday lives and in everyday spaces of interaction?

I consider these questions in Chapters Four through Six. But I will first outline my methods in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This research explores socially constructed identities and ideas about belonging along with everyday social practices related to belonging. Accordingly, it adopts qualitative research methods including interviews and participant observation. Such methods are pragmatic; they help explain phenomena that researchers cannot readily quantify such as the ways people explain what they think, know, or feel, and how these ways relate to how people behave (*e.g.*, Secor 2010; Laurier 2010). They effectively allow for researchers to examine how people interpret their own and others' actions in a relatively open-ended manner. This maintains the link between people's experiences and the meanings they attach to them, unlike quantitative methods, which tend to ignore everyday settings (Staller 2010; Matejskova & Leitner 2011). Qualitative methods also help avoid imposing *a priori* identities/categories on the study subjects. Migration researchers in geography frequently employ in-depth qualitative research methods for these very reasons (*see, e.g.*, Matejskova & Leitner 2011; Nagel & Staeheli 2008; Ehrkamp 2006). Applying them here helps better understand migrants and non-migrants' points of view regarding integration (*i.e.*, making sameness).

This chapter explains the methodology used in this dissertation. I begin by providing greater context regarding my selecting Belgium—and more specifically

Wallonia—as my study site (section 3.2). Next, I outline my research design (section 3.3). I then detail my data collection (section 3.4). An outline of my data analysis follows (section 3.5). Finally, I conclude by considering my researcher reflexivity (section 3.6).

3.2 Situated Knowledge and Selecting Belgium for Study

My drive to research immigrant integration primarily results from lived experience in interacting with both local populations and migrants in southern Belgium (Wallonia) and northern France while serving as a volunteer with an international NGO in my early 20s. I lived in Belgium and France for approximately one year each between 2002 and 2004. While there, I met and befriended several migrants (including refugees). I also interacted with native locals on a daily basis. Most locals were gracious hosts and welcomed me to their countries as a guest. Even so, many were vehemently anti-migrant. Some took out their anti-immigrant frustrations on me. I distinctly remember speaking with a lady in Boulogne-sur-Mer, France, who screamed at me for “invading” France and praised Jean-Marie Le Pen, the then-leader of France’s far-right and extremely nationalist National Front political party. Her feelings were so strong that she continued screaming at me as I walked down the street and until I was out of sight.

Nationalist, anti-migrant anger nevertheless seemed less in Wallonia while I lived there. And it appeared relatively non-existent over the ensuing decade after I returned to the United States and followed Belgium from afar (although I returned for a short time in 2008 to complete an internship). As far as I could tell, immigrant integration was not an issue. Things seemed to change after the November 2015 terror attack in Paris and the March 2016 terror attack in Brussels. I noted news reports that the attacks sparked

debates about immigrant integration across Europe, including in Belgium. Governments at all levels increasingly implemented “integration” laws. So I resolved to research Belgium and its integration laws as I began my doctoral program.

I initially anticipated studying immigrant integration throughout all of Francophone Belgium (Brussels and Wallonia) based on my French language skills. But as I researched the issue more deeply, I learned that the legal systems regarding immigrant integration differed between the Brussels-Capital Region and Wallonia. The former was already the subject of multiple studies, including one presented by Eva Swyngedouw at AAG in April 2018.⁵ Studies regarding Wallonia were relatively non-existent as described in Chapter Two. So I resolved to focus my research efforts exclusively on Wallonia.

3.3 Research Design

Belgium presents a unique case to investigate as the country is a microcosm of Europe’s debates over immigration. Wallonia specifically is a compelling case concerning immigrant integration for the reasons detailed in Chapters One and Two. In this section, I present my original research questions before explaining how being in the field adjusted the initial inquiry to then shape the research questions ultimately guiding this study.

My initial research questions were: (1) What are the legal formulations in the Belgian context that regulate the presence of immigrants and their access to formal rights

⁵ I attended this presentation and spoke with Ms. Swyngedouw afterwards about my anticipated research and her experience. Her research regarding Brussels is now published (*see, e.g.*, Swyngedouw 2019a; 2019b).

and societal resources? (2) How is the legal framework implemented in local spaces of immigrant settlement? (3) How do immigrants respond to this legal framework? These questions were effectively all migrant-centric and structural in nature. They largely ignored host-society perspectives other than those stated in the laws and assumed to be the dominant discourse.

After arriving in the field, however, I recognized the need to revise my research questions to actively include non-immigrants' perspectives as well. Because integration is typically a nationalist demand, and because nationalism is a mass phenomenon, researchers should do more to examine individuals who constitute the masses, the so-called "ordinary" people with unique identities and experiences in their everyday lives (Strømsø 2019). And while Wallonia is not overtly nationalist, there could be nationalist overtones in its integration laws and among its non-immigrant population. These sentiments may bleed over from Flanders and state-level ideals where Flemish nationalists maintain an outsized presence. So I simplified my research questions and focused my inquiry as follows:

1. What legal constructs (state and local) are shaping integration?

Empirical inquiry for this question considered the following issues: (a) how integration laws shape immigrants' and non-immigrants interactions; (b) the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion embedded in integration laws; (c) the embedded assumptions the laws have about the national community and those outside the community (*i.e.* immigrants); and (d) how local/municipal actions differ from national ideals and policies.

2. *How do local actors interpret and implement these legal constructs?*

Empirical inquiry relating to question two focused on: (a) how immigrants and non-immigrants brought together by these laws at specific spaces understand and interpret the stated legal requirements, including how local actors communicate these requirements to immigrants; (b) how local actors enforce or subvert dominant integration discourses; (c) the extent that NGOs implementing integration laws “instruct” migrants to conform to a dominant narrative; and (d) how migrants manifest their own views about society in interacting with non-immigrants.

3. *How do immigrants and non-immigrants respond to integration laws?*

Empirical inquiry for this final question addressed: (a) how immigrants and non-immigrants interpret “integration”; (b) what people think about integration and what the laws state; and (c) how people (immigrants and non-immigrants) see themselves “practicing” integration in their everyday lives and in everyday spaces of interaction.

Because each of these questions focus on the everyday, I use qualitative methods as described in greater detail below. Qualitative methods is the primary tool human geographers use since the discipline’s humanistic turn in the 1980s (Cresswell 2013). Indeed, qualitative methods seemingly defines human geography’s future directions as well (Hitchings & Latham 2020). Qualitative methods are all the more appropriate here because of the study’s focus on locality. “[L]ocal studies involving interviews and local written sources anchor understanding of the intersubjective worlds of daily life out of which politics is finally mapped” (Agnew 2002; p. 22)

3.4 Data Collection

Collecting data for this study involved: (1) document analysis, (2) qualitative interviews, and (3) participant observation. Document analysis and interviews addressed the first research question listed above, while interviews and participant observation address the second and third research questions. I detail my data collection for each of these methods in this section. Fieldwork for this study occurred between May and August 2018 with some follow up in September 2019. **Table 3.1** provides a summary of the methods used and the sites and participants involved in my data collection effort. I also include in this section a discussion of my study sites.

3.4.1 Document analysis

I began analyzing documents in March 2018. My analysis centered on laws and regulations concerning immigrant integration in Wallonia. I started by searching Belgium's national code and Wallonia's regional code through official government websites. I then reviewed legislative decrees concerning integration posted in the "Moniteur Belge" (the country's official legislative reports). I also reviewed official documents relating to the CRIs as posted on each CRI's website. I completed this initial analysis prior to leaving for the field in May 2018. In reviewing government decrees and regulations, I looked for directives and definitions affecting CRIs' actions towards immigrants and the host society. I also examined CRI-specific mission statements and other, localized CRI policies relating to immigrant integration. The findings from this analysis informed the question template I used in qualitative interviews with key informants at CRIs and others.

Document analysis continued as I entered the field and visited the various CRIs. These CRI visits occurred in June and July 2018 and September 2019. Interviewees provided me with documents and reports relating to their centers that were not available online and that stated various policies specific to the CRI. Other documents received in the field included those relating to FIC. I received and reviewed these documents when attending training sessions for FIC instructors and attending FIC courses as a participant.

3.4.2 Qualitative interviews

Qualitative interviews served as my primary data collection method. Using the interview template informed by my document analysis, I conducted over 100 in-depth interviews and dozens more informal interview with migrants and non-migrants alike. Interviews lasted an average of 45 minutes. The shortest interview was approximately 15 minutes; the longest lasted over two hours. I conducted them in each interviewee's place of choice (work premises, parks, restaurants, homes, etc.). I digitally recorded the interviews and transcribed them. Participants seemed to enjoy the interview. Many expressed interest in my research and the results. I personally conducted all interviews in either French or English (sometimes a mixture of both) according to each participant's preference and ability. Charles, for instance, was a native Anglophone and preferred English. All translations are mine. These interviews included several with key informants.

Thirteen key informants included CRI directors and other CRI staff involved with the integration courses (*parcours d'integration*) at all eight of Wallonia's CRIs. **Figure 3.1** shows the administrative action areas for the eight CRIs and the communes they

cover. Three of the eight CRIs are located within large cities that receive significant numbers of migrants. These include Charleroi (population ~202,000), Liège (~197,000), and Namur (~111,000). Another CRI is located in Verviers (~55,000), a city east of Liège near the German border. The remaining four CRIs are strategically located in varying smaller communes between large Walloon cities so as to be more accessible to the total communes they serve. Specifically, these CRIs are in Nivelles (~28,500), Saint-Ghislain (~23,000), Libramont (~11,000), and Trivières (~4,000).

As described in Chapter One, Wallonia's CRIs are primarily administrative actors over a series of frontline actors and local government entities. Their locations are generally basic offices containing administrative workers with some staff conducting individual interviews and then directing migrants to various local organizations assisting migrants. **Figure 3.2** shows the exterior of the offices for the CRI in Verviers known as CRVI. The inside of CRVI, as with each of the other CRIs, resembled a typical business with a receptionist and a small waiting area (approximately three seats). Each CRI had at least one conference room and several smaller offices for the various personnel. One CRI known as CIMB maintained an open floor plan with workers concentrated in a large central room at tables containing their workstations. Many CRIs are easily accessible via public transit while others are more readily reached via car. As an example, **Figure 3.3** shows CRIPEL's location in downtown Liège near a major pedestrian shopping area and with easy access to a train station and bus depot at Place Saint-Lambert.

I recruited CRI informants via cold-calling and snowball sampling. As workers at government-sponsored entities, CRI workers occupy a unique position relating to the Walloon government. They straddle the divide between frontline actors and legislators.

CRI directors are those overseeing the implementation of regional integration laws but not necessarily those interacting with immigrants on a day-to-day basis. CRI workers over the integration courses do have some frontline involvement with migrants, but it is more administrative, as explained above. The CRI also depend on government financing, and they are tasked with implementing legislative directives. Consequently, they must walk a finer line than workers at private organizations in critiquing Wallonia's policies. Some expressed hesitancy to speak on the record absent guarantees that their statements could not be attributed to themselves or their specific CRI as one director likened financing battles between the CRIs as "war." But once assured of their anonymity, workers and directors opened up. I identify the CRI directors here using only numbers (Director 1, Director 2, etc.) and gender-neutral terms. I use pseudonyms for the other CRI workers over the integration course.

Other key informants included FIC instructors (including one of FIC's creators and who is also responsible for training FIC instructors throughout the region), local government officials responsible for immigrant integration projects, workers at local NGOs serving as frontline actors with immigrants, and even a former regional parliament member.

I recruited several participants by direct contact after meeting them at various functions including training seminars, FIC courses, municipal events, religious functions (I attended Friday prayers at a mosque, for example), and from past acquaintances I had known since 2003 when I volunteered in Belgium. I chose to attend functions and recruit participants primarily in Brabant Wallon, a province I had lived in for nearly eight months while serving as a volunteer. My knowledge of the area and connections to it

greatly facilitated my research. For example, I knew about a mosque centrally located in Brabant Wallon in the city of Louvain-la-Neuve that attracted both migrant and non-migrant congregants (*see* **Figure 3.4**). So I attended Friday prayers at that mosque and recruited participants there. (I elaborate on my participant observation activities in the next section.) Many migrants I met in FIC courses were unable to meet for in-depth interviews outside of class but spoke freely during class breaks. FIC instructors encouraged me to speak with their students and similarly encouraged their students to speak with me.

Beyond official, organized functions, I also sought to develop connections with others in what Tatiana Matejskova (2014) calls “interstitial spaces,” meaning those spaces containing unplanned moments such as waiting at a bus stop or riding public transportation. I met some of my research participants this way. Eid-Mohammed is one example. I was on a bus traveling back from an interview with a FIC participant when I heard a man talking on the phone and speaking a language that I did not recognize. When his phone conversation ended, I turned and asked what language he had been speaking. He replied that he was speaking Pashto, one of the main languages in Afghanistan. We spoke further and I discovered that he recently received refugee status in Belgium. We spoke further and he ultimately agreed to speak with me in a semi-structured interview.

3.4.3 Participant observation

Participant observation is something that the researcher should know/have experience with the matter, or at least be involved in it (Laurier, 2010). Accordingly, my initial plan going into the field was to volunteer at CRIs other NGOs assisting migrants in

Wallonia. I repeatedly offered to volunteer within both CRI and other NGOs, but the groups denied my offer. The best explanation that I can come up with is that there are varying administrative regulations on volunteer positions within Wallonia, and the respective organizations either did not want to deal with bureaucratic issues for a volunteer who would be in Belgium for a shorter time or they had concerns about volunteer positions going towards migrants who intended to stay in the country and so affording them the opportunity to develop skills.

I nevertheless participated in as many functions as I could. As mentioned above, these activities included training seminars, FIC courses, municipal events, and religious functions. I selected varying activities to observe a mix of people relevant to this study. To observe workers involved with implementing integration laws, for instance, I attended a day-long training seminar for FIC instructors hosted at one of the CRIs. I acted only as an observer in this seminar, but it is how I gained access to multiple FIC instructors as well as one of FIC's creators for subsequent interviews. This ability to make connections with those implementing FIC was a major motivator for choosing this seminar. Another event I attended for those implementing laws was a municipal workshop on migrant voting in local elections. It was primarily an information session detailing information on Belgium's voting laws and directed towards those working with migrants such as persons at community non-profit organizations. Here too I participated in a more observational manner (as did most attendees), although I did ask some questions during the Q&A.

To observe migrants impacted by integration laws, I attended over 55 hours of FIC courses run by two different instructors. In the first course, I sat with FIC students but was not an official student. Students in this course sat at tables placed together to

form a large U-shape around the classroom, a street-level space situated along a busy road not far from the train station. The setup allowed students to see one another throughout the course. I would occasionally participate when called on by Amelie, the course instructor. This usually occurred when Amelie asked course participants how certain activities in Belgium compared to what things were like in their native countries (such as appropriate public behavior, family structures, etc.), and Amelie or other students would want to know how things compared to America. Most of my observation in FIC courses (42 hours), however, resulted from my enrolling in and following a second course as a student. Students in this course sat around a large conference table in the center of a large room. Most students sat at the table, but space constraints forced some to sit at the back of the room. I actively participated in this second course in the same way that migrants did. **Figure 3.5** is a copy of my certificate of completion for that course, while **Figure 3.6** is a picture from inside that course. I describe these FIC courses in greater detail and share my observations from them (including the participants) in section 5.3 of Chapter Five.

The FIC courses I attended were both in the Brabant Wallon province. I chose to follow courses in this area primarily for two reasons. First, as mentioned above, I was familiar with Brabant Wallon because I had previously lived there years before. I had limited funding and time to be in the field, so selecting an area I was already familiar with greatly facilitated my ability to make contacts with various organizations. Second, Brabant Wallon is the closest francophone province to the Brussels-Capital Region. **Figure 3.7** shows the province on a map colored in red; Brussels is the small circle located directly above the province. Brabant Wallon's proximity to the capital meant that

persons from all over Wallonia could easily access FIC courses delivered there. This could then provide opportunities to snowball sample more migrants across Wallonia. I had some success with this although limited funding and time in the field ultimately curtailed my ability significantly snowball sample out of the migrants I met in FIC classes.

Attending religious functions was a third participant observation activity used in this study. I chose religious activities as a way to make connections with migrants and non-migrants alike who attended these services. Besides attending Friday prayers at the Louvain-la-Neuve mosque that I mentioned above, I also attended Christian worship services and activities at two churches in Nivelles, one of the Brabant Wallon's larger cities. Attending these Christian services brought me into contact with larger numbers of non-migrant Belgians.

3.5 Data Analysis

Per best practices, I typed my interview notes concurrently with my fieldwork and transcribed interview recordings (Maxwell 2012). I recorded my observations either in the moment if circumstances allowed or immediately after. I then organized these diverse types of data into broad themes that arose during the interviews. Some broad themes cutting across the study populations included the importance of speaking French, "being a part of" Belgian society, and frustrations with Wallonia's integration laws. On this last point, the various study populations had differing takes. Workers felt burdened by inordinate bureaucracy regulating their actions. Migrants often chafed at the numerous

legal requirements imposed on them to remain in Belgium/acquire citizenship. And locals comprising the “host society” expressed sentiments that the laws did little good.

While considering competing perspectives on some few themes proved interesting, I noted that some topics arose more among the respective interviewee populations than others. This prompted me to rethink my analysis to first consider the key study populations and then look for themes within them. So for this dissertation, I narrowed my focus to certain themes grouped by the targeted study population they came from (workers tasked with implementing integration laws; immigrants affected by these laws; or locals comprising the “host society” into which migrants are to integrate according to the laws). The manuscripts set forth in Chapters Four through Six discuss some of the themes coming from these differing groups.

3.6 Researcher Reflexivity

The notion that research reflects the researcher’s own subjectivity is a given in qualitative research (Matejskova 2013). It grows out of feminist work emphasizing the impossibility to assume scholars as omniscient, detached observers (Gibson-Graham 1994). Scholars employing a constructionist view, such as feminist and critical theorists, reject the premise that researchers discovers truth from pre-existing data (Staller 2013). Those researching minorities and marginalized communities (with migrants readily being in both groups) often focus on the “insider-outsider divide”, meaning a researcher’s membership status in the group being studied as either as an “insider” or “outsider” (*e.g.*, Carling et al. 2014). Researchers often infer insider status “from the dominant and abstract identity markers such as race, gender, or, as in migration studies, ethno-national

origin, rather than from long-term groundedness in a localized, small-scale community” (Matejskova 2014; p. 18-19). However, some researchers advocate moving beyond the dominant “‘laundry list’ of identity markers” like national origin, race, or gender to consider “insiderness” situationally (Matejskova 2014; p. 20; *see also* Carling et al. 2014). That was my experience in this research.

While I have some similarities with my research participants, I mostly had little in common with them. I am not Belgian. Yet I physically appear to be “Belgian” based on my not-too-distant European ancestry. Like the local population, I speak French. But similar to many of those migrants who also speak French, I speak it with an accent (thankfully not an American accent). I shared similar academic and professional backgrounds with some participants, both from the locals and the migrants. My family status (married with four children) was also be similar to some participants, but not others. The key factor creating a connection with many participants was my experience living in Belgium. This prior experience was a key strength.

For example, many native Belgians I spoke with initially viewed me skeptically. They questioned why an American like me would be in Belgium. But when I explained that I had lived in Belgium years earlier and had wanted to return to the country to explore immigrant integration, their demeanors visibly changed. They smiled and expressed pride in participating in the study by sharing their viewpoints. Many made comments suggesting that I understood what they were talking about, that I “got it.”

Many immigrants did the same thing. When commenting on Belgian culture and adjusting to life in the country, migrants often punctuated their statements with, “you know,” as if to signify my understanding what they described based on my own

experience. For migrants from the FIC classes I attended, my not being a native Belgian and following the same course as they did caused some to see me as one of “them.” A few continue to contact me to this day.

Both groups (migrants and non-migrants) freely spoke with me about various laws and regulations. Migrants did so perhaps because I had no part in the laws’ existence. In other words, they were able to critique these issues without alienating me as the listener whereas they may be more guarded and not say the same thing to a Belgian. Similarly, local Belgians more readily expressed agreement with certain right-wing political views concerning immigration because Donald Trump, my country’s president, uses far-right rhetoric similar to Theo Francken a far-right, Flemish nationalist then serving as the Belgian federal government’s top official over migration. So perhaps these Belgians felt that they had a sympathetic ear in speaking with me simply because of who my president is (and possibly erroneously assume that I voted for him).

Perhaps the greatest limitation that I had due to my subjectivity and positionality is my nationality. One could say that I do not have a “personal stake” in the issue since I am not Belgian or a migrant to the country. On these counts, a critic would be correct. Yet my status as a non-European and non-migrant actually seemed to prompt both locals and migrants to be more open with me about their feelings regarding the “other.” For instance, some locals said things to me about migrants that social courtesy would prevent them from saying directly to migrants, and vice versa. It was surprising to see how unfiltered people became in speaking with me when they knew that I was neither Belgian nor a migrant to the country.

Table 3.1. Summary of methods and field sites.

Methods	Sites and Participants
Document analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Belgian National Code (Code de la nationalité Belge) - Walloon legislative code (Code wallon), - CRIs literature available on internet and provided in person during site visits, - FIC instruction manuals
Site visits and formal/informal interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All eight regional integration centers (CAI – Namur; CIMB; CeRAIC; CRIBW; CRIC; CRILUX*; CRIPEL; CRVI) - DisCRI (the Walloon agency responsible for training FIC instructors and creating course content) - Local NGOs acting as frontline actors (Génération Espoir; Collectif des femmes; ASBL 6 Beaufort; Céfop) - Municipal government offices (Braine-le-Château; Court-Saint-Étienne; Enghien; Ottignies-Louvain-la-Neuve)
In-depth interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 100+ (including 13 CRI workers; 8 FIC instructors; 5 public officials)
Participant Observation and informal conversations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training seminar for FIC instructors (5 hours) - FIC courses (55 hours over two separate courses) - Various CRI-sponsored/promoted events - Religious organizations (churches, mosques)
<p>* = I interviewed CRILUX personnel at an alternative location due to the travel distance involved</p>	

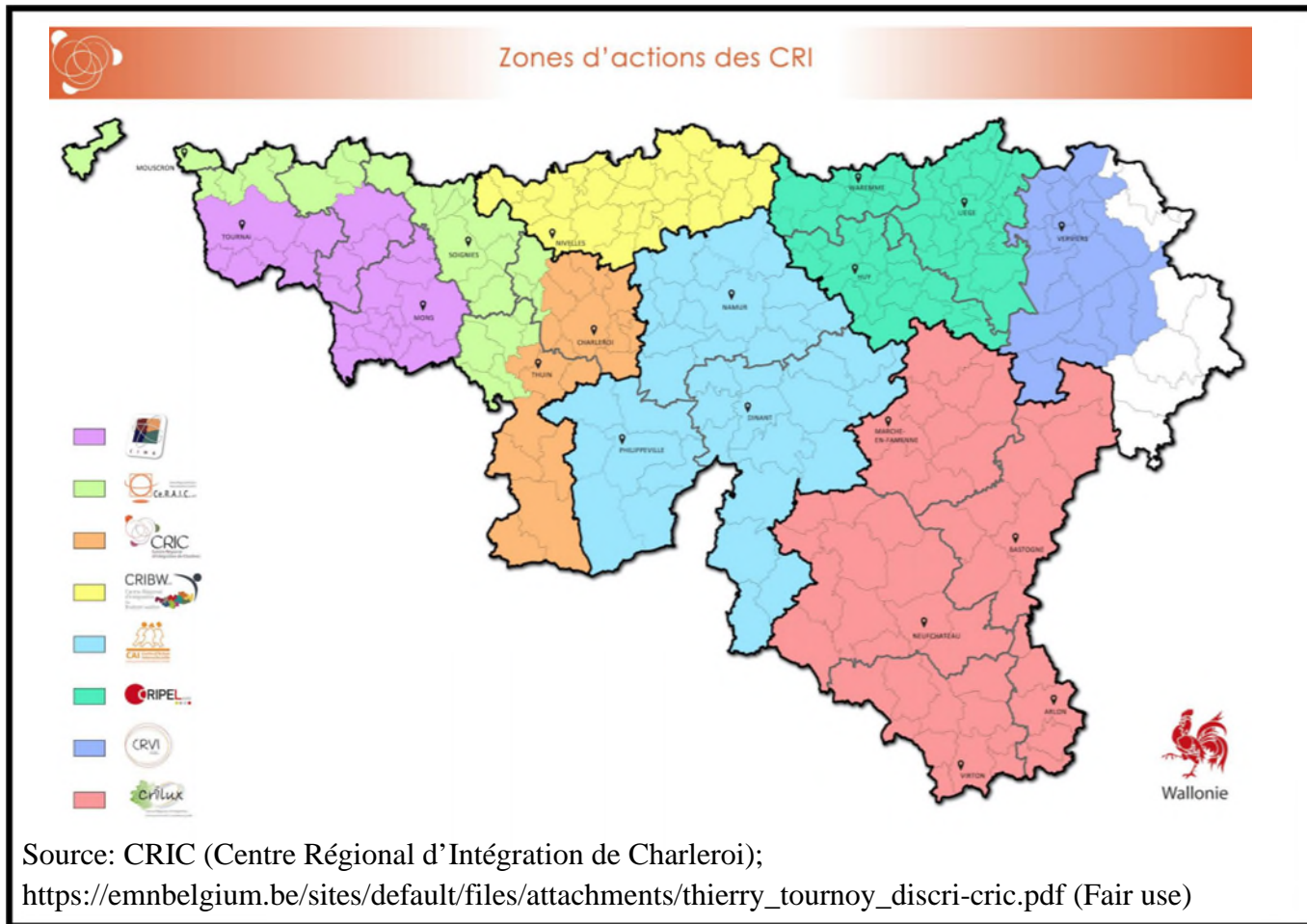


Figure 3.1. Administrative action areas for Wallonia's CRIs.



