IMMIGRANT NATIONS

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polity
Tolerance Under Strain

‘Welcome’, someone calls out unexpectedly from across the street. ‘You like it here?’ Absolutely I do; there’s a lot to like about this place. The Moroccan port city of Tangiers is an inviting chaos in the summer months. Young and old, wrapped and unwrapped, parade along the promenade. The city is packed with returned migrants, their children often fashionably dressed, and behind the wheel of their roomy cars they’re the embodiment of success to those who stayed behind.

I’d often heard that kind of welcome over the previous few weeks, as Morocco has a tradition of hospitality, but this time the greeting came from a young Moroccan who addressed me in my own native tongue, with an Amsterdam accent no less. He spoke with the pride of a host: ‘This is my country. So what do you think?’ We exchanged a few comments about here and there, then he got into a car with his friends and disappeared into the traffic.

I was left slightly perplexed. The man who’d welcomed me was a compatriot of mine. As soon as he opened his mouth the market traders of Tangiers would realize he was a foreigner by birth, if they hadn’t already concluded as much from his bearing. Prices were higher for him than for the locals; he too was primarily a wallet on legs. He was a tourist in a country he knew only superficially, really only from the stories his parents had told him.

In his ‘welcome’ I detected not just ritual hospitality but bittersweet vengeance. At last he could show off about something that truly belonged to him. At last the roles were reversed. The guests he welcomed were people who often gave him the cold shoulder back home. That ‘welcome’
was almost a challenge, drawing the attention of Dutch visitors to shortcomings in their own dealings with outsiders. At least, that was how it felt.

Compatriots in a strange country, yet strangers in our own. That’s the state of uncertainty this book explores, a confusion that has its milder side, but an agonizing side as well. Behind that verbal welcome in a foreign country lay a no-man’s-land, a feeling of not really being at home anywhere. That young man wanted to be proud of a place he mainly knew about second hand because he couldn’t be proud of the place where he grew up.

If we retrace the routes taken by migrants back to their countries of origin, we discover an insecurity that has become our own. Immigrants from all over the world have changed the face of our cities. The original intentions, whatever they were, theirs and ours, ceased to matter a long time ago. The world has settled into our neighbourhoods, and it’s a confusing and shocking experience. Our markets, places of worship, schools, sports clubs – everything and everyone has been affected by the great migration that’s under way and whose end is nowhere in sight.

We’re in the midst of profound changes and it’s unwise to pretend they’re inconsequential or simply to close our minds to them. How often do we hear the unanswerable ‘immigration has always been with us’, the notion that people are always on the move and our own time is no exception? The Amsterdam municipality writes, matter-of-factly: ‘Almost half of all Amsterdammers were born outside the Netherlands. This is nothing new. For centuries Amsterdam, as a city of immigrants, has been open to people of different origins and faiths. Think of the Portuguese Jews, French Huguenots and seasonal workers from Germany.’

Even if we accept that from a historical perspective there’s nothing new under the sun, no one can doubt we are witnessing a profound change to the composition of Western populations. People certainly moved around a great deal in the seventeenth century, but that surely does nothing to mitigate the upheaval that cities are going through now. The guest workers from Morocco and Turkey who are changing Dutch neighbourhoods aren’t simply counterparts to the seasonal workers from Germany who spent time in the Low Countries in centuries past. The fact that Jews from Portugal fled to the Netherlands to escape the Catholic Church’s Inquisition doesn’t make it a matter of course that refugees from Islamist despotism in Iran and Afghanistan should come to live here.

In any case, how much is it possible to know about the newcomers who made Amsterdam into a city of immigrants in earlier times? A recent study by historian Erika Kuipers speaks of ‘the innumerable’ and ‘the invisible’ and demonstrates that our knowledge about them is limited, aside from a social elite that left a heritage of public works and charming houses on the city’s main canals.1 It’s hard to find out anything about the lives most migrants lived; even the numbers are a rough approximation. The lack of information alone makes that stalwart ‘there’s nothing new under the sun’ little short of exasperating.

How long can you downplay the significance of what’s happening to you by talking about those who shared the same fate in the past? How long can a deeply felt experience be declared off limits? There’s a growing feeling that today’s migrants and the reactions provoked by them have not as yet done much to move Western societies forward. This feeling refuses to be placated. Here in the Netherlands and in neighbouring countries, tolerance and freedom are under strain.

In a time when progress is all that counts, when the sense that something is being lost is dismissed as nostalgia, we’ve become adept at transforming reality, blithely describing impoverishment as enrichment, allowing semi-lingualism to pass for bilingualism and treating narrow-mindedness with sympathy. But compliant language doesn’t make reality any more amenable. Turning a blind eye to the clashes caused by the arrival of immigrants is no longer an option.

Today’s migration cannot simply be described as making receiving societies more open, since as a result of the traditional beliefs many migrants bring with them, old questions about the position of women have suddenly resurfaced and freedom of expression has become controversial. People have started to talk about blasphemy again, even apostasy. It may all seem familiar from recent history, but having to repeat the emancipation struggles of 50 years ago can hardly be described as progress.

There’s a need to go beyond the simple assumption that the migration of past decades amounts to an enrichment of the societies in which newcomers have arrived. In fact, the continual use of the word ‘enrichment’ is rather unfortunate, considering the difficult circumstances in which many immigrants and their children live. Schools are suddenly faced with a multiplicity of special needs, and this alone causes significant problems. Set against the benefits, the costs of migration have so far turned out to be high, in some periods perhaps even higher than the returns, although such calculations are always complicated.

This has nothing to do with the question of guilt that comes up in so many contemporary discussions of immigration. Receiving societies are hesitant in their dealings with newcomers; established populations are becoming noticeably more rigid and tending to turn away from the outside world. It has even proved possible to find majority support for measures to limit immigrants’ civil rights. Nevertheless, many migrants could have done more to create a place for themselves in their new countries. They ought to have rid themselves sooner of the ‘myth of return’,
the belief that their stay was only temporary. As someone remarked in a debate: 'The price of staying is that you take the trouble to learn. Learning and spurning are two quite different things.'

It's not difficult to point to shortcomings on all sides, but there's a good deal more to be said. This book examines how the conflicts surrounding migration can bring about a renewal of society as a whole, taking us closer to our aim of creating an open society. There's a need for a more candid approach to the frictions and clashes that always result from the arrival of sizeable migrant groups. Earlier generations of historians and sociologists have left us a remarkable body of work to draw upon. Oscar Handlin, the best-known historian of immigration in America, is one source of inspiration. In The Uprooted (1952) he describes the causes and effects of migration from Europe to America. They can be summed up in one sentence: 'The history of immigration is a history of alienation and its consequences.'

Alienation and loss are key features of any description of the arrival of migrants in a strange environment.