CRVI's offices. Note the sign listed on the lower open window in the center of the image

Figure 3.2. CRVI's headquarters in Verviers (picture taken by the author).

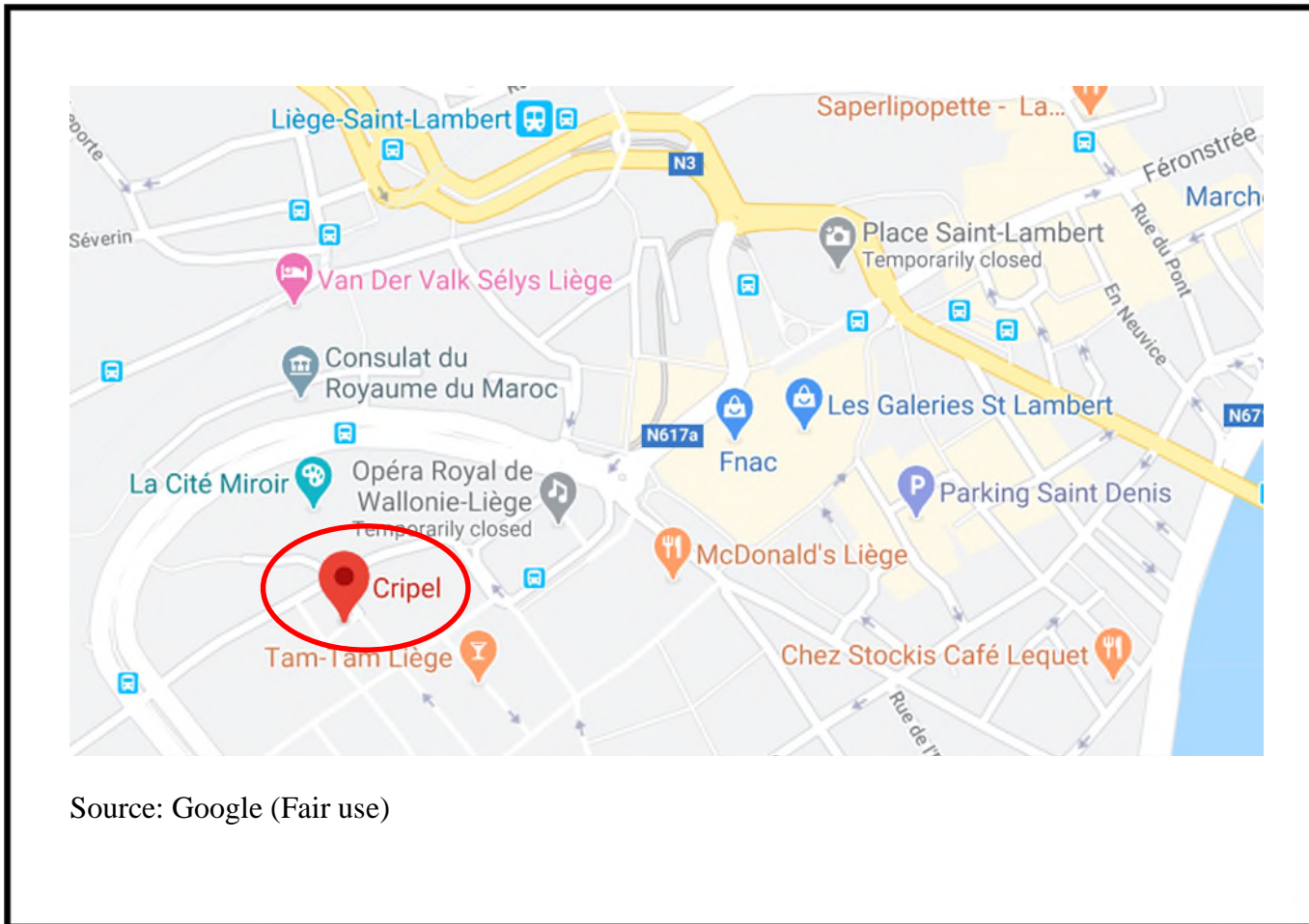


Figure 3.3. CRIPEL's location in downtown Liège



Figure 3.4. Mosque in Louvain-la-Neuve (picture taken by the author).



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ATTESTATION DE SUIVI D'UNE FORMATION A L'INTEGRATION CITOYENNE

Je soussignée, DATTOLI, Pamela atteste en tant que personne habilitée à représenter l'organisme que Monsieur NIELSON, Samuel Patrick numéro de registre national..... a suivi assidument, c'est-à-dire avec un taux de présence minimum de 100%, une formation citoyenne de 42heures délivrée par la formatrice DATTOLI, Pamela dans le cadre du parcours d'intégration organisé par la Wallonie. La formation s'est déroulée du.12/07/18 au 13/07/18 les 16/07, 17/07, 18/07, 19/07 et 20/07/2018 à raison de 6 heures par séance.

La formation a poursuivi les objectifs suivants : assurer aux personnes étrangères une compréhension de nouveaux contextes économiques, sociaux, politiques, culturels et de la vie quotidienne de la Wallonie et de la Belgique, leur apporter des informations pratiques pertinentes et favoriser leur participation à la société.

Fait à Louvain-la-Neuve le 20 juillet 2018

Nom et Prénom du signataire

DATTOLI, Pamela

Fonction du signataire et signature

Coordinatrice

Cachet de l'organisme



Figure 3.5. Certificate of Completion for FIC.



Figure 3.6. Inside one of the FIC courses (picture taken by the author).



By TUBS - Own work. Based on File:Belgium location map.svg by NordNordWest, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=14364888>.

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Figure 3.7. Brabant Wallon province.

CHAPTER 4

WALLOON INTEGRATION WORKERS AND BELGIAN BELONGING¹

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Abstract

This article explores how integration cannot conceptually be categorized as an either/or proposition set forth by the state along a multicultural versus assimilationist ideological spectrum. It does so through a case study of workers tasked with implementing integration laws in Wallonia, Belgium's francophone region. Drawing from in-depth interviews with 13 key informants at all eight of Wallonia's government-sponsored regional integration centers (*centres régionaux d'intégration* (CRI)), as well as analyzing applicable legislation and policy statements from each CRI, this article reveals how workers simultaneously incorporate elements from normative assimilationist and multicultural models to create a localized sense of integration. Workers implementing integration laws within Wallonia do so differently—at a localized level—based on divergent ideas of belonging and community. Workers largely considered integration to be immigrants and host society members creating a new culture together; they determine together who and what belongs. Finally, local actors actually implementing integration laws shape the laws' reality. This all reveals that scholars and policymakers alike should rethink integration as a political and a cultural process that varies across national space.

4.1 Introduction

Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel resigned in December 2018 largely over a single issue: migration. Michel had taken an accommodative stance on migration and had promoted more sympathetic policies towards migrants since assuming office in October 2014. This position put him at odds with many members of his unlikely governing coalition, a four-party alliance that counted the nationalist New Flemish Alliance (N-VA)

as its largest member. The N-VA had enjoyed substantial authority as part of the governing coalition, with N-VA ministers put in charge of migration, security, and defense. But the party quit Michel's coalition after Michel endorsed the United Nations Global Compact for Migration and committed Belgium to the legally non-binding accord. (Belgium's federal parliament previously endorsed the measure in a vote.) N-VA's exit prompted Michel's resignation and resulted in a caretaker government until scheduled general elections in May 2019.

What occurred in Belgium reflects a broader divide in Europe over migration. Roughly one year before Michel's resignation, for instance, German Chancellor Angela Merkel's party suffered significant electoral losses primarily due to her decision in 2015 to welcome 800,000 refugees to Germany. The anti-immigration party Alternative for Germany (AfD) received 12% of the popular vote in Germany's 2017 election and became the German parliament's largest opposition party. Germany's election occurred 15 months after Britain's vote to leave the European Union—a vote largely attributed to concerns about migration. And in 2018, Austria, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia also rejected the UN migration pact, although Belgium's government was the first to fall for supporting the accord (Apuzzo & Schreuer 2018).

Europe's migration divide is decades in the making largely due to varying policies aimed at “integrating” immigrants. Multiculturalism enjoyed a favored status starting in the 1970s as states adopted policies promoting tolerance and cultural diversity (Gońda, Lesińska, & Pachocka 2020). This changed in the 1990s as politicians and the broader public pushed back against multiculturalism ideals (Joppke 2007; Goodman 2010). Many Europeans reconsidered integration in more assimilationist terms, meaning they saw

integration as both a static, idealized end-state of social homogeneity and also a predictable trajectory wherein migrants adopt the norms and values of the (presumably coherent) “national” and/or European society (Nagel & Staeheli 2008). States soon adopted these assimilationist integration policies through formalized laws (Joppke 2017a). The policy pendulum was such that multiculturalism now has little purchase in European political circles (Korteweg & Triadafilopoulos 2015). Some even question whether multiculturalism is dead (Joppke 2017b). The net result is that contemporary “integration” laws often reflect assimilation attitudes.

Scholars studying integration in Europe frequently focus on state-level laws and policies, presupposing that national-level discourse drives integration (*e.g.*, Boucher & Maclure 2018; Joppke 2018) and ignoring local policies (Zapata-Barrero 2018). Scholars also categorize these national laws as either assimilationist or multicultural in nature (or variants of either) (*e.g.*, Joppke 2017a; Barou 2014). This assumes, (even inadvertently) a homogeneous national space. And it privileges the perspectives of those creating the integration laws over any others (*e.g.*, Antonsich & Petrillo 2019; Xhardez 2019; *see also* Nielson 2020). Because this research is top-down and institutional, it overlooks everyday lived experiences that may not be consistent across national space. It also fails to recognize that integration policies, in word or in practice, may not necessarily fit within either assimilationist or multiculturalist paradigms. Indeed, while assimilationist discourse currently dominates immigration politics in Europe, such discourse and the laws that stem from it are not uniform either between or within European countries (*e.g.*, Brubaker 1992; Dekker et al 2015).

This article explores how integration cannot conceptually be categorized as an either/or proposition set forth by the state along a multicultural versus assimilationist ideological spectrum. It does so through a case study of workers tasked with implementing integration laws in Wallonia, Belgium's francophone region. Focusing on these workers rather than politicians responsible for creating the laws represents a "bottom-up" approach to understanding integration. The workers, employed at several government-sponsored regional integration centers (*centres régionaux d'intégration* (CRI)) across Wallonia, have the ability to both represent and challenge the government's assumptions about what integration means.

Before delving into the empirical material, this article first critically examines the concept of integration and notions of community and belonging that are central to integration. It then introduces the Belgian context and the everyday reality within which Wallonia's CRIs operate. After outlining the research design, the article analyzes CRI workers' interpretations of integration in three key themes. First, workers did not maintain rigid 'multicultural' or 'assimilation' integration perspectives. Rather, they combined elements of both normative models to create a localized sense of integration. Second, workers largely considered integration to be immigrants and host society members creating a new culture together, determining *together* who and what belonged. Third, workers considered Wallonia's integration laws as providing directives but with the local actors actually implementing the laws shaping their reality.

4.2 Conceptualizing Integration

Scholars and policymakers alike often use the term ‘integration’ in a general sense to signify a process of immigrants incorporating into a dominant ‘host society.’ Many scholars see integration in this sense as synonymous with assimilation theory and its variants.

¹ Studies thus focus on the stepwise, generational processes by which immigrants become more like (*i.e.*, ‘integrate’ into) the host society in measurable ways (Nagel 2009). These ways include examining the immigrants’ using the host society’s language, their marriage patterns, employment patterns, and so forth (cf. Alba & Nee 1997). Simultaneously, scholars and politicians sometimes use the term integration to describe normative models establishing what incorporation looks like and how immigrants achieve it. When used in this sense, ‘integration’ becomes a milder, less demanding term than assimilation, signifying the incorporation into ‘mainstream’ life without the requirement of total conformity (Erdal & Oeppen 2013). Multiculturalism, which became popular in many immigrant-receiving countries in the 1970s, takes integration’s normative claims of integration a step further by actively validating cultural/ethnic differences and affording immigrants flexibility in maintaining their identities in the public sphere (*e.g.*, Modood 2005).

Important policy implications attach to these different normative models, with most scholars arguing that assimilationist policies look very different from multiculturalist policies (*e.g.*, Boucher & Maclure 2018; Modood 2017). Broadly

¹ Key literature frequently uses integration and assimilation synonymously, with Europeans using the former term and Americans adopting the latter (Modood 2005).

speaking, debates tend to vacillate between the two philosophies, with each seen as being ideologically opposed to the other. Further, these normative models also have much in common: each rests upon idealized notions of what national communities should look like, and each makes assumptions about who ‘we’ are and who ‘they’ (*i.e.* immigrants) are (*e.g.*, Simon & Beaujeu 2018; Modood 2018; Drouhot & Nee 2019). They are also all prescriptive in nature, laying out a supposedly coherent national polity’s rules of belonging and also its terms of inclusion and exclusion. In all cases, there is a noticeable feedback effect between scholarly analysis and public discourse: scholars tend to analyze immigrants as a ‘problem’ for national society, highlighting incorporation’s successes and failures and suggesting ways to remove barriers to immigrant success; policymakers, in turn, use scholarly analyses (sometimes developed in partisan think-tanks) to advocate certain policy prescriptions. Simply put, scholarly literature on integration rarely escapes the state’s political objective of transforming immigrants into national citizens.

Integration’s connection to state objectives of transforming citizens, particularly in Europe, has a historical basis. Long before contemporary migration, and even before the nation-state’s rise, people’s sense of territory was geared towards a combination of local communes, ruling elites, and also broader ecclesiastical ideals (Murphy 1996). Following the Peace of Westphalia, however, leaders began to sweep away attachment to community in favor of state-defined national identities. (Murphy 2018). “Nationalism as an ideology was premised on the link between people and territory” (J .Anderson 1986, p. 97), whereby the people linked to the territory comprised the “nation” (Jones & Fowler 2007). The concept of a territory “belonging” to a people created grander ideas of “us” and “them” with some states pitted against others (Murphy 1996). Nationalism also

served to divide one political community or “nation” from another, thus determining the geographical boundaries of the state in many instances (J. Anderson 1986). Membership is open only to a certain group of people (described as sharing a common origin and/or destiny) living in a certain place. A closure exists vis-à-vis those outside of that place (Brubaker 1992), with those inside maintaining a sense of “one nation” based on ideals of common origins, ancestry, consanguinity, and so forth (Dekker, Malova, & Hoogendoorn 2003). Persons not fitting within this mold or living in the territory do not belong (Soysal 2001; Gustafson 2005). This historical reality may help explain why integration is such a sensitive issue in Europe.

Here, I use the term ‘integration’ generally to refer to the political process centered on public deliberation and debate about incorporating immigrants into the national community and polity. In other words, integration refers to who and what ‘belongs.’ Integration is thus a contentious process of creating, reproducing, and enforcing collective understandings of the criteria of difference/sameness that matter (Nagel 2009; Erdal & Oeppen 2013). This process carries with it assumptions about language, race, ethnicity, religion, and gender (*e.g.*, Askins 2015; Leitner 2012; Yeh & Lama 2006; Nagel & Staeheli 2005). While this article’s focus is on those implementing integration laws, one cannot ignore immigrants themselves as active participants in the politics of integration. For instance, immigrants can assert their personal and social qualities’ sameness and ‘mainstream’ nature, or they can advocate more broadly defining ‘mainstream’ itself. I thus wish to complicate broad conceptual understandings by not simply considering multicultural or assimilation policies as static or exclusive. Rather,

actors creating and implementing policies locally may combine elements of both philosophies.

As a public, political issue, integration frequently becomes a matter of law and policy. Laws and policies that address immigrants' behaviors and comportment reflect, reinforce, and enact particular understandings of who 'we' are and who 'they' (*i.e.* immigrants) are. Justifying these divisions between 'us' and 'them' constitute the politics of belonging (Antonsich 2010; Trudeau 2006). Laws and policies also spell out specific ways immigrants must conform to national norms in order to achieve citizenship and cultural belonging (Joppke 2007). They seek to pin down a particular understanding of, or to fix in place, the end state immigrants must achieve. These may or may not reflect broader societal attitudes. Belgium's revised citizenship law, for instance, sets forth various, identifiable measures of 'integration' one must 'prove' to secure citizenship (Article 12bis *Code de la nationalité Belge*). These measures include linguistic competency along with fulfilling specific educational and socio-economic requirements. Enumerating these measures in the revised law reflect Flemish lawmakers' integration ideals demanded in a 2011 coalition agreement (Pulinx & Van Avermaet 2015).

Scholars often focus on the host society's laws that shape the politics of belonging for immigrants. These laws often function to *exclude* migrants. Examples range from international agreements to municipal ordinances. Hyndman and Mountz (2008), for instance, demonstrate how formal agreements between EU member states and North African countries to detain would-be asylum seekers effectively excluded asylum seekers, most of them black Africans and so visibly 'Other,' from European space. On

the local scale, Monica Varsanyi (2008) examined municipal laws as a means of excluding Latino day laborers from public spaces in the Phoenix metro area. The laborers, primarily undocumented immigrants from Central America, congregated in large groups and spoke Spanish with each other while awaiting work opportunities. Despite many of them living and working within these municipalities making the legislation, in other words being de facto community members, the immigrants were visibly and audibly Othered. Linguistic differences, legal status, and potentially race thus held importance for what community leaders (and so presumably community members) considered crucial for belonging in the Phoenix metropole.

At the same time, laws can operate to *include* immigrants. Walker and Leitner (2011) highlight this reality in their study of municipal laws across the United States that target immigrants. Some municipalities, they found, actively legislate to embrace migrants within their borders. Various cities grant residents the right to vote in local elections, regardless of national citizenship status, for example. Others prohibit local law enforcement from cooperating with national immigration enforcement officers to investigate a city resident's legal status. These laws' net effect is to incorporate migrants on a local level.

Beyond laws themselves, actors implementing applicable laws shape belonging on localized levels. Susan Gordon (2007) described how actors tasked with implementing national U.S. immigration law in the early 20th century privileged the law's requirements of morality and loyalty to America over the requirement that immigrants prove their knowledge of U.S. history and government. These actors' choice to do so resulted in the subsequent development of educational programs focused more on instilling ideals of

proper American behavior than on civics or history. Such actions, Gordon argues, then shaped the host society's exclusionary attitudes and laws towards immigrants and other minorities over the next century. Sutton and Vigneswaran (2011) examined South African immigration judges' determinations in deporting immigrants. The judges, as actors applying laws towards immigrants, greatly shaped the immigrants and host society's ability to make sameness by determining who could or could not be present to encounter one another.

Highlighting locality and the actors involved in integration debates draws our attention to negotiations between immigrants and non-immigrants—to everyday interactions taking place within certain legal contexts. Integration policies and politics vary by locale, with dominant/native groups and immigrants negotiating community membership (local or national) within a variety of socio-spatial contexts—schools, city planning boards, workplaces, etc. (*e.g.*, Joppke 2007; Brubaker 2001; Wise 2005). The negotiations focus on those differences that do/do not matter in creating community membership (local or national). A growing body of literature highlights such localized integration politics. For instance, Helga Leitner (2012) has examined localized encounters between immigrants and host society members in a rural American town. These encounters, whether at supermarkets, houses of worship, or residential neighborhoods, affected host society members' understandings of belonging and community membership. Certain host society members Leitner interviewed no longer see some differences as important while insisting that other differences—notably language use—remain important in defining community membership.

Local policies can further shape localized integration politics, as can other aspects of local contact. Such is the case with Kye Askins' (2015) account of a 'befrienders' program established by a refugee center in the UK. The center created a policy directing befrienders and asylum seekers to spend time 'being together' in the local area rather than engaging in a 'mentoring' relationship. This directive resulted in participants forming genuine friendships and thus remade society at a local level as participants learned of similarities they shared, and also of the differences between them, to then determine which differences—if any—mattered. Although the refugee center's policy directives were self-initiated rather than legally mandated, and while participants in the befriender/befriended program volunteered for it rather than complying out of legal compulsion, the study provides an important window into localized integration dynamics and the ways local practices complement but also cut against state laws and policies.

In sum, integration is a political process referring to boundaries determining who and what 'belongs.' Laws shape these boundaries through exclusion or inclusion. Those implementing integration laws shape belonging on a localized level independent of a national assimilation or multicultural perspectives. Here, this article focuses on those persons implementing Wallonia's integration laws ostensibly intended to include migrants by their stated purpose (*e.g.*, 27 Mars 2014 Décret). These persons work at government-sponsored regional integration centers (CRI).

4.3 The Case Study: Belgium

Wallonia is the subject for this study because Belgium exemplifies variations in integration discourse, law, and policy across national space. Divides in Belgium over

immigration and integration policies coincide with, and flow from, political and administrative divisions in the country. Belgium has a federal parliament, three regional parliaments (for Flanders, Wallonia, and the Brussels-Capital region) and two linguistic parliaments (one each for Francophone and German-speaking Belgians; Flemish-speaking Belgians combined their linguistic parliament with the Flanders regional parliament to create one federated entity legislating for all Flemings, as Flemish-speakers are known) (*see, e.g.*, Deschouwer 2012). The Belgian Constitution grants responsibility for immigrant integration to the linguistic communities and their parliaments (Swyngedouw 2016). Integration legislation in Belgium can thus vary significantly on a sub-national scale.

Research on Belgian politics notes the differences in integration philosophies between Flanders and Wallonia (*e.g.*, Adam 2013; Martiniello 1995). For years, Flanders has had clearly defined integration legislation and policies known as *inburgering* (Flemish term approximately meaning ‘citizenization’) (Martiniello 2013). Scholars and policymakers alike see *inburgering* as assimilationist (Adam 2011; Swyngedeouw 2016), though the N-VA, Flanders’ most popular party, disputes this characterization by claiming that ‘anyone can be a Flemish citizen without having to renounce their own identity’ (N-VA’s Ideology and Purpose n.d.). Wallonia also has well-defined integration legislation that some describe as striking a balance between assimilation and multiculturalism (Torrekens et al 2014). And Walloon legislators themselves consider Wallonia’s integration laws as reflective of an ‘intercultural’ society as opposed to one that is either multicultural or monolithic (*e.g.*, Décret 27 Mars 2014, Article 151).

Wallonia's laws, in turn, diverge from those applicable to Francophones in the Brussels-Capital region. In the mid-1990s, Belgium's French Community shifted immigrant integration policy to the Walloon Region and the French-Community Commission of the Brussels-Capital Region, which developed its own integration policies different from Wallonia's (Adam 2013). Accordingly, integration policy for Francophones is particularly place-based depending on whether one lives in Brussels or Wallonia. Having approached immigration from a distinctly Wallonian standpoint, Prime Minister Michel managed to alienate N-VA representatives, precipitating Belgium's federal government's collapse in late 2018.

This article considers this uneven policy landscape in Belgium through the workers at Wallonia's CRI. The Walloon government created the CRIs to oversee Wallonia's integration projects. The CRIs are government-sponsored non-profit organizations with responsibility over certain, localized territories across Wallonia that do not necessarily coincide with standard provincial boundaries. The region's integration laws spell out the CRIs' role both in introducing immigrants to Belgian society and also in raising the host society's awareness of immigrants (27 Mars 2014 Décret). The CRIs thus present a unique opportunity to explore interactions between migrants and dominant groups and the everyday relationships and encounters that produce 'integration' (e.g., Leitner 2012; Ehrkamp 2006). In focusing on CRIs, I want to suggest that integration is not a single, uniform state policy, as has been described in recent accounts of Europe's general shift towards assimilation (e.g., Korteweg & Triadafilopoulos 2015). Instead, integration is a political process marked by the inconsistent implementation and performance resulting from varied understandings of community and belonging.

4.3.1 Integration politics in Wallonia

Belgium, and more specifically Wallonia, experienced large-scale immigration from other countries after World War II when the state actively sought guest workers. These migrants first came from Italy followed by Spain and Greece, with Moroccans and Turks subsequently arriving starting in the 1960s (Gsir, Mandin, & Mescoli 2015). Still a unitary state² at the time, Belgium considered these migrants to be temporary guest workers and tasked the National Ministry of Employment and Labor with responsibility for welcoming the migrants entering Belgium (Adam 2011). Even so, localities receiving large numbers of immigrants created provincial reception and welcome centers to provide these newcomers with legal services and administrative guidance, literacy and training courses, and cultural activities. In Wallonia, Liège created the first such center in 1964 followed by Namur in 1965 (Torrekens et al. 2013; Adam 2011).

While some localities voluntarily assumed accountability for welcoming immigrants, these obligations soon became regional rather than central-state responsibilities. State reform in 1970 transitioned Belgium from a unitary to a federal state by creating three cultural communities (French, Flemish, and German) and three regions (Flanders, Wallonia, and Brussels). The central government then transferred competencies concerning the welcome of ‘migrant workers’ to the regions in 1974 (Adam 2011). This transfer coincided with a halt in guest worker recruitment that same

² Belgium began in 1830 as a state effectively created by outside powers, with its first king, Leopold I, placed on the throne by the British. The country’s creation followed a brief rebellion by the United Kingdom of the Netherlands’ southern provinces. The provinces were majority Catholic, and many contained Francophones angry at their treatment by the Dutch-speaking, Protestant majority. For further information, *see* Murphy (1988).

year. Six years later, and in conjunction with the state reform of 1980, the central government transferred competencies for the welcome and integration of ‘immigrants’ to the communities. This shift in policy and terminology recognized that these immigrants were no longer ‘guests’ but rather long-term residents (Adam 2007). The communities maintained control for these affairs until 1993 when the French Community transferred its competencies to the Walloon Region and the French Community Commission (now known as the Federation Brussels-Wallonia) of the Brussels-Capital Region. This split in competencies remains today.

4.3.2 Wallonia’s integration laws and the regional integration centers (CRI) implementing them

Wallonia’s integration laws received their start in 1996. That year, the Walloon government adopted a “decree on the integration of foreigners or persons of foreign origin” (4 juillet 1996 Décret). The law created six “regional integration centers” (*centres régionaux d’intégration* (CRI)) throughout Wallonia and tasked them with specific integration objectives. These objectives included “promoting participation by foreigners and persons of foreign origin in cultural, social and economic life” as well as “promoting intercultural exchanges and respect for differences.” Neither assimilationist nor multiculturalist in character, the law’s aim was to provide a coherent integration policy that would, as the decree’s title suggests, target established migrants who had been in Belgium for a long period of time or their Belgian-born children (Torrekens et al. 2013; Adam 2013). The CRI would not take a frontline position vis-à-vis immigrants; they would instead partner with local associations that assisted immigrants on a day-to-day basis. In these partnerships, the CRIs would produce socio-cultural activities for

immigrants and encourage civil society institutions to engage with immigrants (Adam 2013). Their actions were similar to the Flemish Community's creation of integration centers across Flanders in the 1980s. A significant difference, however, was that the Walloon Region did not establish a coordination structure to harmonize the CRIs' policies (Adam 2013). The CRIs had great autonomy in their undertakings, and with that flexibility each had the ability to adapt to the needs of the localities they served. Some CRI have more Maghrebian immigrants in their service areas, for example, while other CRI encounter more sub-Saharan African immigrants; the "intercultural exchanges" each CRI promote could thus vary depending on the localized host and immigrant populations they serve. So everyday integration policies in Wallonia became more decentralized and determined at the sub-regional level by the CRI workers operating within their respective localities.

Another factor fostering localized applications was that four of the first six CRI already existed as non-profit organizations with their own established objectives and missions regarding immigrants (cf. Torrekens et al. 2014). Such was the case in Namur, Wallonia's capital city. There, locals started the non-profit Socio-Cultural Center for Immigrants in Namur Province (*Centre Socio Culturel Des Immigres de la Province de Namur*) in 1982 to assist immigrants in the community. The association focused first on immigrants with European origins but then expanded its scope based on the changing nature of immigration to the area. In 1997, the association became one of the CRI and changed its name to the Intercultural Action Center – Namur (*Centre d'action interculturelle – Namur* (CAI – Namur)). But it continues to operate largely in the same manner since becoming a CRI.

In 2009, the Walloon government amended the original decree creating the CRI to give the centers additional responsibilities. For the first time these included “frontline” responsibilities to provide French language instruction and impart “knowledge of Belgian institutions” (*i.e.*, citizenship classes) (30 avril 2009 Décret). But CRIs acting as frontline actors would be limited. The CRIs would assume these duties only when other local associations or public authorities did not provide them or requested that the CRI offer the services. Second, the 2009 law tasked the CRIs with coordinating integration activities considered part of “local integration plans,” defined in the same law as plans created by individual municipalities (*communes*) within the CRIs’ localities. The purpose for each *commune*’s plan is to “promote[] the integration of foreigners or persons of foreign origin” by “highlighting their specific needs and defining strategies to be developed to better meet them.” So the 2009 decree further localized Wallonia’s integration policies as each CRI assumed greater contact with local political leaders crafting integration policies within that CRI’s locality. Each CRI working with local partner organizations also crafted language and citizenship classes that might differ in a variety of ways, such as content emphasized, target audience (new arrivals versus persons of foreign origin already present in Belgium), participant composition (*i.e.*, catering to specific ethnic groups), and so forth. The CRIs maintained a supporting role in this effort as second-line actors; the frontline actors actually working with migrants were the local organizations partnering with the CRIs or the local *communes*.

In 2014, the Walloon government issued another decree reshaping the CRIs’ missions yet again. This decree was the most expansive regarding the CRIs’ roles in integration. It assigned the centers primary responsibility for a newly mandatory

“welcome course” (*parcours d’accueil*) intended to “integrate newly arrived immigrants” within the CRIs’ territory and that immigrants had to follow (27 Mars 2014 Décret, Article 10). The CRIs became designated frontline actors for welcoming new arrivals. This role includes two parts. The first involves interviewing immigrants individually to better understand their needs and abilities. Second, the CRIs use information from those interviews to then guide migrants to the various local organizations providing French language lessons, citizenship classes (known as “Citizen Integration Training”), and other instructional/training components that comprise the welcome course. So the CRIs’ frontline contact with migrants is largely administrative in nature.

The 2014 decree maintained the CRIs’ principal role as second-line actors ensuring coordination between all of the various local public and private actors implementing Wallonia’s welcome courses operating within their respective territories. The 2014 decree also ordered each center to “consult with the other centers in order to carry out coherent policies” throughout Wallonia (27 mars 2014 Décret, Art. 28). The directive to consult with one another did not mean that each CRI lost its independence; the CRIs retain significant autonomy in developing projects and partnering with local associations who assist immigrants on a day-to-day basis. Rather, the directive provided the government with greater justification to fund a non-profit known as the Consultation and Support System for Regional Integration Centers (*Dispositif de concertation et d’appui aux Centres Régionaux d’Intégration* (DisCRI)) that provides technical, logistical, and education support to Wallonia’s CRIs and that had been in existence since 2009. Some nevertheless argue that the enhanced legal requirements in this decree and the one from 2009 made Wallonia’s laws increasingly assimilationist (*e.g.*, Gsir, Mandin

& Mescoli, 2015) and more similar to Flemish integration laws (*e.g.*, Xhardez, 2019). Yet the 2014 law stated that the region sought an “intercultural society” (27 mars 2014 Décret, Art. 6). The flexibility afforded the CRI in their frontline and second-line responsibilities means that the laws’ implementation nonetheless remains highly localized through the CRIs and their workers.

One other decree bears briefly mentioning here. It passed in April 2016, just over one month after the Brussels terror attacks (27 avril 2016 Décret). The decree changed the name of the CRIs’ “welcome course” to “integration course” (*parcours d’intégration*). Since the terrorists came from Belgium but had foreign backgrounds (Schreur and Bilefsky, 2017), perhaps the name change resulted from political leaders seeking to appease an aggrieved public as the course’s requirements did not substantively change. The name change could have also been a way to appease Flemish politicians at the federal level, and specifically N-VA members. Regardless of the reason, the law was a name change, nothing more.

Today, there are eight CRI throughout Wallonia. Each one incorporates the name of the locality it covers. For some, the names also reveal their philosophical approach as the term “integration” does not appear in their name despite their status as one of the “regional integration centers.” The eight centers are:

- Intercultural Action Center of the Namur Province (*Centre d’Action Interculturelle de la Province de Namur* (CAI))

- Verviers Regional Center for the Integration of Foreigners and Persons of Foreign Origin (*Centre Régional de Verviers pour l'Intégration des personnes étrangères et d'origine étrangère* (CRVI))
- Regional Center for Intercultural Action of the Center Region (*Centre Régional d'Action interculturelle de la Région du Centre* (CeRAIC))
- Intercultural Center of Mons-Borinage (*Centre Interculturel de Mons-Borinage* (CIMB))
- Regional Integration Center of Brabant-Wallon (*Centre Régional d'Intégration du Brabant-Wallon* (CRIBW))
- Regional Integration Center for Foreigners of Liège (*Centre Régional d'Intégration des Personnes Étrangères de Liège* (CRIPEL))
- Regional Integration Center of Charleroi (*Centre Régional d'Intégration de Charleroi* (CRIC))
- Regional Integration Center of the Province of Luxembourg (*Centre Régional d'Intégration de la province de Luxembourg* (CRILUX))

Each center's locality contains a varied population of immigrants, host society members, and frontline integration actors (the assorted nongovernmental organizations implementing components of Wallonia's integration course). For example, CRILUX, the CRI whose locality includes 44 communes throughout the Luxembourg province, has a much more rural-based population and coordinates with relatively few frontline actors compared to CRIPEL, the CRI centered in Liège, the anchor city to Wallonia's largest metro area. CRIPEL works with 55 urban communes. Brabant-Wallon, CRIBW's locality, includes thousands of European immigrants drawn to Belgium because of EU

institutions headquartered nearby and who are not subject to Wallonia's integration laws. The localities thus create different everyday engagements and negotiations for CRI workers implementing integration laws and the immigrants and host groups they work with.

In terms of physical locations, three of the eight CRIs are located within large cities that receive significant numbers of migrants and non-profit organizations serving them. These include Charleroi (population ~202,000), Liège (~197,000), and Namur (~111,000). Another CRI is located in Verviers (~55,000), a city east of Liège near the German border. The remaining four CRIs are strategically located in varying smaller communes between large Walloon cities so as to be more accessible to the total communes they serve. Specifically, these CRIs are in Nivelles (~28,500), Saint-Ghislain (~23,000), Libramont (~11,000), and Trivières (~4,000). Staff at the respective CRIs ranges from 11 at the smallest CRIs (CRIBW and CRILUX) to approximately 30 at the largest CRIs (CRIPEL and CRIC).

4.4 Research Approach for Examining Wallonia's CRIs

This article draws on qualitative data collected during fieldwork in Belgium from May through August 2018 and September 2019 as part of a larger study concerning immigrant integration in Wallonia. Begun in 2017, the ongoing study to date involves more than 100 in-depth interviews with immigrants and non-immigrants alike. This article draws on thirteen of these interviews, each with key informants working at CRI, as well as an analysis of applicable legislation and policy statements from each CRI, an approach favored by related studies (*e.g.*, Careja 2019; Jørgensen 2012).

The key informant interviews addressed here included CRI directors and other CRI staff involved with the integration courses (*parcours d'integration*) at all eight of Wallonia's CRIs. As described above, Wallonia's CRIs are primarily administrative actors over a series of frontline actors and local government entities. Their locations are generally basic offices containing administrative workers with some staff conducting individual interviews and then directing migrants to various local organizations assisting migrants. I recruited CRI informants via cold-calling and snowball sampling. Eleven interviews occurred at the CRIs' offices; two occurred at alternative locations due to the interviewees' schedules. Some initially viewed me skeptically, questioning why an American like me would be in Belgium. But when I explained that I had lived in Belgium years earlier and had wanted to return to the country to explore immigrant integration, their demeanors visibly changed. They smiled and expressed pride in participating in the study by sharing their viewpoints. Nearly all asked me to provide them with the results of my larger study on immigrant integration; some said they desired "qualitative data" from the study to use in communicating with Walloon government officials.

As workers at government-sponsored entities, CRI workers occupy a unique position relating to the Walloon government. They straddle the divide between frontline actors and legislators. CRI directors are those overseeing the implementation of regional integration laws but not necessarily those interacting with immigrants on a day-to-day basis. CRI workers over the integration courses do have some frontline involvement with migrants, but it is more administrative, as explained above. The CRI also depend on government financing, and they are tasked with implementing legislative directives. Consequently, they must walk a finer line than workers at private organizations in

critiquing Wallonia's policies. Some expressed hesitancy to speak on the record absent guarantees that their statements could not be attributed to themselves or their specific CRI as one director likened financing battles between the CRIs as "war." But once assured of their anonymity, workers and directors opened up. I identify the CRI directors here using only numbers (Director 1, Director 2, etc.) and gender-neutral terms. I use pseudonyms for the other CRI workers over the integration course.

In the course of the interviews, I asked CRI workers to explain their understandings of integration and to comment on whether their understandings coincide—or conflict—with legislative edicts. This assumed that workers were familiar with legislative edicts; workers seemed keenly aware of the relevant legislation, perhaps resulting from their working at government-sponsored institutions guided by these rules. (Relevant statutes are also easily accessible on CRI websites.) I also asked what type of society they believed immigrants should aspire to, and whether the laws' stated objectives for inclusion in Walloon society reflected the realities confronting immigrants. It bears briefly mentioning that I asked interviewees their political preference; each declined to state and explained that they would not share because of their unique status is depending on government support, as explained above, and a desire to avoid pushback from politicians. I personally conducted all interviews in French and provide the translations used here.

In reviewing government decrees and regulations, I looked for directives and definitions affecting CRIs' actions towards immigrants and the host society. I also examined CRI-specific mission statements and other, localized CRI policies relating to

immigrant integration. The key informant interviews here come from workers at all eight CRI.

Prior research concerning Wallonia's integration laws is limited. Ilke Adams (2011, 2013) provides perhaps the most comprehensive account in describing the laws' historical background as part of her work comparing and contrasting integration models present in Flanders, Wallonia, and the Brussels-Capital region. Yet her work predates and thus fails to include significant legislative changes in 2014 and 2016 that have dramatically reshaped Wallonia's integration policies, including CRIs' role in the integration process. Other accounts regarding Wallonia's laws tend to examine them in the context of general integration philosophies (*e.g.*, Martiniello 1995, 2013; Adam and Martiniello 2013), in informational terms of comparison (*e.g.*, Adam and Jacobs 2014; Van Avermaet and Gysen 2009), or only superficially when contrasted to Flemish policies that are the primary focus of a study (*e.g.*, Pulinx and Van Avermaet 2015). Research concerning Wallonia's CRI is narrower still. Corrine Torrekens et al. (2014) studied the CRI. Yet their account primarily focused on assessing 'Europeanization' within Wallonia and its CRIs, meaning the extent of the European Union's effort to 'harmonize' member states' integration policies. In terms of the CRI directly, the account also briefly considered each CRI director's philosophy on a continuum ranging from a willingness to work with religious groups to one eschewing any relationship with religious organizations. The article derived from previous work considering the same issue, and one that provided greater information and background to CRIs generally (Torrekens et al. 2013). But both articles examined CRI prior to the Walloon government's 2014 decree revamping the CRI and their missions, and which placed CRI

in more active roles in integration. These significant legal changes require renewed analysis of CRI and their legally mandated role in Wallonia's integration politics.

Some of the activists working at the CRIs have migrant backgrounds. Most do not. But rather than provide the perspective of one group or the other alone (*i.e.*, either migrants or host society members), the workers present a unique population for inquiry because of their relations with immigrants and the host society alike. Indeed, Wallonia's laws dictate these workers role to both introduce immigrants to the Belgian host society and also to make the host society aware of the immigrants (27 Mars 2014 Décret). I seek to understand these workers' actions, asking questions such as: How do these workers' perceptions of 'integration' coincide – or conflict – with legislative edicts? What do these workers consider critical for one to belong in Belgian society when the laws state specific objectives? Do the laws' stated objectives for inclusion in Walloon society reflect the reality the workers see as confronting immigrants? Are there unified perspectives among the workers (*i.e.*, do workers share the same values/ideas across the CRI)? What type of society do workers believe immigrants should aspire to?

4.5 Assessing Integration and Belonging in Wallonia

Workers implementing integration laws within Wallonia do so differently—at a localized level—based on divergent ideas of belonging and community. Exploring these ideas revealed three key themes among all 13 CRI workers from each CRI. First, workers did not maintain rigid 'multicultural' or 'assimilation' integration perspectives. Rather, they combined elements of both normative models to create a localized sense of integration, one that they termed 'interculturalism.' Second, workers largely considered

integration to be immigrants and host society members creating a new culture together; they together determined who and what belonged. Third, workers considered Wallonia's integration laws as providing directives but with the local actors actually implementing the laws shaping their reality. I address these in turn.

4.5.1 Rethinking integration as 'interculturalism'

Despite working at government-sponsored integration centers, and regardless of role at the CRIs, each interviewee had a personal perspective on 'integration' and what that entailed. This resulted, in part, because the Walloon government never defined the term. As Director 2 put it, 'I've never heard the Walloon government answer the question "what is it to be integrated?"' Workers' perspectives usually varied depending on the workers' personal experiences as perhaps shaped by the locality where the worker was originally from, not necessarily the CRI location where the worker was employed. Adele, a worker without an immigrant background who works at a CRI within a large city, for instance, conceptualized integration as 'living side by side in seeking each other, not ignoring one another. It's not essential that we understand one another, but that we remain curious of each other.' Consistent with her more multiculturalist outlook, she opined further that integration is 'not being the same or necessarily different, but being connected.' Nevertheless, Adele stressed that immigrants had the responsibility to learn French for these connections to occur, a seemingly assimilative perspective. Another worker without an immigrant background, Roman, who hailed from a more rural environment, conceptualized integration more in French republican terms. That is, Roman considers integration to mean that an 'immigrant is to not have more or less rights than any other citizen in Belgium.' Yet Roman revealed a more multiculturalist mentality

when emphasizing that immigrants need not aspire to a particular ‘Belgian’ identity as society can have ‘multiple, changing identities.’

By and large, however, workers saw integration in a manner similar to a young worker named Pierre. When asked what he understood ‘integration’ to mean, Pierre laughed and said that integration itself was a ‘hackneyed’ notion understood in so many different ways, even in Belgium. After briefly describing the varying integration models present in Flanders, Brussels, and Wallonia, Pierre said, ‘I see myself more in line with Wallonia’s approach to integration, at least the one found in this last decree. It is to conserve one’s values, one’s culture, their manner of living, and so on; and then to still conform to the host country’s laws. That’s integration.’

The approach Pierre referenced—and to which he believes his perspective aligns—is one stated in Walloon legislation since 2009 that expresses hope that Wallonia’s CRI will help shape an ‘intercultural society’ (*e.g.*, 27 Mars 2014 Décret). Some workers thus pointed to the ideal of an intercultural society as equating integration even though ‘intercultural’ itself is also undefined. As Director 3 put it: ‘I do not like, and I cannot use this word [integration] because it too commonly implies that immigrants must integrate into [society]. So I want us to use the concept of an “intercultural society” and creating an intercultural society. That is clearer.’ Asked to elaborate on what constituted an intercultural society as relating to work being done by CRIs, Director 3 said:

Intercultural is that the two parties must be able to work together, meaning that immigrants must be able to integrate by respecting the rights and responsibilities [present in the host society]. And the host society must also make room for and be open towards immigrants, although this is rarely the case.

The director thus expanded upon Pierre's notion to address the host society's role in integration efforts, albeit calling the concept 'interculturality' rather than integration. Other interviewees maintained the same understanding of integration being both immigrants and society adjusting together. Bernadette, a young worker at one of the larger CRI, called integration 'a two-way movement that is not only for the person who arrives' concerning their respecting legal 'rights and duties, these kinds of things, but also that the host society can open to the other and adapt as well.' Another worker at CAI Namur noted, 'we chose to be called "Intercultural Action Center"' rather than an integration center because they wanted to emphasize that their mission was 'a work of both sides.' Like CAI Namur, two other CRI – CeRAIC and CIMB – deliberately use 'intercultural' rather than integration in their names as a means of emphasizing this two-way communication. In this respect, one has to wonder if the legislation declaring an 'intercultural society' resulted from CRI lobbying efforts more than inherent political inclinations as the three CRI using intercultural in their names each predated the legislative directive by more than 10 years. And multiple directors at other CRI noted during interviews their preference for using 'intercultural' rather than integration to describe their organization's visions. Wallonia's stated policy could thus be no more than using preferred terminology but without more behind it; indeed, a CRI director stated, 'In the Walloon region there are no integration policies in the sense of interculturality.' The legislation uses the terminology but again does little else, leaving the CRI to develop their own policies considered intercultural.

Many CRI create their own policies they consider intercultural to guide them in their localized efforts. These differences presumably derive from each CRI's history and

circumstances in becoming a CRI. CAI Namur, for instance, existed as an entity prior to Wallonia creating CRIs. CAI Namur declares in its introductory literature its stated goals to ‘promote the values of freedom, justice, equality for all and especially for people of foreign origin’ and also ‘to achieve harmonious cohabitation in a society where all its members can participate in a democratic and equal way, fully enjoy their rights and provide for all their needs’ (CAI Namur projet politique et stratégie globale). CeRAIC similarly sets forth its intercultural ideals in the form of four values: citizenship, diversity, equality, and human dignity (Ce.R.A.I.C. Qui sommes-nous?). Other CRI, notably CRIBW and CRIPEL, repeat Wallonia’s decree (CRIBW Les Missions n.d.; CRIPEL Missions n.d.). CIMB and CRIC likewise repeat Wallonia’s decree but do so using layperson language (CIMB Historiques et missions n.d.; Les missions du CRIC). Interculturality for these CRI thus does not vary from the legislative decrees, which is to say that it leaves ‘intercultural’ undefined. So in practice, intercultural combines assimilation and multiculturalism perspectives in the local environment, on a case-by-case basis, as Roman’s and Adele’s comments discussed above suggest.

4.5.2 Creating culture together

Yet another dimension to CRI workers’ conceptualizations of integration is the idea of creating a new culture altogether. To some of them, this is exactly what the legal directive to have an intercultural society implies. Director 3 put it in these terms: ‘To talk about integration is to put [immigrants] on the outside,’ whereas interculturality allows for ‘the production of a new culture that is the result of mixing all of the cultures together.’ Most interviewees tended to express some form of this idea when discussing integration. Some even analogized integration/interculturality to making a cake;

immigrants from one country with all of their culture would be like the eggs, immigrants from another country would be like the flour, native Belgians would be the sugar, and so forth. When placed together in a bowl and mixed, an entirely different product results. One worker gave the annual African Night Festival (*Nuit Africaine*) in the Brabant-Walloon province as a specific example of this process in Wallonia. The festival started in 1994 with a Belgian-based non-profit organization known as 'Friends of Guinea' inviting a Guinean musician to perform in Belgium during the country's popular music festival season and the organization invited the Belgian public to attend free of charge. Two years later, the festival expanded to include music from other African nations, and by 1997 the provincial government began providing financial and logistical support to host the event (including bringing in contemporary musicians from Africa. The festival expanded to include recreated sub-Saharan African villages for attendees to experience. By 2015, the villages included recreations from North African countries as well to better represent the African continent and the origins of the local population in Belgium as Belgians with North African origins created and staffed the villages. Those manning the villages are persons living in Belgium but with origins in the respective country they depict.

The African Night Festival borrowed a Belgian cultural element (music festivals) and combined it with African music to create what a worker at CRIBW, which helps coordinate the event, considered to be one of the Belgium's most popular music festivals. It is consistent with a CRI director's comment that, 'One keeps a little bit of her original culture, but then then also benefits from the host society's culture, and inversely the host culture takes a little bit of the immigrants' culture as they arrive' in the host society. So

conceptually, these workers' perspectives about mixing aspects to create a new culture coincide with those present in early assimilation literature about combining to create something original, what Draschler (1920) called a 'synthetic culture.' There is no large-scale abandoning of past culture. Rather, immigrants and host society find the differences that do or do not matter. This is the fault line for belonging. Whether the festival achieved this objective or not is debatable. But its success in bringing together people with African origins and European origins is real.³

Where the interviewees' perspective on creating something together moves beyond early theories, however, is the interviewees' focus on the host society's laws and immigrants adherence to them. Pierre's statement quoted above – that integration involves conforming to the host country's laws while still conserving ones values, culture, and manner of living – was not an aberration among workers. Nor was expecting compliance with the laws unique to native-born workers like Pierre. For instance, Karena, a worker with an immigrant background, explains, 'I can't deny what the Belgians built over decades, and I comply with all laws because that is relevant' to the host society's identity, just as, she says, 'I preserve traditions, beliefs, and everything that made me the person I am today' to shape her identity and present contributions to Belgium. Another worker with an immigrant background, Bella, related the words that her father often told her in his native tongue after he immigrated to Belgium: 'The country where you go has its practices, and you have to accept them because they are in the country that welcomes you. ... You have to accept that the host country has its own way of life.' The 'practices' Bella's father referenced meant the host country's laws that then shape how people live in

³ Several interviewees in my broader research (both those with migrant backgrounds and those without) pointed to the African Night Festival as an event that they enjoyed.

the country. For Bella and the other interviewees, immigrants' complying with the laws did not mean that they accepted all cultural aspects of the host society. The workers' focus on law is not assimilative in nature. Rather, it is recognition that a host society's laws are critical parts of its culture.