Handlin is thinking primarily of those who came, 'for the effect of the transfer was harsher upon the people than upon the society they entered.' He tells the story of the millions who were set adrift by industrialization and by the astonishing population growth of the second half of the nineteenth century. The dislocation and poverty that resulted, especially in rural areas, led to mass emigration from countries including Ireland, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Norway, and Poland. Huge economic and social forces were at work, and people were torn loose from environments they had occupied for centuries. Hardly anyone welcomed this liberation, Handlin says, since above all it meant separation. He describes with great empathy the often atrocious journey they made across the Atlantic and their arrival in a new land where they had to make their way as immigrants, often utterly destitute and with no idea what the future might bring.

In unfamiliar surroundings many sought refuge in the certainties of their religion. 'In that sense all immigrants were conservatives. . . . All would seek to set their ideas within a fortification of religious and cultural institutions that would keep them sound against the strange New World.' This hankering after old structures and customs served as an aid to survival in an urban environment. It's easy to see why many migrants tried to perpetuate village life in foreign cities, which makes it all the harder to understand why immigrants are so often described as great innovators.

In their new country, so confusing and full of dangers, people felt a need for the support of their religion, but maintaining religious faith was a challenge: 'The same environment, in its very strangeness and looseness and freedom, made it difficult to preserve what could be taken for granted at home.' The end result was all too often a sense of not belonging anywhere any longer. 'They had thus completed their alienation from the culture to which they had come, as from that which they had left.' This is an experience shared by many contemporary migrants as they try to connect with a new society.

It was not only the migrants themselves who were afflicted by insecurity. Those already living in the new country, which after all was not a blank canvas but had customs and traditions of its own, were thrown off balance. Handlin acknowledges their side of the story: 'Everything in the neighbourhood was so nice, they would later say, until the others came. The others brought outlandish ways and unintelligible speech, foreign dress and curious foods, were poor, worked hard, and paid higher rents for inferior quarters.'

In an earlier study Handlin had examined the reaction of nineteenth-century Bostonians to the arrival of Irish immigrants, who came in huge numbers. After the two groups clashed it took at least half a century for the city to regain its balance. 'Group conflict left a permanent scar that disfigured the complexion of Boston social life.' Yet Handlin's approach was subtle and he avoided laying the blame on one side or the other. He used cautious terms like 'latent distrusts' and 'social uneasiness' to describe the attitudes of long-standing residents.

It's not hard to understand reactions like these. People saw their world changed by immigrants and instinctively harked back to a shared notion of the community as it had been before. It serves little purpose to impress upon people who no longer feel at home in their neighbourhoods that we all have to move with the times. In the often hostile expression 'stranger in your own country' lies a recognition that migration has brought people from all over the world to settle in today's major cities. We need to face up to the feeling among established populations that a tried and tested society is being lost, just as we need to acknowledge the feeling of uprootedness among many newcomers.

For far too long, those who didn't live in the neighbourhoods where migrants settled were the warmest advocates of the multicultural society, while those who did live in them steadily moved out. Their opinions were ignored, or they were belittled for suddenly giving voice to their own latent xenophobia. Now that the middle classes can no longer escape the changes migration brings - in part because they can no longer fail to notice migrants' children in the classroom - the argument has broken out in earnest and there is a need to think seriously about both the life stories of immigrants and the experiences of indigenous residents. It is indeed true to say that the history of immigration is a history of alienation and its consequences.

Yet that alienation does not last for ever; quite the reverse, in fact.
Back in the 1920s American sociologist Robert E. Park described what was then generally referred to as the race relations cycle as beginning with isolation and avoidance and moving on via contact, competition and conflict to accommodation and assimilation.\(^{10}\) There is an underlying logic here: on arrival, migrants tend to keep themselves to themselves, partly as a result of the attitude of avoidance they detect in the society around them. In the years that follow, migrants and their children struggle to claim a place for themselves in the new country, and this leads to rivalry and strife. The question of how everyone can live together becomes unavoidable. If a satisfactory answer is found, the descendants of the original migrants will be absorbed more or less smoothly into society. This is a hopeful view and it suggests the familiar model of three generations.

Of course, the process can’t really be divided into phases or generations as neatly as this, but the important point is that every story of migration involves conflict. That was and is the case in America, and the pattern is being repeated in contemporary Europe. It’s difficult to say how long or how severe the period of conflict will be, but the phase of avoidance is gradually coming to an end. We should see today’s frictions as part of a search for ways for newcomers and the established population to live together. Conflict has a socializing effect.

Immigration is the most visible aspect of globalization, which gives many people a sense that their familiar world is vanishing. This is not yet felt to be an improvement. In European countries many people are convinced that a period of stagnation or even decline lies ahead. Few still believe their children will have a better future, whereas the post-war generation enjoyed the prospect that their offspring would live more freely and have more prosperous lives. It doesn’t really help to say that future generations will see these as the good old days. Right now, all that counts is that a sense of loss has taken hold and people are looking for ways of reaching beyond that experience.

Literary critic Svetlana Boym discerns a pattern: ‘Nostalgia inevitably appears as a defense mechanism in a time of accelerated rhythms of life and historical upheavals.’\(^{11}\) Newcomers and natives react in similar ways – and no wonder, since the cause of their unrest is the same. Migrants personify a world set adrift, and those they come to live amongst are swept along by changes to their everyday environments, but shared experience does not bring the two sides together, Boym concludes. ‘The moment we try to repair longing with belonging, the apprehension of loss with a rediscovery of identity, we often part ways and put an end to mutual understanding.’\(^{12}\) That is exactly what’s happening now: the desire for a firm footing in a turbulent world is driving old and new citizens apart.

In the history of immigration the pendulum swings back and forth between openness and withdrawal. Later we’ll examine the American experience at some length, but we should note at this point that after 40 years of mass immigration, between 1880 and 1920, new legislation was introduced that kept the numbers to a minimum until 1965. The similarity with present-day Europe is striking; here too, after decades of mass immigration, there’s a widespread desire for tighter controls.

In other words, the call for the influx to be curbed is not an exclusively European phenomenon, nor does it represent an inability to get along with migrants, a failing that could perhaps be ascribed to Europe’s relatively short history of immigration. A more restrictive policy as a means of restoring the social balance is an option that ought to be taken seriously. History shows that spontaneous rapprochement between indigenous populations and newcomers is rare. The risk that each side will keep raising the stakes with opposing declarations of loyalty – both in effect openly saying ‘my own people first’ – means we must take the trouble to explore what lies behind this hostility. Let’s first take a closer look at the experiences of the migrants we encountered on the promenade in Tangiers.

**The Conservatism of Migrants**

People rarely leave hearth and home simply to seek their fortunes in the wider world. They are usually trying to escape deplorable living conditions in their native countries. Guest workers were motivated by economic misery, migrants from former colonies were set adrift by worries about the repercussions of independence, refugees are by definition fleeing political or religious persecution, and migration arising from the formation or reuniting of families is often the result of emotional attachments or of problematic circumstances at home.