The focus on laws also gives immigrants connection to the host society that is more concrete as the society's identity is not always fixed. The host society culture is always changing, despite the general tendency among politicians and assimilationist academics to fix an identity. To be sure, the interviewees consistently rejected the idea of assimilation wherein immigrants lose their identity to conform to a host culture. This differs from Flemish integration workers' perspectives of integration programs creating 'little Flemish persons' (Swyngedouw 2016). One reason is that the Walloon workers readily acknowledged that there was no set culture for immigrants to conform to even if there was assimilation. They pointed out how society was always changing and legislative attempts suggesting otherwise belied reality. The worker Roman put it this way:

I think that we are mistaken to suggest that there is an identity that is fixed, that there are values that are fixed. That's not the case. ... Take abortion or homosexuality as an example. Talk to 20 Belgians and ask them their thoughts about these issues. There won't be a unanimous position on them. But with an immigrant, we basically demand that they go completely into something, you know, that's fixed. There's multiple, plural identities.

Roman continued on to explain that immigrants must recognize that things in Belgium will be different from their home countries while Belgian society must determine how much difference it will tolerate from immigrants. Again, it is about making sameness. Roman's statement and explanation came in response to questions about legislation

requiring immigrants to sign a pledge to uphold ‘Belgian values’ and his frustration with that legislation and others like it that attempt to establish Belgian society as one thing and immigrant cultures as another rather than seeing them create something together. And while the law Roman referenced was a federal Belgian policy shaped by Flemish integration ideals, workers nevertheless leveled multiple critiques at the Walloon government regarding its own integration laws. It is to some of these criticisms that I now turn.

4.5.3 Walloon laws and their limits

Many workers criticized what they considered to be an increasingly assimilationist approach to integration making its way into Walloon legislation. In particular, interviewees disliked the mandatory nature of the integration course with monetary fines levied on immigrants who do not comply with all requirements within a specified time period that some consider as too short. Skepticism with this approach abounded. Pierre bluntly observed:

We never talked about integration in the 1950s. Integration happened systematically with past immigration waves – Italians, Greeks, Poles. They worked and people said that they were part of society. Now, work is harder to come by. So one has to complete an integration course to integrate into Belgium, or at least in Wallonia. That’s at least what politicians tell us; it’s “We have a miracle solution to integration in Wallonia: come and take our integration course, meet people, do the welcome module [with CRI], take French classes, explore how professional employment works, learn societal rules for citizenship and so forth, then bam! You are integrated.” I’m a little skeptical of this vision, or rather critical of it, even though I work in the integration courses.

For Pierre, elements of Wallonia’s integration legislation are more politically motivated than aimed at actually helping immigrants. Director 2 expressed similar skepticism:

‘Today there is political pressure to say that “integration” is the integration course’

defined by Wallonia's decrees. And these decrees increase obligations on immigrants and the CRI without these new laws necessarily being tied to findings from past legislation or feedback from CRI workers implementing the laws.

To be sure, the government receives statistical reports from CRI. And workers state that the information contained in the reports is only increasing. Yet, as Director 5 and another worker Bernadette observed, the time spent preparing reports takes workers away from other tasks assisting immigrants. Further, the information requested by the government might not allow for a broader understanding of the integration that is occurring because of its limited nature. 'All of the evaluation metrics are often more quantitative rather than qualitative,' observed Director 4, because the politicians 'are not interested in [qualitative information].'

Another common complaint among CRI workers was that the Walloon government's ever-increasing integration laws are made without consulting CRI workers.

According to Director 5:

In recent years, the consultation mechanisms have been less effective than before. So there are still exchanges and contacts, but the government does not systematically take into account its partners on the ground to improve the policies. And so, you know, it puts me back to answer ... that Wallonia regularly consults the CRIs but does not necessarily hear what we have to say.

What constitutes 'consultation' varies. Circumstances surrounding Wallonia's 2018 integration decree evidence this reality. (The Walloon government currently revises its integration decrees every two years.) The decree significantly increases the hours immigrants must spend in French language classes (from 120 to 400) and civic integration courses (from 20 to 60) (Décret 8 novembre 2018). Director 6 recounted how government officials provided the proposed text to CRI officials on Monday April 30th;

May 1st was a holiday, and the officials had a meeting planned to publicly reveal the finalized text on May 2nd. Director 6 noted, ‘Government officials will say, “Yes, we consulted the CRIs.” That’s the official version. But how could one say that we were consulted when we were not able to read over the text, you know? We weren’t consulted.’ Other CRI directors confirmed this scenario, although some said that the government provided the proposed language via email on April 28th, a Saturday. Regardless, it is hard to argue with Director 6’s conclusion that, ‘we aren’t really consulted,’ or statements by Director 4, Pierre, and others that they sometimes learn of legislative changes through the media rather than from the government.

Although increasingly left out of the legislative process, CRI workers nevertheless navigate through the decrees to achieve the broader integration goals each CRI sets for its localized area. ‘We have decrees, and within the decrees we see how we can maneuver within them,’ declared Director 7 before adding, ‘we have always been like this.’ CAI Namur similarly explains in its global strategy document that it has ‘always worked to build a structure that is both in line with the law but also with the organization’s history and meaning’ (Projet politique et stratégique globale 2015). Other CRI workers expressed analogous views, particularly those at CRIs with well-defined local missions as described above. Director 4 nevertheless recognized that Wallonia increasingly limits CRIs’ ability to act independently and cautioned against ‘imposing a standardized model that will ultimately not be relevant to anyone because it is disconnected from the local realities.’ This fact explains why CRI workers directed some of their sharpest critiques towards smaller, more mundane regulations about implementing the larger, more general laws.

Workers faulted Wallonia's administrative dictates for the meddlesome effects the rules and regulations had on various integration activities sponsored or overseen by the CRI. Essentially, workers did not disagree so much with the larger laws' stated objectives as they did with the prescriptions in how to achieve them. Director 2 summed up the sentiment this way, 'We work against the regulations. I purposely use the word "against." It's not a detail.' Director 2 explained the combative statement in the context of negative results flowing from Wallonia's regulations regarding French-language instruction. Wallonia's integration laws require immigrants to learn French. Director 2 did not oppose that requirement at all, asserting instead – like most CRI workers I interviewed – that immigrants learning French is critical to creating a new culture together. While the 2018 decree significantly increases the time immigrants must be in French courses, Director 2 highlighted administrative regulations imposing higher language proficiency/training on French-language instructors. Director 2 objected to these regulations by stressing that they forced out many valuable instructors simply because those instructors do not have the defined certifications or degrees now demanded by the government. Fewer available teachers means fewer available French courses and so fewer opportunities for immigrants to learn French. The move also increases the costs to course operators because they must hire teachers with more advanced degrees even if those teachers are lousy pedagogues; effectively making the government pay more for less. And all of this occurred, Director 2 notes, without a well-defined reason for the regulatory change in teacher certification. Jean-Jacques concurred with Director 2 and expressed his concern that the language regulations were increasingly removing local organizations from servicing immigrants. With an immigrant background himself, Jean-Jacques learned French through

neighborhood organizations as a child and stressed their importance in helping immigrants participate in society.

CRI actors working against tedious regulations is not happenstance. Some put aside administrative directives to achieve the desired end result. In his role at the CRI, for example, Pierre must interview newly arrived immigrants to assess each person's situation (health, children, housing, French language skills, professional training, etc.).

He shared the following:

Wallonia tells us that we have to do interviews individually. But I have to say that in my practice, sometimes I do interviews with a couple – the two of them – because you simply have to accept cultural differences, in a general fashion. One could say, “Look at that woman, that woman is submissive, the man has a hold on the woman,” when in the end it is simply something cultural where the man has always managed administrative papers, the woman doesn't know about their health insurance, you know.

Pierre did not hesitate to adjust the administrative rule of a one-on-one interview to achieve the larger legal objective of completing the interview and assessing the immigrants' situation. He justified his actions as follows:

What does it matter? As long as there's no violence [in the relationship], what does it matter if their roles are different in a couple? We have the tendency to forget that 50 years ago in Belgium it was completely normal for the woman to stay at home, the man to work, the woman to take care of the children. We still have this same reality in other societies, perhaps more in the Middle East, when the reality is that 50 years ago feminism passed through Europe and there was this emancipation of women.

In short, Pierre expressed his belief that it is okay for Belgians (including CRI workers) to take immigrants as they are and work with them rather than demand complete adherence to a policymaker's regulation. As Director 2 said, ‘It's a process. ... You have to take it step by step.’

Multiple workers expressed similar sentiments and their belief that the host society needs greater understanding of, and patience with, the immigrant groups. Director 7 observed, 'For us at [this CRI], the most important part in our efforts is the host society' in making them more culturally aware of immigrants. He continued, 'We are not immigrants' defenders. Personally, I don't defend them. I defend a vision, a vision that encompasses immigrants and natives, whether they're born Belgian or born to parents of foreign origins, that they live together in friendly, supportive way.' Director 3 commented, 'Around 80% of the regional centers' efforts and time should be spent on the host society and 20% on immigrants' in seeking understanding of one another. But Wallonia's current legislation makes this difficult, Director 3 observed, noting that the laws 'provide for French classes only with foreigners in the classroom, for example. They do not foresee any activities where immigrants meet with Belgians. There is nothing. Nothing.' Other workers express similar concern that the laws do not address immigrants and locals being together. Adele, a CRI worker who assists in French language courses, said that students frequently ask where the Belgians are to help practice French. These are issues currently not addressed by Wallonia's laws. And they may not be in the near future as laws increasingly put pressure on immigrants.

4.6 Conclusions

Workers implementing Wallonia's integration laws show how integration cannot conceptually be categorized as an either/or proposition set forth by the state along a multicultural versus assimilationist ideological spectrum. At a local level, workers simultaneously incorporate elements from normative assimilationist and multicultural models. Walloon workers call this mingled approach 'interculturalism.' Yet regardless of

terminology, integration workers shape societal boundaries for inclusion and exclusion in their localized spaces. The local host society they interact with, along with the immigrants living there, will create a new culture together that will vary from one locale to the next depending on those comprising it, much as a cake depends on the ingredients used in making it. CRIs with more sub-Saharan African immigrants promote different cultures than those with more Maghrebian immigrants, for instance, as shown by the African Night Festival.

Next, the Walloon experience reveals how scholars and policymakers alike might rethink integration. Integration is broader than a uniform state or subnational policy; it is a political and a cultural process that varies across national space. This variance can be both regional, as Flanders and Wallonia adopt differing ‘integration’ laws in their respective regions, and local as actors implementing integration laws within Wallonia do so differently—at a localized level—based on divergent ideas of belonging and community. Workers have their own notions of how things should be, or how they are on the ground, and act accordingly. So while laws may dictate one thing, workers may do another. Director 2’s comments that workers ‘work against the regulations’ and Director 7’s emphasis that workers ‘maneuver’ within the decrees are just two statements exemplifying this reality. No two workers will maneuver within and work against integration laws in the same way regardless of any uniform integration law.

More broadly, this study demonstrates the methodological strength that an approach focused on ‘belonging’ contributes to integration literature due to its conceptual emphasis on immigrants and locals together determining the differences that do/do not matter on a local scale. Belonging incorporates local actors’ ideals of community and

prioritizes them over regional or national policymakers' perspectives as those implementing integration legislation are those ultimately shaping immigrants' everyday inclusion and exclusion based on the workers' interacting with immigrants and host society members alike. How these workers shape inclusion/exclusion boundaries may be uneven and not always according to the stated laws. Researchers examining integration would be wise to incorporate belonging in their study to better understand integration's localized nature.

CHAPTER 5

EXPLORING 'CITIZENSHIP' AMONG MIGRANTS ATTENDING WALLOON CIVIC INTEGRATION COURSES¹

¹ Nielson, S.P.. To be submitted to *Citizenship Studies*

Abstract

Amid rising nationalism, many European states demand that migrants ‘assimilate,’ with some states requiring migrants seeking legal citizenship to complete formal ‘citizenship’ courses. Nationalists often see such training as critical for constructing national identities and facilitating immigrant ‘integration.’ Too often, however, academic and public policy debates center on states’ citizenship conceptions delineated in law and policies. Research focuses on the state, is top-down, and institutional. These studies thus address what states believe migrants *should* imagine about the state, leaving aside what the migrants *actually* envision, thereby overlooking migrants’ own conceptions regarding formal membership and informal belonging in the state and community. This article addresses this omission by directly appealing to migrants’ viewpoints, adding to an emerging scholarship centered on migrants’ citizenship perspectives. It considers migrants’ attitudes and the emotions they ascribe to legal citizenship in their new state. Doing so enhances understandings of nationalism’s presence/absence in localized contexts as individuals (including migrants) locally produce national identities. The article reveals that migrants’ seemingly instrumental decision to acquire legal citizenship is not devoid of emotion. Many maintain an attachment to the country’s political culture, meaning safety, personal liberty, and legal institutions, rather than the national culture. Others seek legal citizenship to secure a sense of belonging in their new state. The migrants’ emotional attachments to the state are thus real, but perhaps without the full panoply of emotions desired by nationalists.

5.1 Introduction

Nationalism is sweeping across Europe. No country seems immune from its influence as far right and populist parties gain prominence in local, regional, and national legislative bodies. Election results since 2015 in Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Hungary, and Sweden evidence this reality. These parties' appeal has a variety of sources. But one issue stands out in promoting their popularity with an agitated electorate: immigration.

Native Europeans fret about losing their culture and identity as newcomers arrive with different cultural, religious, and ethnic backgrounds. An influx of immigrants—particularly during the 2015 migrant crisis—amplified European anxieties. Nationalist parties prey on this popular angst, promising to “preserve” national culture from immigrants. They promote love for the nation culturally and suggest that migrants fail to love the same (*see* Ahmed 2014; Ho 2009). Anti-immigrant Alternatives for Germany (AfD), for instance, released a series of campaign posters focusing on cultural preservation leading up to national elections in 2017. One poster depicted white women in traditional German dress from various regions (the Black Forest and Lower Sorbs) with the caption, “Colorful Diversity? We already have it.” Another bore the caption, “New Germans? We’ll make them ourselves” above an image of a smiling white woman lying on her back with a visibly pregnant belly carrying (presumably) a German child. The posters and their message had an effect; AfD captured over 12% of the vote, the best showing by a far-right German party since World War II.

Similar posters appeared in Belgium in late 2018 from the New Flemish Alliance (N-VA) as it opposed Belgium's proposed involvement with the United Nations' Migration Pact.¹ The N-VA is a nationalist party active in Belgium's Flanders and Brussels-Capital regions. It is also the largest party in Belgium's national government. One of its posters opposing the Migration Pact shows fully veiled Muslim women walking in an obviously European city street above the caption: "UN Migration Pact = focus on migrants preserving their own culture" (see **Figure 5.1**). The poster posited that immigrants maintain their own (foreign) culture rather than adopting Belgian/European culture, presumably justifying the N-VA's anti-immigrant stance and strenuous opposition to the UN's non-legally binding accord. After Belgium's Prime Minister pledged to support the UN accord in December 2018, the N-VA left Belgium's federal governing coalition, causing the government's collapse.

A key feature of Europe's current nationalist, anti-immigrant politics is the increase in integration measures aimed at immigrants. Such measures include civic integration courses, language exams, and citizenship tests (Goodman 2010, 2014; Groenendijk 2011; Joppke 2017). Civic integration courses exist across the continent, including in Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom (Joppke 2007a). Their purpose is to facilitate immigrant "integration" into the national polity by providing language as well as civic and cultural (history, politics, culture) instruction (Williams 2018). Nationalists often see these courses as critical for preserving national identity (Jacobs & Rea 2007). And states often tie residency permits,

¹ The measure's is officially known as the United Nations' Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

welfare benefits, work permits, and entry to successfully completing the courses (Goodman 2014; Paparusso 2019).

These broad patterns of nationalist integration sentiment and policy across Europe, however, hide some important variations, including those occurring within states. Belgium is one example. It is a federal state divided into two main regions, Flanders and Wallonia, with immigration attitudes and integration courses varying in each. Flanders, Belgium's Flemish-speaking region,² is a nationalist hotbed. The N-VA mentioned above and other nationalist parties earned over 43% of the Flemish vote in the 2019 federal elections, for instance. (IBZ, n.d.). Flanders in 2003 introduced a mandatory integration requirement known as *inburgering* (Flemish term approximately meaning “becoming a citizen”) borrowed from the Netherlands' civic integration course mandating Dutch language instruction and citizenship classes covering Dutch societal organization (Pulinx & Van Avermaet 2015; Martiniello 2013). *Inburgering* is known for its assimilationist nature, being likened at times to “a little Flemish factory” (Swyndegouw 2016; *see also* Adam 2011).

Conversely Wallonia, home to Belgium's francophone minority, lacks strong nationalist parties. Such parties garnered less than 0.004% of the region's vote in the 2019 federal elections. But this is not to say that Wallonia has a *laissez-faire* attitude towards immigrants. Indeed, the region maintains its own civic integration course that includes citizenship classes known as “Citizen Integration Training” (*Formation à l'Intégration Citoyenne*, or FIC) (27 Mars 2014 Décret). Since 2014, Wallonia mandates

² Flemish is also known as ‘Belgian Dutch.’

that all newly arrived migrants with visas longer than three months complete FIC.³ The requirement does not demand that migrants demonstrate complete loyalty to Wallonia or Belgium, or even that they emotionally connect to the place; indeed, much of FIC's content revolves around the practicalities of everyday living. The stated goal is to foster an (undefined) 'intercultural' society (*e.g.*, Décret 27 Mars 2014, Article 151). This curious context makes clear that researchers cannot assume a homogeneous, nationalist, and anti-immigrant landscape. It also raises questions about the different ways that migrants engaging with compulsory civic integration programs envision citizenship themselves.

Integration courses in Belgium gained greater importance in 2012 after the federal parliament changed Belgium's citizenship laws to require a person to first "prove" their "social integration" before receiving formal citizenship (Article 12bis *Code de la nationalité Belge* ('Article 12bis')). The national government had always retained power over citizenship while the regions controlled integration. But pressure by the N-VA and other Flemish parties to tighten citizenship rules resulted in the change to first require integration (Pulinx & Van Avermaet 2015). Prior to this, Belgium's prevailing philosophy was that first granting legal citizenship facilitated migrant integration (*see* Goodman 2010). After the law's change, completing an "integration course" like FIC became one way to "prove" integration (Article 12bis). So it is that migrants seeking formal citizenship, as well as newly arrived migrants like those mentioned above, enroll in and follow the same civic integration course. Questions then arise as to those in

³ There are some exemptions from this requirement including persons from other EU-member states, the European Economic Area, Switzerland, Turkey, and members of their families. Those under age 18 and over 65, diplomatic corps, and members of international organizations are also exempt.

Wallonia's FIC. How do those participating in FIC conceptualize citizenship/Belgian identity? For them, is it more legal or relational? What is their sense of belonging? Does it vary depending on whether one is attending a citizenship course as a new arrival or in applying for legal citizenship? And as it relates to the change in citizenship laws, do migrants seek formal citizenship to secure a sense of belonging? In short, what does citizenship mean to course participants?

This article answers these questions with information gathered through qualitative interviews with, and in-class observation of, immigrants attending Wallonia's FIC courses. These are persons directly affected by Wallonia's integration laws. The article thus employs a "bottom-up" approach to understanding citizenship, one increasingly emphasized in literature but underutilized in practice (*see, e.g.,* Harpaz & Mateos 2019). Yet the bottom-up approach employed here does not completely ignore state perspectives. Indeed, the primary research sites are government-sponsored courses that migrants attend either as a condition of formal citizenship or as a condition of their residence permits (Article 12bis; 2014 Decret). So this research simultaneously draws in state power over citizenship and migrant conceptions of the same. In other words, it gives voice to migrants engaged with state citizenship laws. These findings may then inform state-level actors creating and implementing citizenship policies. This impact is extremely significant but not yet examined in research. Further, addressing migrants' perspectives enables a secondary focus, which is to consider emotions and emotional attachment in citizenship processes, thereby responding to calls to re-engage emotion in geographic scholarship (Askins & Swanson 2019).

This article begins by reviewing and integrating literature on citizenship and emotion. Next, it briefly summarizes Wallonia's FIC course structure and the methods used. It then discusses the empirical results. The main finding is that immigrants affected by the integration laws have emotional attachments to Belgium's *political* culture, not its national culture. Love of the nation (culturally) is critical for most nationalists (Ho 2009) and seemingly an objective for citizenship course proponents (Pulinx & Van Avermaet 2015), yet it is not a primary motivator for those migrants in Wallonia's FIC courses interviewed here. A second finding is that some migrants see formal citizenship as a means of acquiring an identity, meaning a sense that one belongs in their new state. Finally, this article presents FIC participants' perspectives on the courses themselves.

5.2 Citizenship and Emotion

The analytical framework used in this article centers on "citizenship," a mode of membership conventionally associated with the modern state. The framework also considers emotions doing so emphasizes migrants' citizenship perspectives.

Citizenship is at once a legal category, with citizenship being the laws dictating relations between insiders and outsiders (Steil & Ridgley 2012), as well as a social and cultural construct (Staheli et al. 2012). As a legal category, citizenship highlights notions of rights and obligations that are encoded in laws. It also suggests values and virtues associated with participation in a national community or polity. As a social and cultural construct, citizenship occurs in spaces of everyday life and includes attachments individuals may make (Nagel & Ehrkamp 2016). Citizenship in this latter sense is often

associated with nationalism and a presumed attachment to an imagined community of fellow citizens (Anderson 2006) within the territorial state.

Historical understanding of citizenship dates back to the Greek city-state and classical philosophers such as Strabo and Ptolemy (Painter and Philo 1995). There was a mark of belonging and commitment to a particular place (Desforges et al. 2005) — a sort of legal formula dictated who did and did not belong (Ho 2008). For those deemed to belong, their belonging stemmed from a created identity that carried with it certain rights and obligations as tied to a specific place or territory (Painter & Philo 1995).

The rise of the nation-state and ideas of national citizenship in the late eighteenth century, however, weakened citizenship's local, city-based focus and changed it to more of a national ideal (Desforges et al. 2005). The scale change from the local to the national did not necessarily remove the idea of rights and obligations, what may be referred to as the legal status of citizenship. Indeed, long-established citizenship conceptions, and the study of them, did not begin changing for an additional two centuries after the nation-state's rise (Ho 2008). Territory was considered the dominant citizenship factor throughout this time (Waite 2012; Murphy 2013). That is, citizenship focused on the formulation of political relationships within the nation-state territory.

Rapid globalization and migration altered nation-state citizenship in various ways. Globalization since the late twentieth century rescaled notions of citizenship to also include those above the nation-state such as group identities based on religion, ethnicity, and culture (Desforges et al. 2005; Waite 2012). Migration similarly changed notions of citizenship because, while not formal citizens, migrants in many contexts maintain

certain rights and are subject to similar obligations attendant to citizenship within those areas where the migrants live (Ehrkamp 2010). Citizenship, or “belonging” (*e.g.*, Secor 2004; Ho 2009), formulates the terms of membership in legal and social categories both on the “national” level (in national policy and constitutional law, for instance), as well as everyday spaces—localities—where migrants and locals negotiate membership and what it means to belong in the community of citizens such as churches, neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, and so on (Nagel & Ehrkamp, 2016). Recognizing citizenship as more than a singular national narrative consistent across a country is important because such a scenario is typically unrealistic (Agnew 2013) and impossible in Belgium as a multinational state (*see, e.g.*, Adam & Martiniello 2013).