So although people’s motives for leaving differ appreciably, migration almost always arises out of need, and not everyone has the talent to make a virtue of necessity. Nowadays we’re often presented with a romantic image of the migrant as the personification of an increasingly mobile world. He is described as a forerunner, part of a reluctant advance guard. We should be aware that it requires an immense effort to make the best of what is often a traumatic experience. Some writers, entrepreneurs, sporting heroes and politicians have acquired prominent positions for themselves in their new countries, an admirable achievement, not to mention the innumerable teachers, shopkeepers, police officers and nurses who have made a success of migration.
The early work of Anil Ramdas, a Dutch writer from Surinam, shows that migration need not be a sombre story of loss and homesickness. The migrant’s journey will often entail a broadening of horizons: ‘This means a gulf opens up, a breach in the memory, a void in recollection, as wide as the ocean he has crossed. And I want to insist that this emptiness, this blank space, this vagueness of the past, far from being tragic can be a fortunate thing, that it can be interpreted as a liberation.’

Generally speaking, Ramdas’s view of his old fatherland is affectionate and steeped in a tone that allows the reader to share it. Yet we can sometimes taste a bitterness in his verdict on what he has left behind. He does not baulk at writing: ‘Surinamese literature has failed. And the most obvious explanation for this is that Surinam has failed. Surinam as a community does not exist and has never existed.’ Even for Ramdas, who clearly sees the benefits of migration, the relationship with his native land has its painful side.

It’s been called a ‘brutal bargain’: to gain entry to another culture you have to relinquish many things you hold dear. Securing a place for yourself often involves disloyalty to family traditions. Learning a new language distances many migrants little by little from the parental home. It takes a great deal of effort to balance on a slack rope slung between the country of origin and the country of arrival, and there’s a great temptation either to have done with the past completely or to cling to old memories and react with hostility to the new environment.

Later we’ll look in more detail at how far relocation is an experience of uprooting, even though we know that people don’t have roots, they have legs. There are significant differences between migrant groups and between migrants as individuals, but some of the general characteristics of the experience of migration are worth examining. Let’s start by looking at the first generation, before moving on to see how their children have fared. Imagine the journey through time from a small village community in the Rif Mountains or Anatolia, for example, to big city life in Amsterdam or Birmingham, Lyon or Frankfurt. There’s a Moroccan saying about guest workers: ‘By donkey to the airport.’ It refers to the fact that many had not laid eyes on the modern world before, never having visited their country’s own major cities. In that journey several stages were missed, and no one should be surprised at the culture shock that resulted.

Weighing against the desire to get ahead was a familiarity with the landscape of home. Take one characteristic passage from the life story of a migrant: ‘I didn’t really want to leave. I didn’t talk to anyone about it, but I couldn’t make up my mind. It was such a huge step. I was a country boy. I loved life there intensely. It was simple, fathomable, you knew everyone, you knew what they meant to you. But every day was the same. You never made any progress. Still, did I dare to head off into the wider world?’

Earlier generations of migrants, leaving Europe for America, often faced a similar challenge in the transition from village to town. A greater familiarity with the classic accounts of the past might have helped in anticipating some of the problems of the present day. Back in the 1920s, Park described the migrant communities of Chicago, especially the spectacular growth of ghettos. Tellingly, Chicago’s Little Italy, with 15,000 illiterate peasants from Sicily crammed together in appalling conditions, was also known as Little Hell.

The immigrants’ lives were affected not only by poverty but by the challenge of cultural adjustment. As far as possible, they held the new, unfamiliar world at arm’s length. Migrants were drawn to each other in specific districts: ‘Our great cities turn out . . . to be a mosaic of segregated peoples . . . each seeking to preserve its peculiar cultural forms.’ Park sums up the different legacies as a conflict between individuality and communality. ‘Energies that were formerly controlled by custom and tradition are released. The individual is free for new adventures, but he is more or less without direction and control.’ He goes on to conclude that ‘the result is a cultural hybrid, . . . a man on the margin of two cultures and two societies, which are never completely interpenetrated and fused.’ Park describes this type of person as a ‘marginal man’.

The parallels with today’s migrant communities are obvious. No wonder there are frictions in societies where so many villagers find themselves living in cities. In fact, the same difficulties can arise in their countries of origin; migrants from the Moroccan and Turkish countryside have to make complicated adjustments to life in Casablanca or Istanbul. Even some years ago, the more enlightened residents of Istanbul could be heard complaining to anyone who would listen about the ‘hordes of barbarians’ from Anatolia who had seized control of the capital. They talked endlessly about their many compatriots who were being carried away by traditional beliefs, and how this was destroying the open atmosphere of their city. When the devout mayor of Istanbul suddenly announced proposals to segregate men and women on public transport, the liberal elite felt its most dire predictions were becoming a reality.

Immigration as a threat to tolerance – that’s at the very least an interesting concept, certainly as a response to those who claim without giving the matter much thought that immigration enriches society and makes it more open. And this was domestic migration from rural communities to Istanbul. Inevitably, the sense of disorientation is even more extreme when on top of a transition from village life to the anonymous city comes the transition to another language and a secular society. The change could hardly be more abrupt and profound.
It may seem as if migrants have voted with their feet – by leaving home they have declared a preference for life elsewhere – but many had prosperity in mind rather than anything else. People who wanted to improve their lot economically have now come to see the norms of liberal societies as tarnishing all that is dear to them. Far from avidly embracing the freedoms on offer, they experience them as a threat. Anyone who takes the trouble to imagine what most newcomers go through will realize that arrival in a totally unfamiliar world has a dizzying effect. French historian Gérard Noiriel describes the feeling of displacement: ‘On top of the shock of transplantation and the discovery of a new universe characterized by the speed of the assembly line and the complex topography of metro tunnels comes incomprehension in the face of the new dominant norms.’

The tensions that arise from the difficulty of settling down in a new country are felt mainly within migrant families themselves. It’s there that the gulf between newcomers and their adoptive societies is most keenly felt. Farah Karimi, a native of Iran and a former member of the Dutch parliament, makes this point: ‘There certainly is a multicultural drama going on. It plays itself out primarily in the living rooms of immigrant families.’ A fundamental conflict emerges as traditional beliefs come up against modern attitudes towards men and women, parents and children, believers and non-believers. Those involved are deeply affected.

It’s not easy to find a compromise between a fate-based culture and one that puts individual freedom first. In traditional societies everything is pretty much set in stone. The class, caste and religion you’re born into mould your life from cradle to grave and escape is difficult, if not impossible. In the Western world, to an increasing degree since the Second World War, life is seen as an invitation to self-fulfilment. The notion that a person must take his fate into his own hands is incompatible with a culture that lays all the emphasis on the community, in which the individual has little or no room for manoeuvre.

Much of the insecurity we’re witnessing now has its origins in this collision between authoritarian cultures and the relatively liberal societies of the West. The social divide in Morocco or India is far greater than in Europe, where class differences manifest themselves rather informally, although they certainly do exist. It surely can’t be easy for newcomers to navigate countries with so many implicit codes.

Kader Abdolah, who arrived in the Netherlands as a refugee from Iran, describes the confusion beautifully: ‘We had suddenly fallen out of a culture in which everything happened behind curtains into a semi-naked society. I thought I’d better keep my mouth shut for the time being and watch carefully, listen carefully to the world around me.’ His family falls prey to the same culture shock; his wife wants less and less to do with him: ‘I really had nothing attractive to offer her any longer. In my own country I was a man with a future. My position was clear. But who was I now? An applicant for temporary jobs.’

It’s a story we hear all too often: families come under huge strain because of the father’s loss of status. In many migrant families this results in an inverted form of intergenerational conflict. Instead of children being dependent on their parents, the parents are in many ways dependent on their children. There is something humiliating about the sight of an elderly-looking man in a caftan standing at the pharmacist’s counter holding his small son’s hand, needing the help of his child because he hasn’t mastered the language of the country in which he now lives. It’s especially painful when he comes from an unambiguously authoritarian culture.

This loss of status among immigrants is another classic theme in the history of migration. Under the heading ‘the demoralization of the migrant’, Park describes the way it affects families. How can children believe in paternal authority if it’s personified by someone struggling to hold his ground at the margins of society? The breakdown of communication in many migrant families is largely attributable to the weak social position of immigrants, who have often received only minimal education.

Moroccan-Dutch author Hafid Bouazza presents a compelling portrait of the first generation of guest workers and their isolation: ‘He enjoyed all this, but he didn’t feel part of it. It existed outside him and would continue to exist without him, and that made him sad. It was a sadness he shared with other visitors to the tea house, and which in other men sometimes turned into anger and disgust.’ Indeed, the paths of melancholy don’t always lead people in the same direction, but usually they will cling stubbornly to the ways of life they have brought from home, sticking closely to their companions in adversity, people they can always turn to when problems arise. Anyone who steps into the hall of a mosque will feel this atmosphere all too powerfully: Turkey or Pakistan are everywhere, while the Netherlands or Britain seem a distant illusion.

Many immigrants don’t fully command the language of their adoptive countries, and this adds to their isolation. Postcolonial migrants, who generally did speak the language of their former motherlands and knew a fair amount about their future homes, had an easier time than people who arrived in Germany or Denmark as guest workers, poorly educated and not expected to have much knowledge of a place that was offering them a temporary stay and, most importantly for all concerned, dirty, physically demanding work.

The language, with all its emotional nuances, stands for more than just straightforward meanings. A German immigrant to America in the early twentieth century wrote in an autobiographical account: ‘Whenever we
must decide quickly we judge subconsciously. The subconscious life was destroyed and badly disorganized. I never knew if my reactions would be in line with the new code of conduct and had to think and reflect. To act instinctively in an American fashion and manner was impossible, and I appeared slow and clumsy.  

Many of the everyday misunderstandings and conflicts in cities with a high proportion of immigrants arise from this poor command of the country’s mother tongue. The hesitancy of newcomers is obvious, especially when it comes to expressions with an ironic slant or a double meaning. The room for anything more than superficial communication shrinks; if people want to understand each other, they must limit themselves.

Parents’ unfamiliarity with the language of the new homeland affects the future of their children, large numbers of whom grow up in environments where nobody speaks the native tongue of the country in which they live. They arrive at school with considerable language deficits compared to children from indigenous families. Aside from the impact this has on their performance in school—and it turns out they hardly ever catch up completely—it’s hard for them to establish contacts outside their own communities. German-Turkish sociologist Necla Kelek has criticized childdooring in Germany’s Turkish community. ‘Their parents were unable or unwilling to teach them German, since either they hadn’t mastered it themselves or they didn’t feel it was necessary for their sons to speak the language of the country they lived in.’  

She acknowledges the aloof attitude of the receiving society, but concludes that ‘for their part the Turks—a few exceptions aside—made no effort to accept their second home.’

A reticence towards their countries of settlement can be found in all stories about first-generation migrants, but this self-isolation is particularly prevalent in Europe, where many did not initially see themselves as immigrants. All too often a temporary stay bogged down to become a permanent presence. Whether Algerians in France, Jamaicans in Britain, Turks in Germany or Moroccans in the Netherlands, in each case the notion ‘one day we’ll go back’ gave their lives in the new country a transient character. They lived with a suitcase in the hall; their real lives had been put on hold in the expectation of a glorious return. In most cases nothing came of that dream, usually because they wanted to remain close to their children, who had never lived anywhere else. So a child says of his mother: ‘She doesn’t want to go back until her grandchildren have grown up too. And found their feet. In other words: never.’

The way back is also closed off to most migrants because, for all their conservatism, their lengthy stay outside their own countries has changed them. This becomes evident for the first time when they go back on holiday, staying with relatives. In their home villages it may not be at all natural for women to go out on the street by themselves to shop, for instance, let alone simply to take a walk. People would soon start to gossip. They cannot go back. They could never get used to corrupt officials again, or to police intimidation, or the way society controls them. Too much of what they once took for granted has gradually become alien, even repellant.

Moving changes people, even though they often fail to realize it. Noiriel poses a question that at first seems cryptic: ‘Isn’t the paradox of the immigrant that the more he is one the less he is one?’ He means that the true immigrant, who has settled in a new country permanently and therefore left behind the ‘myth of return’, is really less and less of an immigrant, since he’s making every effort to put down roots in his adoptive land.

To put it another way, the conservatism of many immigrants is not a permanent condition. The work of Oscar Handlin, which has been quoted here with approval, is sometimes criticized for the importance it attributes to alienation in the history of migration. Later historians, such as Kristian Hvidt, with his study into the backgrounds of Danish immigrants in America, have shown that Handlin placed undue emphasis on the transition from the countryside to the city. Although in many cases emigration did mean exchanging rural life for an urban existence—almost half of Danish Americans were originally agricultural labourers—a fair number of newcomers had lived in towns or cities back home. Another historian, John Bodnar, has argued that Handlin saw migration too much as a one-way street, from tradition to modernity, producing an inevitable culture shock.

Important though that transition may be, this book argues more generally that the conservatism of immigrant communities should be understood as a reaction to the loss of social and cultural certainties that migration brings with it. Bodnar writes that migrants ‘had to devise explanations of their status in terms intelligible to themselves by drawing on folk thought, religion, ancestry, and similar devices close at hand’. Harking back to cultural traditions was a means of survival in a time of economic struggle. ‘They had to devote nearly all their attention to that portion of their world in which they actually could exert some power and influence: the family household, the workplace, and the local neighborhood or community.’