In basic terms, citizenship in the migration context is both a formal legal status with rights and entitlements as well as a marker of identity and belonging (Joppke 2007a; 2010; Pogonyi 2019). Identity is often associated with nationalism. Indeed, nationalism presumes an attachment to an imagined community of fellow citizens (Anderson 2006). Scholars tend to categorize nationalism as “ethnic” or “civic” in nature (*e.g.*, Sharma, 2016; Smith & Hutchinson, 1994). The former presumes a community based on ideals of common origins, ancestry, consanguinity, and so forth (Dekker, Malova, & Hoogendoorn, 2003). Civic nationalism, on the other hand, focuses on sharing a common political culture, which suggests the majority culture as being detached from the wider political culture shared by all citizens (Antonsich & Petrillo 2019). The integration courses in Europe generally fit within a civic nationalism ideal as they focus on national principles, values, and histories (Goodman 2010; Joppke 2010).

In considering citizenship as identity, scholarship often centers on official views propagated by the state (Pogonyi 2019; Joppke 2007a). Indeed, academic and public policy debates tend to focus on states' and/or political parties' citizenship conceptions delineated in law, policies, or campaign literature, or by policymakers themselves (e.g., Joppke 2010; Spiro 2008). Such research focuses on the state, is top-down, and institutional (Knott 2019). Consequently, studies generally consider what the state/party expects immigrants to do to become like a defined ideal and then use this measure as a condition of securing legal citizenship (Brubaker 2001; Nicholls 2012). Waerniers & Hustinx (2019) for instance, reviewed integration policy documents in Flanders to reveal the region's expectation that migrants "earn moral citizenship through assimilation" to the dominant "Western culture" (p. 277-278). Put differently, these studies address what the state believes a migrant *should* imagine about the state, leaving aside what the migrants *actually* believe. They thus overlook migrants' own conceptions regarding formal membership and informal belonging in the state and community (Ramos et al. 2019). And despite calls for researchers to increasingly talk *with* migrants rather than *about* them (Leitner & Ehrkamp 2006; p. 1616), scholars still note an ongoing "lacuna of research" that considers migrants' perspectives on the how and why they seek citizenship or conceptualize it (Szewczyk 2016: p. 363; *see also* Harpaz & Mateos 2019). The same is true in citizenship literature generally (*see* Joppke 2007a).

There is nevertheless an emerging scholarship directly revealing migrants' and minorities' views on citizenship and belonging (e.g., Pogonyi 2019, 2017; Hoekstra 2019). This research employs a "bottom-up" approach to understanding citizenship increasingly emphasized in literature but underutilized in practice (Harpaz & Mateos

2019; Studemeyer 2015). The bottom-up approach contributes a greater understanding of nationalism's presence/absence in localized contexts as individuals (including migrants) locally recreate nations and national identities (Antonsich & Matejskova 2015), identities that nationalists may seek to shape by promoting particular emotional attachments (Koch 2016).

This bottom-up approach emphasizes citizenship's emotional dimensions. Emotional attachments frame how individuals live in the world, how they live their everyday (Anderson & Smith 2001). These attachments help form a sense of belonging and are dynamic according to one's social and material experiences (Wood & Waite 2011). Emotions can include a "longing to be", or a desire for attachments, with others and to place (Askins 2016). For migrants, emotions acquire increasing importance as they engage with their new countries after migration (Herrero-Arias et al 2020). Accordingly, migration scholars are increasingly incorporating emotion in their research (*e.g.*, Van Ramshorst 2019). By focusing on emotions and experiences in connection with certain laws, such as laws for the integration courses, researchers and policymakers can better understand those laws' implications in everyday practice and their connection to achieving policy objectives (*see* Hoekstra 2019).

Although scholars increasingly consider emotions, their inquiries at times essentialize migrants' emotions in ways that may contribute to nationalists' frustration with, and hostility towards, migrants. They assume that migrants make citizenship choices in cold, calculating ways designed to either maximize their personal economic interest in the host society or to increase social capital in their homelands (*e.g.*, Joppke 2019; Altan-Olcay & Balta 2016). There is little consideration given to citizenship's

emotional meaning for migrants (Ho 2009), or what migrants' connection to the host country actually is, including their sense of place (Agnew 1987; Massey 2005). Migrants may seek formal citizenship for a variety of personal reasons unrelated to economics (Studemeyer 2015). This can include emotional connections such as memories or pride in the territory (Wood & Gilmartin 2018). Symbolic implications, such as perceived social status in or connection to the state, can also play a part in how migrants emotionally conceive citizenship (*see* Pogonyi 2019). For refugees, a key emotion is a sense of security (Askins 2016), as it can be for other immigrants too (Staeheli & Nagel 2008). Citizenship can be closely intertwined with national identity (Miller-Idriss 2006). So seeking formal citizenship, emotionally speaking, can be a form of identity management, meaning how one claims an identity vis-à-vis her country of residence (Pogonyi 2019; *see also* Nyers 2010).

This article explores citizenship by considering the emotions underlying migrants' seemingly utilitarian decisions to secure formal citizenship, as well as the migrants' emotional attachments to the territorial state (*i.e.*, their sense of place). Why are migrants seeking formal citizenship? What are the attachments prompting them to pursue formal citizenship? This article considers these questions in the context of Wallonia's FIC courses. It does so because completing FIC is one action migrants take to receive legal citizenship (*see* Article 12bis). Consistent with the bottom-up approach, this article focuses on migrants' motivations to attend FIC more than FIC's content. The next section describes FIC generally along with the FIC courses observed in this study and the migrants participating in them to provide greater context to the empirical responses addressing migrants' citizenship conceptions detailed in section 5.4.

5.3 Setting the Scene: Researching Wallonia's FIC

This article draws on formal interviews with 12 FIC students and field notes from approximately 55 hours of participant observation in two different FIC courses I attended. Interviews and participant observation are two methods used in similar studies of integration courses in Germany (Williams 2018) and France (Onasch 2017). Roughly 42 of my observation hours resulted from a course I enrolled in and followed as a student alongside migrants. I selected interviewees based on conversations with FIC participants and their ability to meet for an interview. Many students were unable to meet for in-depth interviews outside of class but spoke freely during class breaks. I incorporated summaries of such conversations in my field notes. In total, I spoke with 32 FIC students but was only able to have extended interviews with 12 of them. I detail my study sites and study participants below following a brief overview of FIC's history in Wallonia.

5.3.1 FIC's history

By way of context, and in contrast to Flanders, Wallonia had long offered optional 'welcome courses' for migrants to learn more about Belgium. It created FIC in 2009 as a means of introducing migrants to Belgium (30 avril 2009 Décret). The course also envisioned participation in the course by long-term Belgium residents with foreign origins (*i.e.*, those born in Belgium to immigrant parents). But Wallonia did not engage in compulsory citizenship training. This changed in 2014—two years after the national citizenship change—when the Walloon government made its welcome course mandatory for newly arrived migrants and included the requirement of receiving at least 20 hours of citizenship training (27 Mars 2014 Décret). This training increased to 60 hours in late

2018 (8 novembre 2018 Décret). Wallonia made FIC one of the four mandatory components of its welcome course (renamed ‘integration course’ in 2016) along with an individualized social report, French language training, and a socio-professional orientation (27 Mars 2014 Décret; 28 avril 2016 Décret). FIC became and remains Wallonia’s de-facto civic integration course for persons seeking Belgian nationality. So it is that migrants seeking legal citizenship, as well as newly arrived migrants, enroll in and follow the same citizenship course.

5.3.2 FIC sites for this study

The two FIC courses I attended were both in located in the Brabant Wallon province. I chose to follow courses in this area primarily for two reasons. First, I was familiar with Brabant-Wallon as I had lived in the province for eight months years earlier when volunteering with an NGO in Belgium. I had limited funding and time to be in the field, so selecting an area I was already familiar with greatly facilitated my ability to make contacts with various organizations. Second, Brabant-Walloon is the closest francophone province to the Brussels-Capital Region. **Figure 5.2** shows the province on a map colored in red; Brussels is the small circle located directly above the province. Brabant-Wallon’s proximity to the capital meant that persons from all over Wallonia could easily access FIC courses delivered there.

My first experience with FIC occurred in a course run by a community non-profit geared towards migrants. The instructor, Amelie, invited me to observe the course to both better understand how FIC courses worked as well as to meet students. Twelve students attended Amelie’s course. Four of them were “new arrivals” (*primo arrivants*) obligated

under Wallonia's 2014 decree to complete FIC. "New arrivals" are those in Belgium less than three years but with a residence permit longer than three months (other than some exceptions, such as students, persons from other EU-member states, Switzerland, etc.). Three of the four – Amina, Rima, and Pauline – were Syrian refugees; Amina, a Muslim wearing a headscarf, entered Belgium in 2015 while Rima and Pauline, Christians, arrived in 2017. The fourth new arrival was Raul, an Argentinian who arrived roughly six months before the course following his marriage to a native Belgian. The other eight participants attended FIC to acquire citizenship. Two of them came from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, two from Morocco, and one each from Peru, Macedonia, Mauritius, and the United Kingdom. Most of these first arrived in Belgium around 2011, although Charles, from the UK, had been in Belgium since the 1980s. Brexit motivated his push to secure Belgian citizenship because, while he had permanent residence in Belgium, traveling abroad with his family could become more complicated. The students' primary reasons for being in Belgium were: marriage, school, or refugee status. Eight of the twelve were women.

While Walloon law required FIC to be at least 20 hours, Amelie's course totaled 27 hours. She held three-hour classes on three weeknights over a three week period (total of nine class sessions). Offering the course at night made it quite popular as many FIC students also work, and attending at night did not require them to take time off of work. Students sat at tables placed together to form a large U-shape around the classroom, a street-level space situated along a busy road not far from the train station. The setup allowed students to see one another throughout the course. The two Moroccan students sat together near the front on one side, the two Congolese students sat next to them, the

Christian Syrians sat together further down, with the remaining students interspersed. While students sat in a somewhat segregated fashion, they all regularly spoke with one another before and after class as well as during short breaks. They seemed to genuinely take an interest in one another.

The second FIC course I attended also took place in Brabant-Wallon at a non-profit center primarily for women located less than four kilometers from the first. Pascale, the course instructor, encouraged me to observe the course as a student. I thus joined twenty students in attending the course. Nine students—all refugees—were new arrivals mostly coming from Syria as well as Iran, Iraq, and Yemen. The other eleven students attended to fulfil their nationality requirements. Five came from sub-Saharan Africa (Cameroon, Guinea, Rwanda, Togo), three from North Africa (Algeria and Morocco), two from Europe (Bulgaria and Russia), and one from Asia (China). Refugee status was the primary reason for most students to be in Belgium followed by marriage and work. Twelve of the twenty were women.

Pascale's course totaled 45 hours over a two-week period. Students seeking citizenship sought out the course because of its condensed timeframe, with one student, Khaled, coming from the Brussels-Capital region to attend rather than follow a course offered in Brussels. The new arrivals enrolled because of the course's proximity to their residences. The classroom consisted of a large conference table in the center of the room. Most students sat at the table, but space constraints forced some to sit at the back of the room. Several students alternated where they sat each day; some did so because they arrived late and no longer could find a place at the table while others seemed to purposely

try to meet class members by sitting next to them. The primary constant was two veiled women, Yasmin from Yemen and Rima from Syria, sitting next to each other.

5.3.3 FIC participants in this study

Table 5.1 broadly identifies the 32 FIC students in this study as reflected in the courses I attended. Interviews occurred in either French or English (sometimes a mixture of both) according to each student's preference and ability. Charles, for instance, was a native Anglophone and preferred English. Viktoriya had been an English teacher in her native country and sometimes found it easier to express herself in English than French. I translated the interview transcriptions into English (all translations in this article are thus my own). Questions included their thoughts on their FIC course, Belgian citizenship, what it means to be part of Belgian society, and what attracts them to Belgium as a place. I typically had multiple informal conversations with formal interviewees and the other FIC students before and after classes and during breaks. To protect the students' privacy, I use pseudonyms and remove identifiable characteristics in this article.

Regarding participant observation, FIC courses are designed to be participatory and interactive (*Manuel de délivrance* 2015). Both courses I attended were participatory and interactive (although one was more so than the other). Amelie and Pascale, the FIC instructors leading the respective courses, were both Belgian citizens (although Pascale had emigrated from Chile in her early 20s). They each created discussion questions from select topics mandated by Walloon law and other topics suggested by DisCRI, the Walloon agency responsible for training FIC instructors and creating course content. Because of the flexibility in delivery, including topic selection (the vast majority of

which was not mandatory), class discussions reflected localized citizenship conceptions that both adhere to and depart from regional directives while simultaneously reflecting an interplay between what FIC instructors and migrants each imagine. The in-class discussion format thus provided a means of learning migrants' perspectives on a range of topics identified by various state actors as relevant to membership in Wallonia and Belgium. I briefly address these topics below.

FIC's topics came from six themed modules centered on Belgium: daily life; family relations; communicating with different cultures; and understanding new professional, political, and sociocultural contexts (one module for each context) (*Bibliothèque FIC*). There are 45 topics across these modules, with 12 of them being mandatory under Walloon law (27 Mars 2014 Décret; 28 avril 2016 Décret; *Structure thématiques de la formation*). Instructors have discretion in how much time to spend on the topics (*Manuel de délivrance* 2015). These mandatory topics address everyday living/basic functioning in Belgian society, covering matters such as taxes, housing, health care, social security, education, and Belgium's laws and government structure. Within these topics, course participants learn fundamental information such as what insurance is, how to secure housing, getting along with neighbors (*i.e.*, basic manners such as not playing loud music after 10:00 pm, not visiting unannounced, etc.), how taxes work, and so forth. The greatest required emphasis, however, is on Belgium's laws and legal system. Issues addressed include the separation of powers, neutrality of the state, universal suffrage, parliamentary democracy, proportional voting, political pluralism and constitutional monarchy (*see generally Structure thématiques de la formation.*) So FIC's overarching goal—and the state perspective in creating the course—seems to be instilling

in participants an understanding and appreciation of Belgium's legal system. This being said, focusing on law does not mean that FIC courses are devoid of emotion. Emotion may arise as students and instructors discuss morals and values associated with the law as discussed in the empirical section below.

Twenty out of the 32 students in this study (63%) were present in FIC to secure legal citizenship, meaning they were not legally compelled to attend FIC to remain in the country but attended FIC to complete legal requirements for formal citizenship. The remaining 12 attended out of legal obligation due to their status as new arrivals, although several of these expressed a desire to eventually become Belgian citizens. And while FIC is a necessary step to achieve Belgian citizenship on paper, the Belgian state presumably expects FIC to create 'Belgian' citizens as well since the course is how one 'proves' integration into Belgium (Article 12bis). Accordingly, I next address FIC participants themselves, specifically what they imagine and what their emotional attachments are to the state where they secure formal citizenship.

5.4 Migrants' Citizenship Imaginations: Making Emotional Attachments and Creating Identities

The FIC participants I interviewed, each of whom was in the course based on legal requirements (as a condition to either secure residence or for legal citizenship), primarily imagine citizenship in emotional terms centered on Belgium's political culture. Their emotional attachments were to laws and rights afforded by their presence in Belgium and by Belgian law. While nationalists might typically expect emotional attachments to a national culture (Ho 2009), and some integration course proponents

might expect as much (Pulinx & Van Avermaet 2015), the migrants I spoke with express emotional attachments to a legal structure provided by Belgium's political culture rather than a Belgian (or even Walloon) national culture. This might be due to FIC's emphasis on law. Even so, the attachments to laws and rights does not mean that migrants are treating citizenship instrumentally; instead, migrants are making connections to the country, to their places of residence, and the privileges afforded in place.

A second citizenship conception FIC participants expressed during interviews or in class is the idea of formal citizenship as an identity. Immigrants make emotional investments in formal citizenship and attend FIC for that reason—to secure an identity, meaning a sense that one belongs in their new state. These emotional attachments are real connections migrants make to Belgium that better make sense of their presence in the state. After addressing interviewees' affinity for political culture and emotional conceptions of identity, I present FIC participants' perspectives on the integration courses themselves.

5.4.1 Attachment to political culture

The “political culture” FIC participants expressed attachment to centered on three key points: safety, personal liberty, and legal institutions.

Safety was a core emotional attachment many FIC students made to Belgium. Safety for these migrants was not simply instrumental (*see* Harpaz and Mateos 2019). Rather, the migrants expressed gratitude for their presence in Belgium. Being *in Belgium* was paramount. This was most apparent for migrants who were in Belgium as refugees. All eight Syrians in the FIC courses fled Daesh (the Arabic term for Islamic State). So

did Seif, an Iraqi. Yesrin fled war in Yemen and the Houthi rebels who invaded her city. Each of these students clearly expressed gratitude for their safety in Belgium. Safety also motivated Riza and Esther, refugees from Iran. “The goal was to find a safe place,” Riza says, after Iranian authorities threatened him following his conversion to Christianity three years earlier. His wife Esther had always been Christian, yet she faced constant persecution because of it. After weighing their options, the couple decided to flee with their young daughter to England based in part on their ability to speak some English. They also believed that England would be easier to reach than America where some of Esther’s family had fled years earlier. Yet after first reaching France on fake visas, the family determined instead to seek asylum in Belgium based on what they believed to be less restrictive asylum laws. They perhaps were correct as their family received asylum one year after arriving. With physical safety in Belgium, Riza says, with a smile, “I am happy, and I am not dead!”

Being in Belgium meant a different sort of safety to Ping: consumer safety. Originally from China and readily familiar with tainted foods there, Ping admired Belgium for its consumer protections. She repeatedly commented during her interview that being in Belgium removed concerns that her food could be contaminated. “I love Belgium,” Ping says while praising its “clean food” along with its abundance of “plants and clean air” and its having “few people.” (Belgium’s entire population is smaller than that of Ping’s hometown.) Belgium also presented what Ping called political “safety,” or what others refer to as “freedom,” meaning the basic freedoms associated with Western democracies such as freedom of speech that China aggressively restricts.

The personal liberty in Belgium that Ping discussed was another factor shaping migrants' emotional attachments to the state. Riza and Esther certainly love their liberty to attend church and openly practice their faith. "I am happy now because I have freedom," Riza says. Riza and Esther had greater attachments to Belgium because of this freedom than they did to Iran, similar to Eliassi's (2016) findings about Kurds in Sweden, who felt greater attachment to Sweden and a sense of belonging because of the rights afforded to them as minorities. For Guinean-born Fatoumata, being in Belgium means freedom to avoid—and not worry about—cultural practices prevalent in her home country like female genital mutilation. Fatoumata cried as she related to the class her own experience with the practice and expressed her gratitude that Belgium prohibited its occurrence so it would never be an issue for any daughters she might one day have. Were she present in Guinea with daughters, Fatoumata shared that she would be constantly worried about relatives or others taking a daughter and performing the horrific procedure without her consent. Belgium freed Fatoumata in this regard. Her love was more for the law than it was for Belgian society. And that law was based on legal protections afforded to Fatoumata in place. In some respects, Fatoumata expressed what Walloon leaders might hope for from FIC students—greater appreciation for Belgium and its legal system.

Yet not all students considered freedom as being synonymous with their presence in Belgium. To be sure, students recognized and enjoyed freedoms typical in Western society (freedom of speech, religion, etc.). But freedom to work where one wished was a different matter, especially for new arrivals. Asmaro lamented the restrictions placed on his employment due to bureaucratic determinations about his educational and professional backgrounds. He had an MBA and operated a successful company in Syria

for several years; yet Belgium mandated that he secure another master's degree so that his qualifications could be 'equivalent' to others in Belgium. This significantly limited Asmaro's employment prospects and pushed him to take menial jobs rather than those better suited to his skills and expertise. Riza also expressed disappointment with his limited employment freedom. An engineer by training, Riza received a job offer in his field while awaiting his asylum decision. He says that accepting the job would have jeopardized his asylum application as he could be considered an 'economic migrant' rather than a religious refugee. So he declined the offer. Then, after receiving refugee status, Riza found himself in a similar situation as Asmaro with the bureaucratic claim that his education and experience was not 'equivalent.' Yet Riza gladly accepted limited employment freedom in exchange for full religious freedom. So did Asmaro for his family's physical safety.

Class observations and interviews revealed that FIC participants expressed attachment to legal institutions without necessarily agreeing with the values promoted by some laws enacted by Belgium's government. This conception came out during in-class discussions of sensitive topics like same-sex marriage and euthanasia, both of which are legal in Belgium. One reason perhaps for the increased connections is that the discussions allowed students to consider their backgrounds and the similarities Belgium had to their homelands. Another reason, and perhaps a more central factor, is that students were able to understand that just because something is legal in Belgium does not mean that they must support it.

Same-sex marriage, for instance, came up during a far-reaching discussion of Belgian family structures and as a counterpoint to polygamy, a practice that more

students were familiar with based on their religious backgrounds. Students sat together in small groups and reviewed different pictures showing groups of persons, determining together what the photo portrayed. The groups then shared with the class their beliefs. Two of the 10 or so photos bear mentioning here. One showed an adult man in the photo's center with four adult women near him, and the five of them surrounded by roughly 20 children ranging in age from toddlers to early 20s. The other photo showed two men seated together. Sub-Saharan African and Latin American students guessed that the first photo was of a large extended family. Muslim students, however, corrected them by stating that it was a polygamous family. The class then discussed polygamy's presence in some of their home countries (Syria and Mauritius), its relative absence in others (Morocco), and its illegality in Belgium. The discussion allowed participants to be comfortable with difference.

For the picture showing the two men, Bondeko, from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, said, "They're brothers." Class members corrected him that the men were likely a gay couple since Belgium recognized same-sex marriage. Another broad discussion ensued during which Amelie, the native-Belgian instructor, shared that while Belgian law permitted same-sex families, not all Belgians supported the practice. Bondeko, a fervent Catholic, later revealed during an interview that Amelie's comment assuaged him and other students opposed to same-sex marriage that they too could find a place in Belgian society by acknowledging, but not necessarily embracing, legal matters within the state. Amelie's noting that native Belgians acknowledge laws but do not always endorse them, essentially emphasizing a respect for laws and the legal process, was consistent with Wallonia's directive that migrants appreciate Belgium's legal system.

It also allowed migrants to make greater identifications with other Belgians rather than seeing all of society as monolithic in nature.

A similar result unfortunately did not occur when discussing euthanasia in the course taught by Pascale, herself an immigrant to Belgium of nearly 40 years. Once the topic arose, a devout Muslim named Khaled questioned the wisdom in permitting euthanasia, especially with no age limit. (Belgium is the world's only country to allow euthanasia at any age and, as of May 2020, has two confirmed cases of euthanizing children under age 12.) Ali, another student with a Muslim background but who had lived in Europe most of his life, vociferously responded, "It's how things are here! Miracles with Mohammed and Jesus and all of that don't exist!" Missing the opportunity to explain how many Belgians still opposed the practice, and also to compare Belgium's laws with those in students' homelands, Pascale responded: "It's how things are here, so you just have to accept it." This ended further discussion and many students seemed genuinely uncomfortable; the statement made FIC assimilationist in nature and complicated migrants' efforts to make connections to Belgian society based on the premise that everyone in the state supported assisted suicide. To be sure, FIC instructors played a role in these discussions. When they encouraged participatory dialogue, as FIC courses are supposed to do, more students seemed comfortable with their understanding of issues and imagining themselves as part of Belgian society. But when instructors explicitly took sides in a debate, it resulted in consternation among students, particularly for those who disagreed with an issue, because of the assimilative approach and sense among students that they could not find common ground with Belgian laws and so create emotional attachments. Such unease might also discourage some migrants from seeking

an identity with Belgium—a sense that one belongs there—which is a significant reason why many to seek formal citizenship in the first place, as discussed in the next section.

5.4.2 Citizenship as an identity

Beyond attachments to Belgium’s political culture (its legal system and rights related to formal citizenship), several students imagined citizenship as an identity. They saw their acquiring citizenship more as a means of belonging than as a utilitarian tool like nationalists might claim. Seif is a prime example. An Iraqi refugee, Seif wanted Belgian citizenship because he believed that it would allow him to be part of the country.

‘Something that is very important to really feel like you are a Belgian person is to have Belgian citizenship, be a Belgian citizen. That way, you can have confidence that you are Belgian, that there is not a distance with people, that you are like the others.’ Seif made this statement after proudly showing a video of him in Brussels’ Grand Place at an event welcoming back Belgium’s national team from the World Cup. The brief video showed Seif near the center of the Grand Place as the team stood on a balcony 50 meters away and addressed the crowd. Seif explained that he felt a connection with the crowd but did not quite feel that he fully belonged because when the crowd chanted, ‘We are Belgium!’ he did not have anything to show that he was. And Seif wanted a new identity based on his history. He resented Iraq for its soldiers abandoning him and his family to Daesh (the Arabic name for Islamic State) in 2015. Seif left Iraq in June 2015, weeks after Daesh overran his native Anbar Province. Aid workers in Greece recommended that he re-establish his life in Belgium, telling him that the path to legal citizenship there would be easier there than elsewhere in Europe. Wishing to find a new, permanent home and never return to Iraq, even if it becomes safe to do so, Seif followed their advice and went to

Belgium. After three years in the country, Seif says, ‘I feel that I am lost between Iraqis and Belgians. Maybe when I am Belgian—when I have Belgian nationality—perhaps then I will say, ‘I am Belgian, I am not Iraqi.’”