Alienation should be seen as a phase in the biographies of migrant families. Gaining control in unfamiliar surroundings marked the start of a process of integration. Mastering a new language, dealing with unfamiliar working conditions, deciphering the prevailing rules of etiquette and
practising the old faith in a new environment – all these things changed their lives, and even more so the lives of their children. The more time they spent in the new environment, the more treacherous the route back to a remembered youth. In Zorgvlied cemetery in Amsterdam a little plot of Islamic gravestones is shlyly emerging, a literal and figurative 'we’re never going to leave', but that decision – 'I want to be buried here' – is a difficult and deeply emotional one. The isolation of many older migrants, tied by their children to the place where they’ve settled but in their minds still living in their native countries, should not be underestimated. And who will look after them when they need it? 'I do secretly hope that my children will care for me.'

The In-Between Generation

A skewed relationship with the children is one of the most painful consequences of migration. This is particularly clear in the case of migrants from Pakistan, Morocco and Mexico, for example, whose rather conservative lifestyle is now meeting with growing resistance from their sons and daughters, but in many other cases too the generation gap is wide, and traditional communities in many countries of origin fail to acknowledge intergenerational conflict. Parents have few means of preparing their children for a society whose language and customs remain in many ways strange to them. Their resignation is all too obvious, as is the sense that everything they once had has been taken away.

In his novel Judith and Jamal, Fouad Laroui, born in Morocco, describes a father-son relationship. 'Abal-Khail loved his son, but he didn’t know how to tell him. He worried about him, there in that country where he understood so little. It was his fault that Jamal was growing up in a land of infidels. He had wanted to protect him against every danger, against the temptations, the traps. If anything, the boy’s mother has an even more tenuous connection to the world around them. Can you stay somewhere and yet not be there? Laroui asks himself, looking at Jamal’s exhausted mother asleep on the couch. 'The answer is a sorrowful yes. In the mornings she hurries through the streets of Paris, wrapped in an exotic djellaba, but what is she actually making of her life? In all things she’s an outsider, irrevocably an outsider.'

The powerlessness of such parents is obvious. As one of their children has said: 'It’s not that they didn’t want to offer us any support, it was simply that they couldn’t. You can’t give something you don’t have to begin with.' Many are so detached from society that they have no idea what their offspring get up to when they leave the house. The children move between separate worlds: home, school and the street. The norms that prevail in the family sphere have little to do with the rules that apply outside it and the resulting conflict seems almost inevitable. The distances that have to be bridged every day are simply too great for many parents, and for their children.

One difference between the first and second generations is that for adults the shock of the new country comes after they’ve already been shaped to a great degree by the cultures of their countries of origin, whereas the problems of adaptation for their children come at a point when they’re in the midst of their personal development. This explains why children are even more susceptible to the confusion that migration inevitably brings with it. They can’t stand aloof. Their resilience and flexibility are tested, and often their parents can do little to help them.

Journalist Margalith Kleijwegt has recorded their stories: 'At home Mehmet never says anything about school, about what happens there, who his friends are. He claims he does his homework, but does he? Mrs Demircan has no way of checking. School is an abstract concept to her. She has no idea where the building is or what her eldest son does there.'

So the gulf between migrants and society inevitably creates a gulf between parents and children. Kleijwegt sums up her impressions: 'For most of the parents, childrearing seems more like staying off catastrophe than something beautiful or fun that they can enjoy. They lack confidence in themselves, in the world and in their children. Parents feel pushed into a corner. They react defensively to everything.' People outside the family are kept at a safe distance as a matter of principle.

Follow the trail in the other direction. Anyone who travels back with a migrant family to the place where its older members were born will soon become aware of the gulf between here and there. People accustomed to living as part of an extensive family network are suddenly transformed into a nuclear family in a rear apartment on the third floor. Husband and wife living on top of one another – surely that’s unnatural. The emotional balance is upset; family conventions have to be rethought. In the new country, relationships are strange: men and women, boys and girls treat each other differently.

It is of course quite natural for parents to defend their own notions of propriety. This tendency expresses itself most clearly in traditional beliefs about marriage as a bond that arises not so much out of love as from a sense of social duty. In her novel Brick Lane Monica Ali describes the married lives of two migrants from Bangladesh. Nazneen was given away to Chanu by her father when she was young: 'Her husband had a proverb for everything. Any wife is better than no wife. Something is better than nothing. What had she imagined? That he was in love with her? That he was grateful because she, young and graceful, had accepted
him? That in sacrificing herself to him, she was owed something? Yes. Yes. She realized in a stinging rush she had imagined all these things. Such a foolish girl. Such high notions. What self-regard. All that's left to her is rebelliousness. There's no way out. 'If I had known what this marriage would be, what this man would be...! What? What then? I would have run away.'

Arranged marriages also reveal clear notions about the role of women, and these increasingly conflict with liberal ideas after 50 years of female emancipation. Fatiha, another second-generation migrant, says: 'Mother thinks, like father, that I should just give up my studies and get married soon. Studying isn't terribly important in our family. As a woman you've little to gain by it. You're going to marry anyway and be a housewife, so working for a diploma is a waste of time.' Many girls from migrant families see school as a chance to escape their parents' plans for them. But how many women take their lives into their own hands when they leave full-time education and use the knowledge they've amassed to pursue a career?

This collision over marriage is a constant theme in the history of migration. Handlin wrote of European migrants in America that 'here was the ultimate barrier between the generations: they would never understand each other's conception of marriage.' Getting a daughter to marry young was a way for parents to prevent her from being lost to a liberal outside world that was felt to be a perpetual threat to her chastity. Fatiha says: 'Because of all these things I haven't spoken to my father for a long time, nor he to me. I find my parents' constant distrust of me the worst thing of all.' Yet even today most of these girls, however modern they may appear at first glance, fall back into a more-or-less traditional marriage.

One of the causes of troubled relationships in many migrant families is that the father usually left first. Ten years or so passed before he arranged for his family to follow him. The children grew up without their father, who visited only at holiday time, laden with gifts. Indeed, the pressure to have his family join him usually arose from the fact that mothers were being forced to bring up their children alone. Often these holiday dads agreed to reunite the family only with some understandable reluctance, since they'd learned to value the freedom of their new country in their own way and had entered into all kinds of relationships. With their wives and daughters came religion and a more conservative outlook.

These clashes within families, complicated enough in themselves, are compounded by a legacy of educational disadvantage. The expectation that children from migrant families would quickly make their way up the social ladder has met with disappointment in many cases. The statistics on training and work speak for themselves. The second gen-

eration is clearly over-represented on the lowest rungs. Exclusion and discrimination are exacerbated by language deficits, a limited range of personal networks, inadequate knowledge of the social environment and, of course, a low level of education among parents.

A new social question has arisen. On average, the children of migrants lag behind their peers significantly in cognitive development and linguistic ability, which puts the better jobs out of their reach. Researchers have concluded that there is a 'considerable reserve of talent', yet, at the same time, that 'the majority of children from non-native families reach a level of education little different from that of their low-skilled parents. Clearly the weak social position of the first generation is being passed on to the second.' Not only does their advancement seem less spectacular than expected, progress in relation to the parents is not what ultimately matters, however valuable it may be in terms of family history. Children don't compete within their own communities but within society as a whole. What counts in the end is whether they have a real chance in the jobs market.

Amid all this attention to falling behind, we shouldn't neglect the existence of a growing middle class of migrants and their children. Migrant communities differ, and social distinctions within them are bound to increase in the future. Disadvantage tends to be concentrated in non-Western communities, although many migrants from Asia are doing extremely well. The impatience of this new middle class is unmistakable and its achievements are crucial in determining the degree to which immigrants feel their new country is truly their own. A society that affords little space to talented newcomers will pay a high price.

Good jobs aren't everything, however. Those who succeed often feel remarkably uncomfortable. In societies that haven't yet adjusted appropriately to the permanent presence of migrants and their children, they soon find a role thrust upon them, as George Alagiah, a well-known BBC journalist who came to England from Sri Lanka as a boy, reflects in his autobiography. 'I had never asked to be an example to anyone. I never wanted to be the best black journalist. I simply wanted to be the best reporter that I could be. Later, I came to understand that I performed a function regardless of whether I wanted to or not.'

That feeling of continually being judged by where you come from, or are presumed to have come from, is pernicious, but the reaction of those it affects is ambiguous: 'Don't judge me by my background but never forget where I come from.' The hedgehog response comes naturally to people struggling to gain a foothold in a society that in many respects remains closed to them, and it can lead to willed victimhood among those not endowed with any outstanding talent: 'I'll never fit in.'

The psychology of this middle class of migrants and their children may
be complicated, but it's become impossible to imagine Western countries without them. Anyone casting an eye across university lecture halls knows that in 10 or 20 years at most, people with a background in post-war migration will be in positions of responsibility of all kinds. Their presence will seem increasingly natural, and the question 'Where do you come from?' will gradually be replaced by 'What kind of work do you do?'

The lives of children from migrant families can no longer be evaluated using the common denominator of social disadvantage. This in itself is reason for hope. But a large group remains that is failing in the education system as it stands, a group with little chance of finding decent jobs. What will happen to them? How will they vent their frustration in an environment of seemingly limitless opportunity? The trouble they cause won't be cancelled out by the success stories that run in parallel to theirs, and which must also be told.

Most worrying of all is the level of criminality. Even today it's spoken of with great trepidation. While we're all willing to accept that social class is an important factor, statistics showing high crime rates for certain ethnic groups, among them Moroccans in the Netherlands, Pakistanis in Britain, Somalis in Sweden and Algerians in France, cannot be ignored. Spokesmen for these communities are heard to excuse them by saying: 'We have a crime problem precisely because we're excluded.' The perpetrators become the victims.

It's unwise to ignore resentment simply because confronting it is unpleasant. In a fascinating interview, psychiatrist Zohra Acherrat-Stitou described the situation that people of her generation find themselves in: 'They're angry with a society that exploited their parents, and angry with their parents for failing to put up any resistance. Many young Moroccans, I notice, see themselves as victims. A victim feels mistreated, misunderstood, insecure. They'll have to shake off that victimhood if they're to find an identity.' This is something we often hear discussed by immigrants who are troubled by the resentment and hostility towards society they detect in their own communities, especially since many such victims quickly build careers for themselves as criminals, thereby jeopardizing the opportunities available to fellow migrants.

A high juvenile crime rate among the second generation is nothing new. Research by Park and his colleagues recorded no fewer than 1,300 youth gangs in Chicago, mostly made up of the children of migrants. His study detected overwhelming uncertainty among parents about how to handle their children. What were they allowed to do and what not? A Polish woman wrote to her sister about her unruly son, 'You say, "Beat". In America you are not allowed to beat; they can put you into a prison. Give them to eat, and don't beat – such is the law in America. Nothing can be done, and you advise to beat! Nothing can be done; if he is not good of himself, he is lost.... I regret that I took the children from our country so soon."

With a view to prevention, it's important to talk about the background to juvenile criminality. Crime isn't imported by migrants, but current crime rates are a product of the confusion that arises from the contrast between different ways of exercising authority. Young people accustomed to a fairly authoritarian upbringing in immigrant families laugh at police officers who prefer to negotiate with them than to arrest them, and they're not afraid of judges who, with a clear conscience, impose one community service order after another. The appeal for self-control isn't working and the unwillingness of migrant communities to take stock of their own responsibilities doesn't help matters. Parents who bury their heads in the sand are no doubt prompted to do so by shame, or impotence, or apathy, but meanwhile their sons are wrecking the image of the entire community and thereby disadvantaging everyone.

There's no doubt that some neighbourhoods have developed a subculture in which both serious and petty criminals flourish, most famously the banlieues in cities like Lyon and Paris, although comparable stories emerge from other urban districts, such as Berlin's Rollberg-Viertel. Lucienne Bui Trong, who for 10 years headed the urban violence section of the French police intelligence service, writes that although the children of migrants are involved in crime to a disproportionate extent, 'the attachment to a territory seems to be stronger than comradeship based on ethnic origin; a coloured youth from a different part of town is not regarded as a brother.' Clearly crime shouldn't be perceived as a product of a young man's country of origin but, rather, as an outcome of the violent street culture that turns some deprived neighbourhoods into no-go areas.

We'd do better to call the second generation an in-between generation. Its members are themselves often unsure where they belong. Although many young people in Europe describe themselves as Turkish, Bangladeshi or Moroccan, once on holiday in their parents' countries they quickly discover they don't belong. In his novel, Laroui takes a humorous look at this confusion. When Jamal and his friend pay a brief visit to relatives in Morocco they're upset by the arbitrary behaviour of the police and much else that seems outlandish to them. Back in Paris we're privy to the following dialogue: "Didn't we invent couscouss?" "Who do you mean by 'we'? What are you then, actually?" "Well, I'm Arab aren't I?" "Crap. What on earth do you know about the history of the Arabs? You don't even speak Arabic. There's no way you're an Arab. That's what I think and no one's going to tell me any different." "You sure do take the prize for making simple things complicated. Suddenly I don't know who I am any more. But I'm a Muslim anyhow, aren't I?"
“Don’t make me laugh. You? You wouldn’t last 15 minutes in Teheran. The only thing that connects you to Islam and the Arabs is your name. And even that’s nothing but hot air.” “So where are my roots then, dammit?”