In Belgium and elsewhere in Europe, immigration and citizenship policies now generally assume that one must be ‘integrated’ in order to acquire legal citizenship (*e.g.*, Article 12bis; Papparusso 2019). Seif’s perspective, however, suggests the inverse: that legal citizenship generates a sense of belonging. Other studies provide similar observations. For instance, Barzoo Eliassi’s (2016) account of Kurdish immigrants in Sweden describes an Iraqi Kurd who, like Seif, asserts that securing Swedish citizenship would give him ‘an identity and when you have this identity, people respect you as a human being’ (p. 103). Szabolcs Pogonyi (2019) lends some empirical support to this contention, pointing to research that shows that ‘Citizenship is a boundary creating category that distinguishes members from non-members and thus, in addition to securing status and rights, it has the potential to ground identification’ (p. 977).

The potential for grounding one’s identification could explain Viktoriya’s situation. A native Russian, Viktoriya enrolled in FIC to secure formal citizenship. During class introductions, Viktoriya flippantly said that she wanted Belgian citizenship so that she could eventually ‘move to the south of France’ with her Belgian-citizen husband. This statement seemingly confirmed a strategic citizenship choice (Ramos et al 2019). But when later asked about this statement during an interview, Viktoriya said that she and her husband had no plans to move to France. Pressed further about her reason(s) for seeking citizenship, Viktoriya responded, ‘I feel like I need it. I don’t know why.’ She explained that she did not currently have a sense that she belonged in Belgium, noting, ‘I

feel a little frustrated right now because I am not necessarily at home here in Belgium, nor do I feel like I'm at home in Russia either.' But Viktoriya did note that she preferred to be in Belgium over Russia because Belgians are 'very kind, friendly, people who are eager to help.' Being among them in the country made her a happier person. Viktoriya also no longer enjoys returning to Russia because the people there, she says, are 'cold and distant.' She has emotional attachments to Belgium, as shown by her preference to be in the country over her homeland. So Viktoriya's seeking formal citizenship could really be a way of acquiring an identity and integrating into Belgian society. Ironically, Belgium's national philosophy concerning citizenship prior to the 2012 changes pushed by N-VA and other nationalists was based on the idea that granting legal citizenship facilitates immigrant integration and attachment to country (*see* Gordon 2010). So the shift to additional hurdles migrants must overcome may have only succeeded in making some migrants feel unwelcome.

I must acknowledge that some migrants seek formal citizenship solely for instrumental purposes and not because of an emotional affinity to Belgium: nationalists may pejoratively call such citizenship seekers '*belge de papiers*' (paper Belgians) (*see* Brubaker 1992). However, my research indicates that these migrants' decisions are far from emotionless. Juliana is one example. Originally from Peru but married to a Belgian and living in the country for 10 years, Juliana must pass through customs separate from her Belgian-citizen family because she does not have a Belgian passport. Customs officials often select her for extra screening, causing concern and frustration as she is not able to communicate with her immediate family during these moments that sometimes last for hours. Formal Belgian citizenship will allow her to return to Belgium unimpeded,

so Juliana's seeking citizenship is a strategic decision (*see* Ramos et al. 2018). Juliana admits that she is seeking citizenship without deeper emotional connections to Belgium. "I am a Peruvian living in Belgium," she says, adding that she and her husband plan to return to Peru once their children finish school. (Juliana's Belgian husband lived in Peru for nearly two decades before they moved to Belgium when their oldest entered middle school.) Juliana's heart never left Peru, and she sees Belgians as too 'cold and distant' for her to wish to stay. In this respect, Juliana exemplifies emotions revealed in transnational and flexible citizenship (*e.g.*, Soysal 1994; Ong 1999). Her love for Peru overrode any affinity for Belgium.

FIC student Nikolai from Bulgaria is a second example of migrants making strategic decisions based on emotional attachments to places other than the host state. In class discussions and in conversations, Nikolai often expressed his view of Belgium as a transit country where people do not come to stay long-term. This is likely true in his case as well. He had previously spent significant time in Florida (USA) and several times expressed a desire to return and stay long term. Although unspoken, Nikolai hinted his belief that Belgian citizenship might improve his chances of eventually immigrating to the United States, a 'stepwise' migration similar to that revealed by Jaeun Kim (2019) with ethnic Koreans from China securing South Korean citizenship to then use their new status for subsequent migration to the United States. Indeed, Nikolai spoke more affectionately of Florida than he did of his native Bulgaria.

5.4.3 Participant perspectives on FIC courses

FIC participants had varied thoughts regarding their FIC course and the emotional attachments it offered. Some appreciated an understanding of cultural nuances that would

allow them to better navigate Belgian society. One example occurred during a class discussion on the boundaries between harassment and welcome behavior regarding women's appearance in public. Immigrants from Islamic countries shared that women wearing revealing clothing invite harassing behavior (whistles and catcalls) in their home countries. Other students pointed out that such conduct was unacceptable in their home countries as well as in Belgium regardless of what a woman was wearing. Yet Raul, an Argentinian, surprised other students with his comments that whistling at a woman was "complimenting" her "on her beauty." Students thus confronted cultural differences that they may not have expected, and Raul learned the boundaries of acceptable behavior in Belgium.

By and large, however, FIC participants had mixed feelings about the course and its ability to create connections to Belgium. FIC students believed the courses served a purpose to bring them in contact with others. Seif commented, "It's not just a course to understand Belgium's laws, but it's a way to mix with other people too." As an example, Seif pointed to meeting new people in class and learning from them that two other refugee families lived near his home. Classroom observations also made these connections clear; students increasingly interacted with one another in class and out of class, including eating together.

Viktoriya shared a similar belief as Seif regarding classes offering the chance to meet people. She believes classes to be good because they force immigrants like her to get out and to make friends. She spoke favorably of prior courses she had attended, such as dance and tennis courses, and how she enjoyed them because she met others. Ping shared a similar observation about her participating in a local badminton club. But

Viktoriya did not find FIC useful in meeting Belgians, largely due to its failure to put her into contact with non-immigrant Belgians. The fact that FIC participants were all immigrants like Viktoriya caused her to criticize the course as not providing an opportunity for greater connections with Belgium.

Viktoriya's criticism is consistent with classroom observations. FIC participants congregated by similar backgrounds; Moroccans sat with Moroccans, Syrians with Syrians, and so forth. Sometimes these seating patterns simply resulted from language difficulties as those less capable in French would rely on those sitting around them to sometimes translate. But sitting in this way complicated efforts to achieve social connections with a wider range of persons. And the lack of Belgians made it nearly impossible to achieve any sort of broader connection with Belgian society.

5.5 Conclusions

Those within Wallonia's FIC courses do imagine citizenship by emotional attachments, albeit with feelings different perhaps than those desired by nationalists. Nationalists often push for migrants to love a country's national culture and show that love by becoming culturally similar to other national members (*see* Ahmed 2014; Ho 2009). Those migrants I interviewed, however, focused their emotional attachments on Belgium's political culture, meaning its legal system and rights related to formal citizenship that they previously lacked like safety and personal liberty. While seemingly suggesting that migrants see citizenship in purely instrumental terms, the overall picture is more complex than an attachment to the new country and its culture as nationalists may advocate. Indeed, some interviewees see formal citizenship as a means of securing an

identity. They believe that legal citizenship will provide social acceptance—belonging—in Belgian society (*e.g.*, Eliassi 2016). These findings may be at odds with what nationalists might expect, but consistent with Wallonia’s seemingly relaxed attitude towards migrants (Pulinx & Van Avermaet 2015; Adam 2011; Martiniello 1995). In short, migrants make emotional attachments to the state as a place, but the feelings they express may differ from what nationalists might expect. This complicates current understandings of citizenship as state-centered and with migrants making citizenship decisions devoid of attachments to the host country, thereby highlighting that national citizenship is not an either/or proposition.

Next, migrants’ emotional attachments are useful in the process of integration, and in the ways that nationalists desire, because the migrants’ attachments are to the territory. Indeed, attachment to territory is nationalism’s primary premise (J .Anderson 1986; Williams & Smith 1983). So migrants’ love for Belgium as a territory based on ideals of the safety, personal liberty, and the legal institutions found there, for example, is seemingly consistent with nationalists’ goals for connections to a national place. Migrants and nationalists both share a sense of place in the country.

Third, the Walloon experience reveals how scholars and policymakers alike should rethink citizenship and migrant expectations in nationalist environments. Migrants develop emotional attachments to the state, just different attachments from what native-born nationalists might have themselves. The migrants’ attachments do not imply any less devotion to the state. And even then, each migrant has his or her own notions of what citizenship means. Riza and Esther, for instance, see citizenship as religious liberty. For

Seif, it is an identity. Fatoumata sees citizenship as safety within Belgium. Each has their own emotional attachments tied to Belgium as a place.

Fourth, the appearance of a relatively robust system of citizenship and integration education for immigrants in Wallonia, in the absence of a broader swing toward nationalist parties, raises questions about the meaning of ‘citizenship’ and ‘integration’ across European space. Europe’s nationalism swing is unmistakable in recent years, yet the shift away from multiculturalism and toward “assimilationism” and exclusion (the subject of nationalist policies), has not been entirely uniform. This study suggests that as much as one might recognize the power of nationalist movements in Europe, they need to be mindful of more localized variability and unevenness. The politics of citizenship and immigration, while directed at the nation-state and national polity, in reality unfolds in more localized contexts.

More broadly, this study contributes to citizenship discourses regarding identity creation and formation. Nationalists who see citizenship courses as key to preserving/maintaining a coherent national identity may need to reconsider course implementation and connections that immigrants may or may not make in them with the broader society.

Areas for further exploration include the content and pedagogy of classes and instructors’ perspectives. Is there an expectation that an identity is something distinctly Belgian? Do the instructors have a unified Belgian identity? Focusing on the instructors themselves still steers clear of a set “state” identity and so in many respects maintains a “bottom up” approach to study integration as the instructors may also have citizenship ideals at variance with government mandates.



The poster features a photograph of a diverse group of people walking on a cobblestone street. In the foreground, several women are wearing traditional grey and purple abayas and black headscarves. They are walking alongside other people, including a man in a white shirt and blue jeans, a woman in a pink shirt, and a young boy in a striped shirt. The background shows a typical European street scene with buildings and more pedestrians. A yellow banner is overlaid on the bottom right of the image, containing the text 'VN-migratiepact = focus op behoud eigen cultuur van de migrant' and the NVA logo with the slogan 'DE VERANDERING WERKT'.

**VN-migratiepact = focus op behoud
eigen cultuur van de migrant**

NVA
DE VERANDERING WERKT

UN Migration Pact = focus on preserving the migrant's own culture
Source: *Le Soir* December 2018 (fair use).

Figure 5.1. N-VA Campaign Poster.



By TUBS - Own work. Based on File:Belgium location map.svg by NordNordWest, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=14364888>.

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Figure 5.2. Brabant Wallon province

Table 5.1. Characteristics of Observed FIC Course Participants

Characteristics of Observed FIC Course Participants		
(N = 32)		
Sex	Men	12
	Women	20
Reason for FIC Attendance	Legal Citizenship	20
	Legal Residence (new arrival)	12
Region of Origin	Africa (sub-Saharan)	10
	Latin America	2
	Asia (excluding Middle East)	1
	Europe (EU)	2
	Europe (non-EU)	1
	Middle East	12
	North Africa	4
Arrival in Belgium	Before 2005	1
	2006-2010	5
	2011-2014	11
	2015-2017	15
Reason for Migration to Belgium	Education	1
	Family (marriage)	12
	Labor	9
	Refugee/Asylum	10

CHAPTER 6

RETHINKING THE NATION IN INTEGRATION DISCOURSES BY LOOKING MORE CLOSELY AT THE LOCALS¹

¹ Nielson, S.P. To be submitted to *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*

Abstract

Europe's rising nationalism often advances the idea that migrants do not "belong" in Europe. An accompanying ideal is that, if migrants do arrive, they must integrate into an imagined "host society" or nation present there. While not usually sympathizing with nationalist politics, scholars studying integration often incorporate nationalist imaginaries by applying various frameworks viewing the host society as monolithic. These frameworks ignore perspectives from the host society other than those dictated by elites. Ordinary persons' perspectives remain untouched. The present article critically interrogates the ideal of a uniform host society through a case study of local persons living in Wallonia, Belgium's francophone region, who claim to feel "at home" there. The article provides empirical evidence contesting the idea of uniform host societies and congruity between society and state (or even substate) boundaries. It contributes to an increasing literature focused on host society perceptions. And it provides a new framework for considering ordinary persons' perspectives by engaging elements from existing frameworks addressing nationalism and identity (everyday nationhood and belonging).

6.1 Introduction

"We're all Belgians right now. But when it's over, we'll be divided again."

– Municipal mayor in Wallonia, Belgium, discussing Belgium's national team during the 2018 World Cup

Belgium fielded a talented national team in the 2018 World Cup. Known as the "Red Devils," the team surprised many by finishing third in the tournament, beating powerhouses Brazil and England before losing to eventual champion France. To World

Cup observers unfamiliar with Belgium's political situation, Belgium seemed every bit a unified and integrated country, as its multi-ethnic/racial team advanced through the World Cup matches played in Russia. Back in Belgium, jubilant fans hung Belgian flags from their home windows and balconies or flew Belgian flags from their cars. (*See Figure 6.1*) The country came together. It did not matter that many of the team's top players were children of immigrants from Congo, Morocco, Spain, Portugal, Albania, Mali, and Martinique. Everyone was Belgian.

The euphoria and unity over the Red Devils' success sharply contrasted with Belgium's everyday, fractious reality neatly summarized by the mayor quoted above. Indeed, Belgium's internal divisions reflect how traditional nationalist ideologies fail to capture the political dynamics present in modern states. Nationalism seeks unity, if not homogeneity, within a state's defined territory (Murphy 1996; Anderson 1986). The modern state at times fosters national unity through laws based on notions of "universality" (Weber 1977), public rituals and myths (Billig 1995), and naturalization systems that clearly demarcate "nationals" from "foreigners" (Yuval-Davis 2004). But even in Europe, the heartland of the modern nation-state system, nationhood and national identity remain incomplete and contentious ideals. This is particularly so in Belgium, where strained relations between Dutch-speaking Flanders and French-speaking Wallonia complicate notions of national identity (Adam & Martiniello 2013; Murphy 1988). The two regions operate with a significant measure of independence in matters relating to migrants and even pass their own "integration" laws (Swyngedouw 2016, 2019). This context makes migrant incorporation and integration particularly problematic. Integration presupposes a unified nation, a national "host society," which newcomers can easily

identify and to which they conform and adapt (Nagel 2009). But what if the host society lacks even the semblance of coherence? What if there are relatively few “national” institutions, narratives, rituals, or policies to provide clear cues for migrants on what it means to belong?

Belgium provides a compelling case to consider these questions. The country’s lack of unifying national narratives or political-territorial coherence, combined with its increasing and divergent integration laws, provide an entry point to more explicitly probe how ordinary people envision themselves as a “host society.” Integration laws like those in Belgium increasingly dictate the notion of a host society and what it means for newcomers to become part of that society, *i.e.*, how migrants “integrate.” (*e.g.*, Article 12 bis *code de la nationalité Belge*; Decret 27 Mars 2014, Article 151). Yet there is little literature on the “host society” into which migrants are to integrate according to these proliferating integration laws. Indeed, Christian Joppke (2007b) considers the absence of ordinary persons’ perspectives “one of the biggest lacunae in the literature” (p. 44). Existing integration research primarily focuses on migrants’ perspectives (Leitner & Ehrkamp 2006) or those held by local elites (Antonsich 2012), not ordinary persons.

This article makes three important contributions. First, by focusing on the host society, it responds to Marco Antonsich’s (2018) call to engage the nation in migration research and not simply treat it as a site of exclusion and discrimination. Antonsich’s call is particularly salient in an era of increased nationalism and integration demands. Too often migration researchers dismiss the nation outright to focus instead on migrants as the researchers employ approaches such as cosmopolitanism, postnationalism, and transnationalism in their work (*see, e.g.*, Nussbaum 1994; Baban 2006; Leitner &

Ehrkamp 2006). This article thus adds to a limited—but growing—literature focused on host society perceptions (*e.g.*, Clarke 2020; Strømsø 2019; Antonsich 2012; Miller-Idriss 2006). Second, this article provides an empirical counterpoint to studies suggesting that one’s sense of local belonging can lead to national belonging (*e.g.*, Antonsich 2018; Clarke 2020). It shows how some may have a national sense of belonging but not achieve, or be able to secure, a local one. Third, it provides a new framework for considering ordinary persons’ perspectives by engaging elements from existing frameworks addressing nationalism and identity (everyday nationhood and belonging).

The next section introduces this article’s theoretical framework linking nationalism, integration, and belonging. The article then describes the Belgian context and outlines the research methodology. The empirical section presents two primary findings: (i) locality significantly influenced participants’ identities, and (ii) participants’ emotional attachments to a broader “Belgian” identity arise situationally—not uniformly or automatically—and primarily in comparative contexts. The conclusion addresses how these findings complicate migrant-centered analyses and draw attention to “host societies” being produced on a localized scale.

6.2 Theorizing and Framing the Nation, Integration, and Belonging

The “nation” is a central consideration in integration discussions. Indeed, integration presumes an identifiable nation that minorities (including immigrants) integrate into (Nagel 2009). Scholarship traditionally approaches nations and national identity as either a fixed, a-historical phenomenon predating the nation state (Smith 1995) or as an ideal invented by elites seeking to build states and consolidate power

(Hobsbawm & Ranger 2012). Both approaches focus on a nation's origins and study the nation as a historical, institutional unit (Antonsich 2015). Territory is also a key element in these analyses. The people linked to a territory comprise the "nation" (Jones & Fowler 2007). "Nationalism" is thus the desire to maintain a shared, uniform national identity within a territory by creating and maintaining a state (Murphy 1996; Anderson, 1986, p. 97; *see also* Williams & Smith, 1983). Pursuing a uniform nation—what integration discourses label the "host society" (Antonsich & Matejskova 2015)—within a territory often shape integration demands. These demands can come from the state (Mitchell 2003) or members of the national community (Antonsich 2012).

Starting in the mid-1990s, scholars started considering nations in new ways. One approach sees nations as social creations; persons seeking to situate themselves in relation to others create the nation in everyday contexts (Thompson & Fevre 2001; Brubaker et al 2018). The individuals were part of an "imagined community" that (re)produced nationhood in individuals' everyday lives (Anderson 2006; Fox & Miller-Idriss 2008). So while nationalism is a mass phenomenon, this everyday approach seeks to understand the individuals constituting the "masses" (Strømsø 2019; Smith 2008). Sometimes referred to as "sociology of nationalism" because of sociologists' lead in advocating its use, this approach's focus on the everyday often results in its being labeled "everyday nationalism" in geographic literature (Jones & Merriman 2009).

Scholars tend to approach everyday nationalism through one of two methodological frameworks: banal nationalism (Billig 1995) or everyday nationhood (Brubaker 2006; Fox & Miller-Idriss 2008). The former is top-down in approach; the latter is bottom-up. Specifically, banal nationalism focuses on national symbols such as

flags hanging in public buildings, national songs, and so forth that presumably create a shared sense of identity in everyday life. It is top-down and state centered because it emphasizes the state and its elite members dictating the nation's identity through these everyday items that people passively consume (Antonsich 2016; Antonsich 2020). "Everyday nationhood," on the other hand, provides a bottom-up framework for analyzing the nation by examining ordinary persons' perspectives (Miller-Idriss & Rothenberg 2012). Its proponents see the "nation" as simultaneously resulting from state-level forces and "ordinary people engaging in routine activities" (Fox & Miller-Idriss 2008, p. 554). Everyday nationhood explores how ordinary individuals interpret, respond to, identity with, and distance themselves from the nation (Brubaker et al. 2018; Fox & Miller-Idriss 2008). In some respects, the "nation" in everyday nationhood means the "state" as it conceptually considers ordinary people's everyday relations with a state-defined nation (Jones & Merriman 2009).

Despite being differing frameworks for analyzing the nation (either top-down or bottom-up), banal nationalism and everyday nationhood both share a common limitation in how they see nations. Banal nationalism "operates with an unrealistic notion of a uniform, homogenous national audience" (Antonsich, 2016, p. 33). So does everyday nationhood. As Anthony Smith (2008) argues, everyday nationhood assumes "an undifferentiated 'ordinary people'" (p. 565). Methodological nationalism thus unfortunately follows from these two approaches (Antonsich 2016).

Mainstream migration scholarship similarly sees nations as monolithic. It generally imagines "integration" as a process wherein immigrants incorporate into a uniform and immediately apparent nation/host society (Antonsich & Matejskova 2015;

Nagel & Staeheli 2008). Three broad perspectives dominate integration literature: classical assimilation theory, multiculturalism, and transnationalism (Nelson & Hiemstra 2008). These perspectives in turn fashion how scholars perceive the host society.

Classical assimilation theory conceptualizes a one-way process between migrants and the host society, one in which the migrant minority gradually adopts/conforms to the dominant “core culture” (Gordon 1964). Some scholars argue that this absorption and loss of difference is partial, multigenerational, or segmented based on a host society’s existing hierarchies (racial, economic, etc.) (*e.g.*, Alba & Nee, 1997; Portes and Zhou, 1993).

Multiculturalism emerged in the 1980s as an alternative approach to classical assimilation’s requirement of conformity; it seeks to better understand immigrant and host society interactions and adaptations (Nelson & Hiemstra 2008). Rather than immigrants absorbing the host culture, however, the concept considers both cultures existing side-by-side (hence the ‘multi’ aspect of culture) and valuing the differences (*e.g.*, Modood 2008). Many nevertheless fault multiculturalism for its tendency to see host and immigrant cultures as fixed and mutually exclusive (Hoon 2006; Yuval-Davis 1997).

Transnationalism gained prominence in the 1990s to explain ongoing attachments and active social networks migrants have across national boundaries (*e.g.*, Basch, Schiller, & Blanc 1992; Leitner & Ehrkamp, 2006). It effectively questions the idea that migrants discard previous identities and adopt those of the new host culture (Nelson & Hiemstra, 2008). Its focus is on migrants’ perspectives (Leitner & Ehrkamp 2006; Nagel

& Staeheli 2008). Scholars employing transnationalism often see the host society (*i.e.* the nation) as either an afterthought or as a site of discrimination and exclusion (Antonsich 2018).

Cultural assimilation, multiculturalism, and transnationalism also all tend to assume a uniform host society as tied to a place, and more specifically the boundaries of a nation-state (Wimmer & Schiller 2003; Antonsich 2012). For example, studies regarding immigrant integration in Germany consider “German” society as national and undifferentiated within Germany (Ehrkamp 2005), those examining immigrants in France envision “French” society coterminous with the state’s borders (Brubaker 1992), and so forth across numerous states (Antonsich 2012).

Some integration scholars admittedly seek to challenge ideas of the host society by deconstructing taken-for-granted categories like “ethnicity” and “race” (*e.g.*, Roediger 1999). Even so, this critical work maintains the idea of a uniform host society; it seemingly substitutes “host society” with whichever dominant group is the focus of study, be it race (Clarke 2020), religion (Egorova 2015), or some other national trait. So instead of an “Italian” society, for example, these scholars see “white” culture (Antonsich 2012). The critical integration scholarship also remains tied to a predefined, national territory, with researchers projecting the perceived/imagined dominant group onto the whole of a national territory (*e.g.*, Leitner 2012) rather than considering the nation as variegated and contextual as has been more common among cultural geographers researching post-colonial contexts (*e.g.*, Mills 2010). In many respects, the persistence of a fixed host society within integration literature (regardless of approach employed), and the ongoing methodological nationalism in migration studies, is indistinguishable from

the “territorial trap” (Agnew 1994) confounding political geographers wherein states are “containers” of societies with analysis centering on the nation-state.

Efforts to move beyond methodological nationalism in integration scholarship can conceptually benefit from political geographers’ efforts to escape the territorial trap. These scholars broke free from nation-state-based analyses by problematizing territory and prioritizing place (Murphy 2010; Agnew 1994, 2015). Place is a geographic location with human attachment and meaning (Cresswell 2014; Tuan 1990). It necessarily includes everyday spaces where people conduct their lives and socially engage with one another (Agnew 2015). These everyday spaces, localities, are where individuals and groups create notions of national identity (Mills 2010). Locality thus shapes identity through the feelings of belonging to a place, and so to the nation as an imagined community (Mills 2008; *see also* Tuan 1990). Place’s connection to the nation/national identity shows why place should play a prominent role in host society conceptualizations for scholars studying integration. Integration scholars should also critically consider the population living in places where integration is an issue. Some people may have localized understandings different from the broad, nationalist narratives set forth in laws or policies as to what constitutes the “host society.” And some of these people may have personal attachments to place that shape everyday interactions and thus integration (Huot, Dodson, & Rudman 2014). So using a framework addressing place helps move beyond methodological nationalism in integration studies.