And so on. The misunderstanding is endless. Many children of migrant families have considerable reservations about the countries in which they were born and raised. Some are proud of an identity borrowed from their parents’ native land, a place they can’t really fathom. All this follows a familiar pattern and at the same time it’s a pity, because clinging to the culture of the country their parents left behind will not help them to thrive in new circumstances. There are two sides to their reticence, however. It signifies the gulf that exists, but it also represents the beginning of critical engagement. Indeed, there is a growing number who rise above the idea that they’re not fully at home anywhere. If asked whether they’d like to go back to their ‘native country’ they answer with a simple ‘I’m already there.’

Native Unease

Migrants aren’t alone in feeling that a familiar world is being lost. People who in some cases have lived in the same district for generations have seen their surroundings changed out of all recognition by the arrival of people from other parts of the globe. Anyone who chooses to listen can hear countless stories of people who no longer feel at home in their neighbourhoods. So-called white flight is one result, a phenomenon associated with all major waves of immigration in Western countries. The steady departure of the original inhabitants contributes to the creation of districts in which the majority has become a minority and minorities are now the majority. We shall return with some regularity to the relationship between the two, but now let’s look for a moment at the unease felt by native populations.

The history of immigration is a history of alienation, Handlin wrote, and this applies not just to the immigrants themselves but to a fair few of the longstanding inhabitants as well. The documentary film All White in Barking focuses on what was once a traditional working-class district of London. Dave, one of the central characters, walks through his old neighbourhood and comments: ‘This was the best part of Barking and Dagenham. Everyone wanted to live in this area; now no one wants to live here. Well, none of the indigenous population wants to live here now anyway.’ He worries about those left behind: ‘Clive and Chris, what’s going to happen to them? They can’t move. They’ve got to suffer it all.’

The filmmaker asks him about the town he’s chosen as his new home. ‘It’s a nice place, only your own people there. I just want to move out of this bloody borough and be safe again, like I used to be.’

Sometimes discontent may arise from rather more symbolic changes to the built environment. In the Berlin district of Pankow residents rebelled against plans for a mosque, which was finally built despite years of opposition. It’s a relatively modest building, hidden behind a Kentucky Fried Chicken, but the people involved in the protest – whom the mayor of the borough describes as predominantly moderates – are convinced the new house of prayer won’t be of any benefit to their neighbourhood. One reason may be that its imam is fairly orthodox and tries to convince believers that their German neighbours will one day understand why they cannot shake hands with women.

Of course it’s perfectly possible to dismiss such experiences as the trivial complaints of citizens who’ve never had it so good – the mosque really is here to stay and there are more important things in life – but it would be better to listen first. During a debate in Antwerp several people commented that a third of the city consisted of declared and undeclared xenophobes, since they’d voted for the populist Vlaams Belang, while others asked why so many voters were refusing to take part in a rational conversation about a changing world. Perhaps it shouldn’t surprise us that people will not be favourably disposed towards dialogue if their concerns are dismissed as knee-jerk reactions. Besides, does a term like ‘racism’ really increase our insight into the fears of the native population? No one would deny that xenophobia exists, but British urban sociologist Ruth Glass opted for a more cautious approach in her early study of Londoners’ responses to the arrival of immigrants from the Caribbean in the late 1950s: ‘The keynote in the situation of the coloured minority in Britain is not inflexible prejudice, harsh segregation and discrimination; it is muddle, confusion and insecurity.’ She concluded that ‘the majority have an attitude which can be called “benevolent prejudice” – a combination of passive prejudice and passive tolerance.

Glass was writing about the 1950s and ‘60s, but this undoubtedly applies to present circumstances too. Avoidance of such monolithic terms as ‘racism’ allows a more accurate picture to emerge. In a speech about race relations in America, Barack Obama attempted not only to find words for the anger and frustration of the black community but to say something meaningful about the sense of resentment among his country’s white residents. ‘Most working- and middle-class white Americans don’t feel that they have been particularly privileged by their race. They are anxious about their futures, and feel their dreams slipping away. When they hear that an African American is getting an advantage in landing a good job or a spot in a good college because of an injustice that
they themselves never committed; when they’re told that their fears about crime in urban neighborhoods are somehow prejudiced, resentment builds over time.’ He told his audience that ‘to wish away the resentments of white Americans, to label them as misguided or even racist, without recognizing they are grounded in legitimate concerns – this too widens the racial divide, and blocks the path to understanding’.56

The anxiety Obama talks about has everything to do with a loss of social and cultural certainties. Established populations are reacting in ways that are reminiscent of earlier periods of mass immigration, in America and elsewhere. We have already looked at the cycle of ethnic relations, in which three stages can be discerned: avoidance, conflict and accommodation. In this context, avoidance involves a refusal to accept a new reality; people deny that anything essential has changed. As long as they never actually meet any migrants, because of segregation in the cities where they live, it may seem as if the arrival of newcomers hasn’t really affected anything.

Avoidance is often the first phase in a long process of settlement. Research in cities like Detroit and Chicago – where the one-time majority now finds itself a minority of the urban population – reveals the unease of white residents. Maria Kefalas describes an overwhelmingly ‘white’ district of Chicago called Beltway, populated by the lower middle class and located not far from one of the city’s black ghettos. Her aim is to chart the aversion felt by its residents, since she is convinced that ‘tolerance only comes after every voice of dissent is heard’.57 In her judgement, the defensiveness of residents goes ‘beyond the old notions of racial antagonisms and fears’.58

They are the children and grandchildren of working-class people who struggled to survive at the margins of society, so home ownership is extremely important to them. They feel themselves partial owners of their neighbourhood, which is well maintained. Graffiti is regarded as a serious assault on the orderly social environment. ‘Consumption, ritualistic displays of house pride, and a fanatical concern for order serve as talismans to keep socio-economic insecurities at bay.’59 For many residents, Beltway represents a last stand. If bad neighbours arrive they have nowhere else to go. Their lives are far more bound to a specific place than those of the better off.