“Belonging,” as put forth by Marco Antonsich (2010), is a framework that considers attachments to place (*see also* Yuval-Davis 2006). Indeed, belonging “can be understood as a sense of feeling at home, where individuals build an attachment to place

over time” (Huot, Dodson, & Rudman 2014; p. 330). The framework contains two foci; the first is collective acts of inclusion and exclusion whereby people police the boundaries of communities (Yuval-Davis 2011). Marco Antonsich (2010) calls this the “politics of belonging.” This first focus addresses how one interacts with, or feels part of, a broader community. Because the nation may be one such community, scholars often use belonging “more or less consciously, as a synonym for identity, and in particular national or ethnic identity” (Antonsich 2010, 644). The politics of belonging does not necessarily coincide with place but may be more of a relational attachment with others. Yet even that relational attachment connects

Belonging’s second focus is an individual’s personal sense of belonging and emotional attachment to place (Antonsich 2010). Personal belonging centers on two primary points of inquiry, namely one’s: (1) identifications, and (2) emotional attachments (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Both points center on who people are/are not, what it means to be a member of certain groups, an individual’s construction of identity, and may even include legal citizenship or residency (Antonsich, 2010; Yuval-Davis 2006). These points consider whether one feels “in place” or “out of place” (Cresswell 1996).

The geographic literature emphasizes that belonging is a process that consistently redefines one’s relationship with people and places rather than a static definition of one’s connection to persons or a place (Wright 2015; Antonsich 2010; Massey 2005).

Regarding place as a component in the process of belonging, Doreen Massey (2005) observes, “We are always, inevitably, making spaces and places” (p. 175). So it is that “belonging” is not simply a social practice, but rather a process affecting, and in turn affected by, the place in which it occurs (*see* Nielson 2020). This understanding of

belonging coincides with critical approaches to the nation and national identity as continuously re-created and subject to multiple meanings (Mills 2010; *see also* Herzfeld 2014).

The framework applied in this article combines elements from both belonging and everyday nationhood to better understand the nation/host society. It engages everyday nationhood's focus on ordinary people and attaches it with belonging's idea of personal belonging to examine ordinary persons' personal sense of belonging. That is, the framework focuses on ordinary persons' identifications and emotional attachments. Findings from this framework admittedly are not broadly representative, but as with results from qualitative inquiries, they are not intended to be so (Baxter & Eyles 1997). The study's purpose is instead to provide a window into current conditions shaping integration discourses and better understand those persons who comprise the host societies into which migrants are to integrate according to the ever-increasing integration laws.

6.3 The Belgian Context

Belgium provides a unique environment to consider immigrant integration and one's personal sense of belonging. First, the state lacks the coherence and resurgent nationalism that has been linked to anti-immigrant politics in Europe. Belgian nationhood has been a vexing concept since the Belgian state's creation, sitting uneasily with competing nationalisms and multiple concepts of "community."

Belgium began in 1830 as a unitary state with French as the sole official language. The country had been part of the Netherlands since 1815, but the

predominantly Catholic population resented interference in their territory by a protestant king (*see, e.g.*, Cook 2004). Prior to Dutch rule in the early 19th century, large parts of what is now eastern Belgium once comprised the Prince-Bishopric of Liège, a self-governing state in the Holy Roman Empire for over 800 years. The remaining parts of the present-day Belgian territory had been ruled at times by Spanish, Austrian, and French sovereigns (Cammaerts 1921). Perhaps owing to this varied history of outside rule, Belgium has significant local attachments, often at the level of the commune, and certainly along linguistic lines (*see, e.g.*, Murphy 1988).

Following independence from the Netherlands, a minority French-speaking elite dominated government and educational institutions, as well as commerce in urban areas throughout the country, including the country's Flemish-speaking¹ northern half known as Flanders. Starting in the mid-19th century, Flemish speakers began advocating for linguistic equality with French, with some even advocating for complete independence for Flanders (*see, e.g.*, Murphy 1988). This advocacy eventually led to six state reforms between 1970 and 2014 that decentralized authority across three regions (Flanders, Wallonia, and the Brussels-Capital region) and three linguistic communities (Flemish, French, and German).² Each federated entity has its own parliament equal in authority as the national parliament within their legally assigned competencies (Deschouwer 2012). The linguistic communities' competencies including policies regarding "immigrant

¹ Flemish is also known as "Belgian Dutch."

² Dutch-speakers comprise the Flemish Community and live in Flanders and the Brussels-Capital Region. The French Community consists of Wallonia's residents and all French-speakers in the Brussels-Capital Region. The German-speaking Community consists of nine municipalities located in Wallonia near the German border. This community represents a tiny fraction of Belgium's total population and does not have a separate region.

integration” (Swyngedouw 2016).³ This being said, much of the nationalist ‘integration’ rhetoric comes from Flanders and Flemish members of the national parliament, with the rhetoric increasingly favoring Flemish nationalism rather than a Belgian identity (*see, e.g.,* Boonen & Hooghe 2014). Wallonia, on the other hand, references “integration” in various laws but leaves the term largely undefined (*e.g.,* 2016 Décret). And the region does not seek out a separate “Walloon” identity.

Second, identifications and emotional attachments (*i.e.,* personal belonging) may vary more in Belgium than in other European countries based on its immigrant population’s origins. Eighteen percent of its total population was foreign born in 2010 (Petrovic, 2012), with roughly 70% of all immigrants who live in Belgium coming from other European Union countries (“A statistical overview,” n.d.). So the country has large numbers of immigrants that are neither racial nor religious minorities because of their European origins, meaning that integration discourses in Belgium may differ, as might the lived reality for immigrants and local citizens alike, *vis-à-vis* societal expectations and immigrant integration. Even so, the country also receives large numbers of immigrants from non-EU countries; the 2015 immigrant wave into Europe contributed to a greater proportional population increase in Belgium than it did in Germany or France (Connor & Krogstad 2016), two countries that dominate integration scholarship (*e.g.,* Ehrkamp 2006; Croucher 2009).

Third, state-level integration narratives in Belgium closely parallel those in its larger neighbors, especially in terms of the growing salience of securitization discourses.

³ The Flanders region and Flemish community combined their parliaments into a single entity.

Belgium served as the base of operations for the Paris and Brussels terrorist attacks in 2015 and 2016, and the attackers all had migrant backgrounds (Schreur & Bilefsky 2017). European politicians seized on the attacks to call for stricter laws governing immigrants and mandating integration (Erlanger 2016). One measure from Belgium's national parliament requires immigrants to sign a pledge promising to accept Belgium's (undefined) "local values" (Guardian 2016). Integration laws effectively gained new urgency and prominence in Belgium and across Europe following the attacks.

But again, such narratives primarily come from Flanders and the Flemish-dominated national parliament, not Wallonia. Wallonia itself lacks nationalistic rhetoric; there is no "Walloon" movement or even an overt "Belgian" nationalism. The "integration" laws passed by the Walloon parliament focus on welcoming migrants and creating an "intercultural" society (*e.g.*, 27 Mars 2014 Décret, Article 151). Some commentators describe Walloon legislation as striking a balance between assimilation and multiculturalism (Adam 2011; Torrekens et al 2014). Wallonia's using the term "integration" in legislation may be nothing more than appeasing Flemish politicians at the federal level as legal citizenship is a federal competency, and Flemish lawmakers successfully changed citizenship laws to require "proof" of "integration" (*see* Pulinx & Van Avermaet 2015). Consequently, persons in Belgium may make identifications and emotional attachments more local in nature than in many other countries.

Finally, Belgium has always had a weak national identity. Indeed, identification with a Belgian "nation" is relatively weak (Biliet, Maddens, & Frogner 2006). The federalization and Flemish nationalism at play cause some to claim that Belgium is deconstructing a national identity (Rosoux & Van Ypersele 2012). Regardless, its local

attachments in many ways resemble those in Italy, where a similar history of local city-states shaped modern attachments to the Italian state (Agnew 2002).

6.4 Methods and Data Collection: Researching “Belgium” and “Belgian”

Recognizing Belgium’s internal divide and its potential to shape integration debates as to persons’ identifications and emotional attachments, and while engaged in a larger study regarding immigrant integration in Wallonia, I resolved to explore how Walloons conceptualized a ‘Belgian’ identity (if at all) along with their emotional attachments to place. Conducted in 2018 and 2019, this exploration included more than 100 in-depth interviews with immigrants and host society members alike, more than 60 hours of participant observation in civic integration courses and training seminars for workers participating in integration projects, and informal conversations with hundreds more individuals.

This article draws on sixty-seven of the in-depth interviews with ordinary people who might be considered part of the host society. To avoid making my own determinations as to who that might be, I followed Mette Strømsø’s (2019a) approach of recruiting participants without predefined notions of nationhood such as ethnicity, religion, class position, or formal citizenship. The primary criteria for being part of the study for this article is that the participants be living in Belgian national space at the time of the interview (Bauböck 2002) and that they claim a feeling of being “at home” there (Antonsich 2010). I refer to the participants in this article as “locals.”

The locals include persons with family roots dating back generations, those born in Belgium to migrant parents, and those who are immigrants but married to Belgian

spouses (*see* **Table 6.1.**) So long as they claimed to be “at home” in Belgium, I included many second generation persons as “locals” because those descended from migrants comprise as much as one quarter of Belgium’s total population according to some estimates (*e.g.*, Hertogen 2012), suggesting that having a foreign background is fairly regular in Belgium. Approximately 25% of the participants here were born in Belgium to immigrant parents, with another 9% being married to Belgians. Those whom I include as locals in this study are either migrants married to Belgians or are born in Belgium to migrant parents (second generation) who identify more with Belgium than with their countries of origin or their parents’ countries of origin. They are not “transnationals” *per se* but instead individuals emotionally connected to their current country.

I recruited participants through various civic, government, religious, and non-profit organizations around Wallonia. Several of the locals interviewed work at government-sponsored integration centers and so have direct responsibility for implementing regional laws aimed at migrant integration. Many of the others work at local non-profit organizations directly assisting new migrants with language acquisition, job training, and so forth. Both those at the integration centers and those at the NGOs are on the front lines in actively shaping host-society narratives about Belgium that migrants encounter in everyday living. I also recruited participants by knocking on doors in a public housing project mixed with migrants and locals.

Interviews for this article occurred in French and lasted between 30 and 120 minutes. Questions related not only to immigration and migrants, but also to participants’ understanding of the community and place to which they belong and how one can be part of it. I asked, for instance, what does it mean to be “Belgian”, and what defines Belgian

society? How do you identify yourself and what are the communities to which you feel you belong? What are the boundaries of your community/society? I digitally recorded the interviews and transcribed as appropriate. Interview translations used here are my own. I identify all participants using pseudonyms. Content analysis followed an “analytic induction” approach (Crang 2013: 224) in which ideas emerged through an iterative process of going back and forth between the data and key concepts to categorize the material and explore relationships between individual experiences and perceptions, institutional structures and narratives, and place-based processes and patterns.

6.5 Exploring Locals’ Personal Identifications and Attachments

As described in section 2, integration discussions often assume a coherent national society awaiting migrants as they arrive. Many scholarly analyses take this as a given; the emphasis remains on nationalist ideologies and institutions’ hegemonic power over subordinate groups. Belgium provides a good case to explore this power’s uneven influence in a divided national society. Questions of place and belonging surface frequently in Belgium, as detailed above in section 3.

Wallonia emerged as the choice for this study in part based on past survey data showing a stronger “Belgian” identity in Wallonia than in Flanders (Billet, Maddens, and Frogner 2006). Paradoxically, much of the nationalist “integration” rhetoric in Belgium comes from Flanders and Flemish members of the national parliament, with the rhetoric increasingly favoring *Flemish* nationalism rather than a Belgian identity. While Belgian identity has more purchase in Wallonia, the region does not have strong nationalist political parties. Indeed, nationalist parties garnered less than 0.004% of Wallonia’s vote

in the 2019 federal elections (in contrast, nationalist parties secured over 43% of the Flemish vote in 2019). Wallonia's low levels of nationalism stand in sharp contrast to what is occurring in neighboring northern France, where French nationalist parties enjoy their greatest electoral strength and where the populace has comparable demographics to Wallonia. The region also has a mandatory "integration course" for newly arrived migrants, although the course emphasizes personal autonomy rather than conformity in Belgium (*e.g.*, Manuel de délivrance 2015). These facts prompted me to explore how Walloons conceptualized a "Belgian" identity (if at all) along with their emotional attachments to place. Understanding these ordinary persons' perceptions gained importance in the broader integration study as potentially varying identities might make it more difficult for migrants to identify a coherent host culture that they encounter in their everyday living and so complicate integration efforts.

While I entered the field expecting that locals' attitudes about Belgian identity would be complicated, and that more localized conceptions of identity might be more salient than a national Belgian identity, two points stood out. First, locals tended to identify themselves more by their locality (localized area where they lived) than their nationality (Belgian). Their emotional attachments were localized in scale, de-territorialized from state or even regional boundaries. And expressions of identity were quite uneven among host-society members. Second, participants who claimed emotional attachments to a broader "Belgian" society did so primarily in comparative or situational contexts. They identified with Belgium more when away from the state, with their connection coalescing on their ability to return to Belgian territory and localities within it rather than an emotive link to a "Belgian" national community. The "Belgian" attachment

for many locals centered on their passport, not the state, and the passport's ability to return to a specific place—their home. In many respects, locals themselves unapologetically adopted a “paper citizen” identity, echoing a critique commonly expressed by nationalists who claim that migrants are attached to the country on paper only (Brubaker 1992). I address these in turn.

6.5.1 Creating an identity, albeit one often defined by locality

Many interviewees noted that one's primary identity in Belgium often derived from their locality, meaning their local village or commune, rather than a broader nationality. Claude is one example. An ancestral Belgian, Claude was raised in Brussels but has lived in Wallonia much of his adult life. He says, “In my case, I am Bruxellois [someone from Brussels], so I never had strong attachments to either Flemish or Walloons” despite his having both Flemish and Walloon progenitors. Consequently, Claude says, “I identify myself first as Bruxellois” and adding “I've never felt Belgian.” Nor does he consider himself “Walloon.” Locals who were ancestrally Belgian and also students attending a university in Wallonia with a high percentage of foreign students recounted how classmates routinely made distinctions based on where they each came from *within* Belgium. Students were not simply “Belgian” to foreign students, but instead “Namurois” or “Mouscronaise” or “[fill in the locality].” Based on the country's size, a comparable analogy would be if persons living in the United States identified themselves by their county instead of as “American.”

The attachment to locality was similar for locals who were not ancestrally Belgian. Carolina, for instance, was born in Belgium to Italian migrants. She says, “I feel

and identify more as Liègoise than I do anything else.” Matteo, another Belgian-born child of Italian immigrants and also a Liège native, provided a similar response. He surmised that it had to do with the city’s past as an independent principality. (The Prince-Bishopric of Liege existed from AD 980 to 1795.) Regardless of the reason for these responses in Liège, locals in other places expressed comparable feelings. David and Marie, two university students of African origin who grew up in Brussels, share a similar mindset to Claude. David says, “I don’t really feel Belgian; I feel more Bruxellois.” Marie adds, “I too don’t feel Belgian, but I feel at home in Brussels.” Conversely Constança, another university student born and raised in Brussels to parents from France and Portugal, claimed a “Belgian” identity but limited it to Brussels, saying, “I feel Belgian, but I don’t identify with Flanders or Wallonia. I’m at home in Brussels.” Both Constança’s and Marie’s statements of feeling “at home” demonstrate the attachment to locality that typifies belonging imaginations in Belgium (Antonsich 2010). Constança considers being “Belgian” synonymous with Brussels, while many Walloons and others hold the opposite view presumably for reasons relating to Belgium’s history as set forth above in section 3.

Claude considered the local attachments to be based on a broader mindset prevailing in Wallonia. He observed, “When someone from Charleroi has to go to Brussels, a distance of 30 to 50 kilometers depending on which part of the city one is going to or leaving from, it’s, “Whoa! [moving his hands away from his head like it is exploding and then making an explosion sound] Whoa!” Claude frequently traveled around Belgium for work, both in Flanders and Wallonia, and recounted how in place after place persons maintained a focus on their local village. He then proclaimed,

“Belgium is a village. It has a village mentality,” meaning that the inhabitants will not look beyond their local area.

Some locals commented that even for themselves not being from a particular locality kept them outside of the local community. There was no larger “Belgian” identity to unite them. Louise’s experience exemplifies this. Louise is a white Belgian woman born and raised in Brussels. Her family roots in Belgium predate the Belgian state. Yet when Louise married and moved with her family to a small town in Wallonia, she felt as though she did not belong. “For 15 years,” she says, “I lived in a small village near Namur, and I was considered a foreigner because I was from Brussels. I always felt a difference. It was evident that I was not from there.” Louise continued, “Everyone who came from more than 10 kilometers from the village was foreigners.” This experience shows just one of the challenges migrants face in identifying a coherent “host society” and that nationalists would have to confront in Belgium if promoting a “Belgian” identity.

Jean-Michel’s experience while working in Brussels further demonstrates how local identities dictate belonging imaginaries. Born and raised in Liège, Wallonia’s largest city, Jean-Michel moved to Brussels in the late 1960s/early 1970s. He soon adopted a Brussels accent to avoid problems at work, which was dominated by native Bruxellois, some of whom were native Flemish speakers and who treated Walloons poorly. While the antagonism towards Walloons could be tied to Belgium’s linguistic divide (*e.g.*, Murphy 1988), for Jean-Michel it was evident that workers banded behind a Bruxellois identity rather than a Belgian one. The issue was not one of language but more

where one came from. Indeed, Jean-Michel dropped the Brussels accent entirely once he returned to Wallonia in the 1980s.

When asked about identity on more of a national scale, however, many locals directly tied their identities to where they lived on a state level. They considered themselves “Belgian” simply based on their residence, without necessarily identifying a deeper emotional attachment. This perspective cut across racial lines and familial or ancestral connection to Belgium. For example, a white, ancestrally Belgian male in his early 20s named Antoine says, “To be Belgian means to live in Belgium and desire to live in Belgium. It doesn’t really go farther than that.” Antoine has significant involvement with immigrants through a community volunteer program. He does not see cultural differences migrants might have as impeding their path to integration; for Antoine, so long as migrants lived in and wished to stay in Belgium, they could be “Belgian.” Their presence and intent to stay overrode other considerations. A non-profit worker named Clarisse, the Belgian-born daughter of a white ancestrally Belgian father and a Latin American migrant mother, similarly states that “living here [in Belgium]” makes one Belgian. She identified herself as Belgian based on her living in the country and assumed that identity even though she was racially mixed. Hisham, born in Belgium to a Spanish mother and Moroccan father, agrees; he says that he is “just Belgian” despite his mixed ancestry because he is “living in the territory.”

The above examples of local attachments trumping national identities, and with national identities not being able to overcome local affections, provides empirical counterpoints to literature suggesting that persons use local attachments to claim national identities (*e.g.*, Antonsich 2018; Clarke 2020). These strong local attachments preclude

membership by nationals who might otherwise maintain the same “national” traits such as race and language, as Louise’s and Jean-Michel’s experiences attest.

Despite interviewees overwhelmingly disclaiming a “Belgian” identity in favor of a localized one or otherwise identifying as “Belgian” because Belgium is where they live, a small minority did claim a “Belgian” identity based on emotional attachment to the country, and most of these held fast to it. Many of those adhering to this identity worked at Wallonia’s regional integration centers designed to help immigrants adapt to Belgium. One ancestrally Belgian worker at a non-profit named Roman says, “I am attached to a Belgian identity first, before anything else.” Yet he still had a localized identity, stating, “I would say that I’m attached to the Luxembourg province” in southern Belgium as his next identity. Another worker, Patrizia, born in Belgium to Italian immigrants, related, “I have always felt Belgian. I tell people that I am Belgian and that my parents are Italian.” These workers’ attachment to Belgium inform their interactions with migrants. Indeed, many locals emphasize what Belgium means to them personally, including how all are considered equal under law, when speaking to migrants. Belgium’s laws and promise of equal justice for all are key themes these locals emphasize. Addressing universal Belgian laws potentially help immigrants arriving in the country aspire to a more inclusive Belgian identity rather than the fractured, scale dependent imaginations that currently exist among the broader populace. Migrants could thus identify a coherent host society based on laws (although some laws will be limited to Wallonia due to Belgium’s federal structure).

Ironically enough, the vast majority of those strongly asserting a “Belgian” identity were not ancestrally Belgian. Patrizia, discussed above, is one example. Another

is Tawfiq, the Belgium-born, twenty-something son of Moroccan immigrants. He says, “I’m Belgian first. Then I would say a Moroccan. You could say I’m ‘multicultural’ (smiling). But I’m proud to be Belgian before anything else!” Pascal, born in Belgium to Congolese parents, says, “I really identify as a Belgian – truly Belgian. But at the same time, I am proud of my origins, meaning proud of my country of origin, my parents’ country (Congo).” So while claiming a Belgian identity, these interviewees did not dismiss other identities; rather, they embraced them but as subordinate to being “Belgian.” They did so despite other, long-term residents not necessarily enforcing a specific Belgian identity. (Although long-term residents may not pressure migrants to adopt a Belgian identity because for them the primary identity is one based on locality.)

In sum, few imagined or described a distinct “Belgian” identity in national terms or even one coinciding with formal state (or regional) boundaries. Many respondents highlighted localities’ importance in the Belgian imaginary. Distinct identities exist within the state, shaped perhaps by Belgium’s federal nature. Or it could be that the federal nature more closely aligns with popular sentiment: being “Belgian” is local.

6.5.2 Emotional attachments to place, and attachments through one’s passport

Some interviewees expressed their attachment to Belgium in emotional terms. Most did not. The primary attachment to place was through one’s passport—whether or not the interviewee had a migrant background (second generation, married to a Belgian). For those who expressed an actual attachment to place, meaning Belgium, the attachment came when away from the state more so than when inside of it. That is, their identity as

“Belgian” and their connection to place coalesced around comparisons to other countries and cultures. Françoise exemplifies this point. Born and raised in Wallonia, Françoise spent one year of high school as a foreign-exchange student in rural Kentucky (U.S.A.). She began to see herself as distinctly Belgian rather than any other identity while abroad and says that she maintained that sentiment after returning. Françoise did not qualify her statements to Wallonia or even her hometown. Instead, she identified with Belgium as a whole. To help others better appreciate Belgium as a place and a Belgian identity, Françoise joined a local association that promotes Belgian identity and culture, including aspects perhaps more associated with Flemish and/or German areas within the state. The association’s intended audience is everyone who wants to better appreciate Belgium—native Belgians and recent migrants. Asked what she considered to be the Belgian identity that she missed while in Kentucky and that she consequently promotes in Belgium, Françoise pointed to a conception of one’s self. Belgians, she believes, do not take themselves too seriously. She added that they enjoy sports, particularly soccer and cycling, and take pride in their cuisine. “Belgian food is French quality with German quantity,” she says, before laughing and adding, “Luckily it’s not German quality and French quantity!”

Françoise’s sentiments are not lost on other locals who increasingly express attachments to Belgium and identify themselves as Belgian when outside of the state. Karena is one example. Married to a Belgian and in the country for more than 10 years dating to her early 20s, Karena increasingly feels attached to Belgium. “Each time I go to Romania,” she says, “I want to return to Belgium. I feel that Belgium is my home.” Asked if she considers herself Belgian, Karena says, “Personally, I feel Belgian, but not

100%. ... I identify myself as Belgian with a Romanian origin.” Constança, the university student born in Brussels to migrant parents, says, “When I am abroad, I say I’m Belgian, but with a French and Portuguese origin.” She makes this statement despite not having Belgian citizenship herself or any other claim to the country beyond being raised in Brussels. And even then Constança limits her view of the Belgian identity to Brussels, as explained above. These identities and attachments when abroad correspond with Michael Skey’s (2011) findings among native English persons.

Finally, several locals expressed their attachment to Belgium based on their passport. That is, their emotional attachment was based on the right to come and go to that place. In the context of belonging, this relates to what Nira Yuval-Davis (2006) considers critical to “enter a state or any other territory of a political community and, once inside,” stay there (p. 208). Passports make that entrance to a place possible. Yet the ability to come and go, and the connection to that ability rather than to the place itself, fits with a critique many nationalists make, and one that often appears in integration discourses, that migrants acquiring their host society’s citizenship are attached to the country only on paper (their passport) but without deeper emotional connections to the country, thereby being “paper French” (cf. Brubaker 1992), or in this case “paper Belgians.”

In Belgium the paper citizen critique is not simply made by right-wing nationalists espousing an exclusionary mindset. Jean-Luc is one example. Born in Belgium to Congolese immigrants but a naturalized Belgian citizen since his youth, Jean-Luc served in parliament as a member of a center-left political party. He says:

What I've noticed is that there are a lot of people like me, those who are native Congolese but who are Belgian, who are still too attached to Congo. They consider Belgium, how to say it? [Thinking.] They consider Belgium as not really being their country, you know? I call these persons "paper Belgians." They are effectively Belgians with their passports, their id cards, but they are going to criticize Belgium; [changing his tone of voice to a critical tone as he mimics these persons stating] "Belgium is like this," or "Belgians are like that." They are always going to criticize like it's not their country.

Jean-Luc made this statement while discussing his belief that immigrants should actively foster connections to the country, just as his mother had done and taught him. One example he gave was his learning Dutch so that he could better understand the country as a whole (rather than just the francophone community). Yet despite Jean-Luc's passionate advocacy for Belgium and his professed Belgian identity, Jean-Luc revealed that he too lacked emotional connection to the Belgian state. "If I had the opportunity tomorrow to go work in Canada, for example, I would go," he said, then adding, "I am a Belgian, but not particularly attached to the country."

Locals with ancestral ties to Belgium similarly claimed to lack emotional connections to the country other than their passports. And they were not afraid to say so. Bernadette opined that being a Belgian "is just a nationality, because after that ... [pausing and thinking]. It's just a nationality. That's all." Asked to expound, Bernadette stated, "Yes, you could say that there is a culture, and Theo Francken [a far-right, Flemish nationalist then serving as the Belgian federal government's top official over migration] would say that there are values, but I don't have the same values as him. So, you know, it's too bad for him." She would rather that her passport state her identity as "citizen of the world" than Belgian as Bernadette did not see a coherent host society in Belgium at any sort of national scale but sought instead connections to humanity broadly.

Bernadette attributed at least some of her non-affinity for a Belgian identity to her parents and annual trips abroad they took as a family during her youth. Her father was a professor, and the family spent at least three months per year outside of Belgium. Claude, who spent two years in England working with a multinational team, said, “I am Belgian when I watch the national team in the World Cup. That is perhaps the only time I am Belgian.” Yet even those who did not spend time abroad like Bernadette discounted a desire to belong to a specific “Belgian” identity. Sarah, a university student, says, “I don’t think of myself as Belgian. It’s my country, but it’s not how I define myself.” Her roommate and fellow native Belgian Geraldine says, “Belonging to a specific Belgian nationality isn’t really important to me.”

Another local with Belgian ancestry, a white male named Paul, expressed his lack of emotional connection to the country by explaining his personal situation. He married a woman raised in Belgium but whose parents are Moroccan. Paul and his wife then gave their children Moroccan names so that they could have dual citizenship with Morocco. Ironically, Paul is a government worker tasked with overseeing migrants living in his Walloon city. All migrants with any legal status in the country (*e.g.*, those with five-year work permits, asylees, etc.) must register with their local commune. In effect, he is the chief local officer for ensuring migrants’ compliance with legal obligations. Despite his legally defined role, Paul summarized his sentiments towards the Belgian identity by bluntly stating, “I’m not particularly attached to Belgium.” This expression was almost identical to Jean-Luc’s despite his and Paul’s radically different backgrounds.

The reasons for this lack of emotional attachment vary. Claude considered it to be geographical based:

Belgians, I think because of their history and their geographic situation, the fact that they are in between the Netherlands, France, Germany, England, and so forth, the Belgians never had a nationalist feeling like other nations. The French are truly French. The Dutch have their distinct colors and manner of dress. A German is German. An English is English. By nature Belgians adapt to everything and everyone. That is part of our DNA. We live like this. A Belgian is never going to confront, he is going to go around. So you see, in all, Belgians are not really a nationalistic people.

Essentially, Belgium's history eliminates any sort of nationhood. He might be right. As explained in section 3 and demonstrated above, the country is extremely place-based, with localities trumping state-based boundaries for belonging. Belgium is very localized in attachment.

In the end, this localized focus carries over into Wallonia's approach to immigrants. The Walloon government does not promulgate strong assimilation directives. While it maintains a mandatory "integration course" for newly arrived migrants, that course does not dictate conformance to a particular Belgian or Walloon ideal (*e.g.*, 27 Mars 2014 Décret; 28 avril 2016 Décret; *Structure thématiques de la formation* n.d.). So there is no overt pressure by a government (much less one filled by nationalists) to conform. The emphasis on localities ultimately may create confusion for migrants seeking to identify a host society to which they may belong. But it also provides opportunities for migrants to adopt a broader "Belgian" identity that others in Belgium may also share and that is readily available to them.

Locals maintain two primary criteria for newcomers to assume a Belgian identity, as explained above. These are either (1) to live in Belgium and desire to remain there, or (2) to hold a Belgian passport. Locals themselves, as putative host society members, maintain these criteria even for themselves due to their otherwise locality-based

identities. And for migrants and locals alike, there are instances when they will not be part of a community depending on that community's locality within Belgium.

6.6 Conclusions

Wallonia's everyday realities demonstrate why integration scholars cannot conceptually categorize a "host society" as homogenous. Locals often have divergent ideas as to what their society's identity is—or even if there is one. Identities and emotional attachments to place (personal belonging) are critical to understanding integration discourses because they demonstrate that host societies are not monolithic. Persons may have attachments to or beliefs about identities and places that can readily vary from one locality to the next. This phenomenon is not limited to Belgium. John Agnew (2002), for example, considered place-based political attachments in Italy. He argued that local attachments shape politics, and that those politics play out through nationalist parties that ultimately derive from local places (Agnew 2002). In Belgium, the political divides based on locality show that migrants may still find a place within a state even if nationalist, anti-migrant rhetoric seems commonplace there. Nationalists have significant power in Belgium, but as shown here, Walloons are not as nationalist in nature.

Next, the Walloon experience reveals how scholars should heed Antonsich's (2018) call to engage the nation in research and not simply treat it as a site of exclusion and discrimination. Indeed, treating it in such a fashion falls prey to methodological nationalism/the territorial trap. Just as geographers critically considered place to avoid the territorial trap (Murphy 2010), integration researchers should engage place and critically

consider the local population living in that place. This is particularly salient in an era of increased nationalism and integration demands. Too often researchers dismiss the nation outright to focus instead on migrants. Yet host societies are not monolithic entities and nationalist ideologies do not necessarily shape immigration, integration, and citizenship policies in any singular way; there is a process that significantly varies across national space. This variance results from ordinary persons' competing imaginaries and emotional attachments to place that may be more local in nature. Each person has his or her own notion of who they are, who is part of their fellow community—and they act accordingly. So while certain ideas/societal conceptions may appear one way, the everyday imaginations among so-called host society members may be different.

This analysis assumes greater relevance in areas that do not have stated regional divisions like Belgium does but that nevertheless have divergent ideas about place and identity across geographical space. It could be readily applied in the United States, for instance, where what is viewed to be true “Americana” varies by locality, with one in “flyover country” seeing things differently from a coastal urbanite (*see* Kendzior 2018). To be welcome within, and feel part of, these varying communities requires some conformance to localized ideals and politics (*see* Cresswell 1996). Locals in conservative Murfreesboro, Tennessee, (USA) made clear that Muslims were not welcome in their overwhelmingly Christian community by filing suit to block a mosque from being constructed (Farmer 2010). Similarly, locals in progressive Philadelphia pressured conservative foster care agencies to close due to the agencies' opposing child placement with same-sex couples.

More broadly, this study demonstrates the methodological advantages of engaging everyday nationhood and personal belonging to more critically address integration discourses in contemporary nationalistic environments. Researchers examining integration would be wise to prioritize ordinary persons' perceptions in their studies to better understand integration's localized nature, especially considering how one's individual sense of belonging may ultimately shape broader integration politics. This is particularly true as governments increasingly legislate integration laws and define the host society that immigrants are supposed to integrate into.



Figure 6.1. Belgian flag on apartment (picture taken by the author)

Table 6.1. Interviewees' backgrounds

Interviewees' backgrounds	
<u>Interviewees</u>	<u>Number</u>
Ancestrally Belgian	44
Born in Belgium (2 nd generation)	17
Migrant but married to a Belgian	6

CHAPTER 7

OVERALL SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This research addressed immigrant integration in Belgium using qualitative methods. Belgium is a microcosm for Europe's contemporary integration debates. The politically and culturally fractured country gives power over integration to regional governments rather than the national parliament. Nationalists dominate in Flanders and enact assimilative integration laws there while Wallonia, far from being nationalist, also adopts integration laws for its territory. Flanders' integration laws receive frequent attention (*e.g.*, Pulinx & Van Avermaet 2015), but Wallonia's do not. This internal division, though unique to Belgium, reflects the general unevenness across Europe as the continent is not homogeneous in integration politics. Negotiating membership may still occur. Accordingly, this study explored the interplay between Wallonia's integration laws and immigrants and non-immigrants localized, co-existent experiences and relationships. It did so by considering three key populations with differing connections to integration laws: (1) workers tasked with implementing Wallonia's integration laws, (2) migrants affected by these laws, and (3) locals comprising the "host society" into which migrants are to integrate according to the laws.

7.1 Workers' Implementing Wallonia's Integration Laws

The workers involved in this study who were implementing Wallonia's integration laws were key informants at all eight state-sponsored regional integration

centers (*centres régionaux d'intégration* (CRI)), including the centers' directors. These workers show how integration cannot conceptually be categorized as an either/or proposition set forth by the state along a multicultural versus assimilationist ideological spectrum. At a local level, CRI workers simultaneously incorporate elements from normative assimilationist and multicultural models. CRI workers call this mingled approach “interculturalism,” a term used in Wallonia’s integration laws but left undefined within them (30 Avril 2009 Décret; 27 mars 2014 Décret).

Regardless of terminology, CRI workers shape societal boundaries for inclusion and exclusion in their localized spaces. The local host society they interact with, along with the immigrants living there, will create a new culture together that will vary from one locale to the next depending on those comprising it, much as a cake might depend on the ingredients used in making it. CRI with more sub-Saharan African immigrants promote different cultures than those with more Maghrebian immigrants, for instance, as shown by the African Night Festival.

CRI workers reveal as well how scholars and policymakers alike might rethink integration. Integration is broader than a uniform state or subnational policy; it is a political process that varies across national space. This variance can be both regional, as Flanders and Wallonia adopt differing ‘integration’ laws in their respective regions, and local as actors implementing integration laws within Wallonia do so differently—at a localized level—based on divergent ideas of belonging and community. CRI workers have their own notions of how things should be, or how they are on the ground, and act accordingly. So while laws may dictate one thing, workers may do another. CRI Director 2’s comments that workers “work against the regulations” and Director 7’s emphasis that

workers “maneuver” within the decrees are just two statements exemplifying this reality. No two workers will maneuver within and work against integration laws in the same way regardless of any uniform integration law.

7.2 Migrants Affected by Wallonia’s Integration Laws

Migrants are perhaps the most talked-*about* group in integration discourses. Yet many studies do not talk *to* migrants. This study directly talked to migrants directly affected by Wallonia’s integration laws, employing a “bottom-up” approach increasingly emphasized in literature but underutilized in practice (*see, e.g.,* Harpaz & Mateos 2019). The migrants in this study are those attending government-sponsored citizenship classes known as “Citizen Integration Training” (*Formation à l’Intégration Citoyenne*, or FIC) (27 Mars 2014 Décret) that migrants attend either as a condition of formal citizenship or as a condition of their residence permits (Article 12bis; 27 Mars 2014 Décret). These immigrants have emotional attachments to Belgium’s *political* culture, not its national culture. Love of the nation (culturally) is critical for most nationalists (Ho 2009) and seemingly an objective for citizenship course proponents (Pulinx & Van Avermaet 2015), yet it is not a primary motivator for those migrants in Wallonia’s FIC courses (at least those interviewed here).

Migrants focused their emotional attachments on Belgium’s political culture, meaning its legal system and rights related to formal citizenship that they previously lacked like safety and personal liberty. While seemingly suggesting that migrants see citizenship in purely instrumental terms, the overall picture is more complex than an attachment to the new country and its culture as nationalists may advocate. Indeed, some migrants see formal citizenship as a means of securing an identity. They believe that legal

citizenship will provide social acceptance—belonging—in Belgian society (*e.g.*, Eliassi 2016). These findings may be at odds with what nationalists expect, but consistent with Wallonia’s seemingly relaxed attitude towards migrants (Pulinx & Van Avermaet 2015; Adam 2011; Martiniello 1995). In short, migrants make emotional attachments to the state as a place, but their feelings differ from nationalists’ desired emotions. This complicates current understandings of citizenship as state-centered and with migrants making citizenship decisions devoid of attachments to the host country, thereby highlighting that national citizenship is not an either/or proposition.

Next, the Walloon experience reveals how scholars and policymakers alike should rethink citizenship and migrant expectations in nationalist environments. Migrants develop emotional attachments to the state, just different attachments from what native-born nationalists might have themselves. The migrants’ attachments do not imply any less devotion to the state. And even then, each migrant has his or her own notions of what citizenship means. Riza and Esther, for instance, sees citizenship as religious liberty. For Seif, it is an identity. Fatoumata sees citizenship as safety within Belgium. Each has their own emotional attachments tied to Belgium as a place.

7.3 Locals Comprising the “Host Society” into Which Migrants Are to Integrate According to Wallonia’s Integration Laws

Locals comprising the “host society” into which migrants are to integrate according to the laws complicate notions of a “national” or monolithic host society. (“Locals” in this study consisted of persons living in Wallonia who claim to feel “at home” there.) These locals, as fellow community members, have competing imaginaries and emotional attachments to place that might be more local in nature. Each person acts

according to his or her own notions of who they are and who members of their fellow community are. So while certain ideas/societal conceptions may appear one way, everyday imaginations may be different. This suggests that that scholars should rethink their assumptions about host societies and that nationalist ideologies do not necessarily shape immigration, integration, and citizenship policies in any singular way; there is a process that significantly varies across national space.

A key feature of considering locals' perspectives is that it engages the nation in this research rather than seeing the nation as a site of exclusion and discrimination. This is particularly salient in an era of increased nationalism and integration demands. Researchers often dismiss the nation outright to focus instead on migrants. This article thus adds to a limited—but growing—literature focused on host society perceptions (*e.g.*, Clarke 2020; Strømsø 2019; Antonsich 2012; Miller-Idriss 2006).

7.4 Implications

This dissertation actively contributes to policy and academic understandings in several significant ways. First, this dissertation fulfills a need in Wallonia for qualitative research regarding immigrant experiences and integration. Multiple CRI directors commented on the lack of qualitative data they were able to provide to lawmakers. The desperately desired to share qualitative information to shape future integration laws and policies in a way that fosters inclusion in an era of rising nationalist sentiment across Europe. But due to government directives to prepare an increasing number of quantitative reports, there is a lack of time and resources to produce qualitative material. Relating these findings back to CRI directors, as I intend to do (and as some requested), should thus facilitate Walloon lawmakers receiving more robust information to guide their

legislative efforts. And this information should help lawmakers better understand migrants' motivations in being in Belgium, including their perspectives and emotional attachments to their new country of residence, perspectives that may significantly differ from those that lawmakers previously (or even presently) might suppose.

Second, this dissertation provides theoretical and empirical support for a more critical perspective on integration. This perspective considers migrants' and non-migrants' viewpoints and is sensitive to emotion and place. Theoretically, this research reveals the methodological strength "belonging" contributes to integration literature due to its conceptual emphasis on migrants and non-migrants together determining the differences that do/do not matter on a local scale. Belonging incorporates local actors' ideals of community and prioritizes them over regional or national policymakers' perspectives. How local actors, including workers implementing integration legislation, shape inclusion/exclusion boundaries may be uneven and not always according to stated laws. This also connects theoretically with the idea of locality in integration research. Focusing on localities incorporates migrants' and non-migrants' identities and attachments, including their imagined communities, and prioritizes them over an assumed homogenous host society (or a presumed discriminatory and exclusionary nation). This helps escape the tendency to view the host society as a conceptual hegemon. And it moves beyond methodological nationalism in integration studies. Researchers examining integration would thus be wise to incorporate belonging and locality in their study to better understand integration's localized nature, especially considering one's individual sense of belonging may ultimately shape broader integration politics.

Empirically, by combining migrant and non-migrant perspectives in a single study, this dissertation richly supports Nagel's (2009) argument that migrants and host society members *together* influence the meaning of integration. Integration studies typically do not simultaneously consider migrant and non-migrant viewpoints. They instead focus separately on either state (Antonsich 2019), migrant (Ehrkamp 2005), or local population (Strømsø 2019) perspectives. Segmenting studies in such a way makes it difficult to understand law's influence on integration overall rather than a component part. But as shown in the holistic approach considering migrant and non-migrant perspectives applied here, laws may influence integration discourses among immigrants and locals without necessarily dictating those discourses. This is particularly salient when discussing integration laws as such laws' purpose is presumably to shape integration.

Further empirical support for a critical perspective on integration applied here concerns emotion and place. As shown in Chapter Five, migrants maintain emotional attachments to Belgium. Many seek an identity to the state through formal citizenship (a desire to be "Belgian"). Conversely, as shown in Chapter Six, many non-migrants in Belgium seek connections to their local commune rather than the state. These competing emotional attachments make it difficult for immigrants and non-migrants to connect with each other (and in some instances for non-migrants from different communes as shown by Louise's and Claude's experiences).

Third, this dissertation adds to an emerging scholarship centered on migrants' perspectives and to broader discourses regarding identity creation and formation. Considering migrants' attitudes and the values they ascribe to legal citizenship, belonging, and identity in their new state enhances understandings of nationalism's

presence/absence in localized contexts as individuals (including migrants) locally produce national identities. In terms of identity creation, nationalists who see citizenship courses as key to preserving/maintaining a coherent national identity may need to reconsider course implementation and connections that immigrants may or may not make in them with the broader society.

Fourth, this study contributes to growing literature on ordinary persons' perspectives in addressing the nation as this study centers on ordinary persons, meaning those who are not considered the ruling elite. As noted earlier, Christian Joppke (2007b) considers ordinary persons' perspectives as "one of the biggest lacunae in the literature" (p. 44). Researchers examining integration would be wise to prioritize ordinary persons' perceptions in their studies to better understand integration's localized nature, especially considering how one's individual sense of belonging may ultimately shape broader integration politics. This is particularly true as governments increasingly legislate integration laws and define the host society that immigrants are supposed to integrate into. As shown here, engaging everyday nationhood and personal belonging to address integration discourses reveals ordinary persons' perspectives.

7.5 Practical Suggestions for Policymakers

This research pushed me to consider practical takeaways for policymakers. After speaking with workers, migrants, and locals, and also after attending FIC courses as a student, I thought about key policies lawmakers could pursue to facilitate integration. I wanted to identify the simplest policies that would not require efforts solely by migrants. Accordingly, I came up with two pragmatic proposals that address workers and migrants alike.

My first policy proposal concerns workers interacting with migrants. It would require those working with migrants (in FIC courses, at CRIs, etc.) to receive cultural education about migrant groups coming into the country. It seemed to me that those who had greater cultural competency were more effective in their jobs and in helping migrants make connections to Belgium. For example, Pierre, the CRI worker mentioned in Chapter Four who understood cultural dynamics with Muslim migrants and so worked relatively well with them, had a degree in international studies. That being said, the policy proposed here would not mandate certain education levels or degrees; instead the required cultural training would come by way of a basic course providing broad overviews of world regions and cultures where migrants are coming from so that the workers can understand how to relate to these migrants. The course would be a basic workshop lasting a few hours.

The cultural course's effects could be profound in facilitating migrants' connections in Belgium. An experience I had in one of the FIC courses I attended provides an example. Yesrin was a fellow student in the course. She came to Belgium from Yemen as a refugee. Wearing a headscarf and jilbab (a long, loose-fitting coat), Yesrin introduced herself on the first day by stating—in broken French—that her French was not very good so she could not really understand/talk with others. For the first several days, I noticed Yesrin sit quietly during the course and occasionally whisper to one of her Arabic-speaking classmates to get a brief explanation of what was going on. But during breaks, Yesrin actively engaged in conversations with Arabic-speaking classmates. One morning while waiting for class to start, I asked Yesrin in slow French how long she had been in Belgium. She responded by shaking her head and stating in

broken French that she did not really understand. So I repeated the question, this time in Arabic. Yesrin's eyes lit up and a large smile spread across her face as she exclaimed to me and others, in Arabic, "You speak Arabic! He speaks Arabic!" I soon exhausted my limited knowledge of the language, yet from that point on Yesrin started making efforts to speak with me and others in her limited French. Others started reciprocating her efforts. Yesrin simply needed encouragement that others had at least a basic understanding of her background/culture, that they were not all antagonistic. Absent some sort of intervention like I did, however, Yesrin may have not achieved any sort of connection beyond other arabophone migrants. Indeed, the instructor Pascale did not ask students about their cultures or backgrounds throughout the course. (Sadly, Pascale made multiple comments reflecting cultural ignorance that visibly troubled some students.)

My second policy proposal is to require migrants to be actively involved in the community through some sort of organized hobby or sport that interests them. This could range from involvement with a community garden to dance classes to recreational sports clubs. This requirement serves two purposes. First, it connects migrants with locals who have similar interests. As mentioned in Chapter Five, various immigrants who felt greater connections to Belgium/with Belgians did so through other activities/connections.

Viktoriya from Russia spoke favorably of her dance class and the Belgian friends she made there. Ping from China said the same about her badminton club. Second, requiring migrants to be in some sort of community activity facilitates language learning.

Involvement requires migrants to speak with Belgians and so speak in French. Migrants would thus be learning French from locals rather than in a classroom setting surrounded only by other migrants. Mandatory involvement in these activities would last for a period

of time, such as 12 months, to achieve the policy's purpose of connecting migrants with non-migrant Belgians. It would also coincide with participation in FIC, where migrants could come back and speak with their instructors and classmates about their experiences in Belgium. (The required hours in FIC would be reduced to 15-20 and spread out over a number of months.)

7.6 Areas for Further Research

Multiple future directions flow from this research. One concerns workers at private associations assisting migrants. Private organizations abound in Wallonia and Belgium; many provide services such as language instruction that help migrants comply with Wallonia's legal directives concerning integration. These workers could provide a comparative point of analysis to, and expansion of, this dissertation research interviewing paid immigration workers at government-sponsored organizations.

Other future directions include comparative projects with other integration programs internally in Belgium or with other European countries. Internally, these projects could certainly include comparisons between programs present in Wallonia and Flanders (the *parcours d'integration*, *FIC*, and *inburgering*) as well as between Wallonia and francophone Brussels. This latter scenario is especially relevant due to the split in integration laws and programs in the French Community (Adam 2007). Concerning comparative research with Flanders, several possibilities abound. A visiting researcher at Vrije Universiteit Brussel recently contacted me about my research with FIC courses because she is comparing citizenship courses in Flanders and Wallonia and wished to build upon my findings (Tuley, personal communication, June 15, 2020). A similar experience happened after I presented earlier findings at a conference in Maastricht last

fall when a Dutch researcher expressed interest in collaborating on a project comparing Wallonia's civic integration classes I researched with those she was studying in the Netherlands.

FIC, alone, presents at least two additional research directions. The first includes the content and pedagogy of FIC classes. I received access to FIC instructor materials and pedagogy guides from one of FIC's two creators. Comparing the actual FIC course content with the broad-brushed directives in the legislation would illuminate connections between laws and localized educational experiences. A second research direction relates to FIC instructors' perspectives on integration. Is there an expectation that one identify as something distinctly Belgian? Do the instructors have a unified Belgian identity? Focusing on the instructors themselves still steers clear of a set "state" identity and so in many respects maintains a "bottom up" approach to study integration as the instructors may also have citizenship ideals at variance with government mandates. Further, the FIC instructors are workers implementing the laws, thereby providing a comparative example to the CRI workers examined in Chapter Four.

More broadly, my hope is that this project will pave the way for more transformative research regarding integration, research that moves away from state-centric or migrant-centric approaches to instead seek out more localized, people-focused perspectives. This research will seek to understand migrant *and* non-migrant viewpoints as tied to a place. Doing so is critical amid rising nationalism as the two groups *together* determine those differences that do/do not matter (*see* Nagel 2009) and people remake places. Integration varies from one place to the next, even within a state, as Belgium demonstrates. The new framework I proposed and used in Chapter Six, which combines

elements of everyday nationhood and belonging, provides a concrete step for understanding integration in localized places.

Overall, immigrant integration will remain a key issue in Europe (and across the world) in coming years as nationalism increases and migration continues. Integration legislation will be a part of the discussion. This dissertation's showing the connection – or lack thereof – between laws and the localized, coexistent experiences between immigrants and citizens provides a foundation for future research and policy applications by those considering integration in other contexts.

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