Their insecurity has to do with both class and colour. Anthropologist John Hartigan is firm in his views about white districts of Detroit that feel similarly threatened. In one case he writes of ‘the interplay of class anxieties and racial confusions at work in the transformations of this neighbourhood’.60 The importance of social class is clear from reactions to white migrants who arrived from the South from the 1950s onwards, the so-called ‘hillbillies’, who were far from welcome despite their skin colour; in fact they were often labelled ‘white trash’. ‘The overall focus of negative feeling was on recent arrivals, both white and black, native-born and foreign.’61

Clashes such as these, Kefalas says, can be seen as arising from resistance of a kind that excludes any ‘ambiguity about what distinguishes the garden from the ghetto’.62 Ambivalence is a privilege reserved for those who have already secured a place on the social ladder. ‘Safety, a sense of belonging, security, and undisrupted routines – these are the things neighbors want to preserve and these are the things they would mourn if the last garden ceased to exist.’63 Hostility towards newcomers – who, as in Detroit, include white immigrants – is one result. ‘Even though many Beltway residents are the children and grandchildren of European immigrants, second- or third-generation Americans demonstrate little empathy for the latest wave of arrivals from Eastern Europe to settle in Chicago.’64

Classic competition for resources lurks behind much of the resistance to further immigration and no one would deny that it’s especially intense at the bottom of the labour market, where people are forced out of their jobs by a low-paid and non-organized work force, or subjected to downward pressure on wages. Perhaps those with most to lose are the insecure lower middle classes. American economists Timothy Hatton and Jeffry Williamson conclude soberly that hostility today, as in the past, arises from the admission of large numbers of migrants with little education or training, leading to ‘rising inequality’ and a growth in the number of ‘crowded-out native unskilled workers’. This opposition is made all the harder to ignore by ‘the greater voting power of those hurt most – the working poor’.65

The stories relayed by writers like Hartigan and Kefalas should not be allowed to obscure the fact that however durable a phenomenon avoidance may be, it represents an early stage in an ongoing process. A time always arrives when segregation becomes untenable. Today, in cities like Marseille, Birmingham, Stuttgart and Malmö where 40 per cent or more of residents are migrants or the children of migrants, newcomers and established residents can no longer avoid one another. Nor can they disregard the question: How much must we have in common in order to live together in a diverse but peaceful society? The end of avoidance provokes a good deal of conflict, which is not to say that integration has failed.

Once the permanence of the changes unleashed by immigration can no longer be denied, loss becomes tangible on both sides and tensions emerge. To take the enrichment of a society that immigration brings about as a starting point and ignore the disappearance of a familiar world is to demonstrate an inadequate understanding of the history of immigration. Recognition of the resulting sense of loss opens up the possibility of
a rational explanation for many of the accompanying experiences people go through. Clashes are an integral part of immigration history and they often seem to help people accept their new social environment.

The malaise in native populations arises from a sense of insecurity, which has social and cultural causes. It’s not always easy to distinguish between the two, but whether it’s a matter of the freedom to publish cartoons that ridicule all that is sacred, the wearing of headscarves by prosecutors and judges, dual nationality, sex education, or the kind of history taught in schools, each dilemma arrives with cultural or symbolic baggage. Of course people’s living conditions must be improved and access to education extended, but an important part of the unease felt on all sides is at precisely this symbolic level: ‘We’re losing our culture.’

Since 9/11, if not before, opposition to immigration in today’s Europe has been bound up with the sense of insecurity arising from the emergence of Islam as a major European religion. In many neighbourhoods, hostility towards newcomers is generated by the precarious circumstances of residents’ lives, but the debate about the place of Islam in a liberal society has little to do with class divides or traditional distinctions between left and right. There’s a widespread belief that the achievements of liberalism are at stake, from freedom of speech to sexual equality.

Sometimes it’s simply a question of etiquette. A resident of a mixed neighbourhood in Rotterdam describes an incident in her own street: ‘Those young Turkish women don’t say good-day to me. They look away arrogantly if a man comes towards them. I can’t stand that. Last week I stood talking in my doorway with a Turkish woman. That was quite something. Later that day I saw her on the street with her mother. She didn’t say a word. The next day I said to her, “Listen, if you don’t even want to say hello to me in public, then I don’t need to talk to you indoors any more either.”’ She just shrugged. It’s interesting to note that the failure to greet a neighbour was interpreted as arrogance, whereas it might equally well have been a sign of embarrassment or shyness.

Everyday friction of this kind is common. It may revolve around the withdrawal of a child from mixed swimming lessons, the introduction of halal food in a staff canteen, concern about whether state schools should celebrate Christmas, a firm’s decision to stop giving piggy-banks as promotional gifts, the provision of separate citizenship courses for men and women, the granting of planning permission for a mosque, or the refusal of a policeman to shake a woman’s hand because it’s against his religion. Sometimes a compromise could easily be reached, but when norms are radically different they will collide.

In the case of Muslim communities, attitudes to homosexuality and unequal treatment of men and women are particular sources of discom-
not to publish) and the murder of filmmaker Theo van Gogh were further occasions for what could be described as secular discomfort.

Just as racism is a catch-all term and therefore inadequate to describe current hostilities, the overused word Islamophobia can lead people to mistake legitimate criticism of religious intolerance for a rejection of the principle of religious freedom for Muslims. Especially when equated with anti-Semitism, thereby evoking a whole range of unjustified historical associations, it blocks the route to any understanding of the controversies surrounding Islam. The unease created by the emergence of European Islam requires more detailed examination than this, if only because the threat of terrorism casts a shadow over attempts to see Muslim communities as part of the ‘imagined community’.

The social and cultural dimensions of integration both deserve attention. Currently, the experiences of migrants are often interpreted as primarily socio-economic and those of native populations as cultural in origin. Neither interpretation reflects the full picture. It’s also important to stress that problems surrounding migration are embedded in general social issues, that they never arise in isolation but are part of far broader changes to society. The unease felt by established residents results from the general impression that there are more and more gaps in the social fabric, that neighbourhoods are losing their cohesion.

The fundamental dilemma of our times is the growing divide between social elites, able to move around at will in a world that has fewer and fewer borders, and an increasing proportion of the population that feels threatened by globalization and is turning its back on the outside world. A vague and unrealistic concept of world citizenship has encouraged a return to parochialism. While some sing the praises of a borderless world, others are resorting to cut and dried notions of their own identity. Conservatism can never be the complete answer and there’s a need to look beyond the self-affirmation of slogans like ‘my own people first’, but self-abnegation, the dream of a world without borders where nationality will no longer matter, isn’t a long-term answer either.

Societies cannot progress from avoidance to acceptance without evolving a new sense of themselves. What is citizenship and who are our fellow citizens? Avoidance, conflict and accommodation occur simultaneously, since immigrants continue to arrive, but societies aren’t fated endlessly to repeat the same clashes. History teaches us that new groups are continually being absorbed into the imagined community, thereby enlarging it. There was a time when the Catholic Irish were unwelcome in Protestant America, whereas nowadays we can’t imagine that country without them. Their history is similar to that of other migrant communities of past centuries, such as the Italians in France or the Poles in Germany.

During a debate in Amsterdam with representatives of the Surinamese community, someone said in a slightly injured tone: ‘No one talks about us any longer.’ The current focus is on problems involving young Moroccans and Turks. Contrary to the speaker’s intentions, that complaint was actually an encouraging reflection of immigrant history: those once seen as outsiders have become, little by little, established residents. The Surinamese immigrants of 40 years ago have slowly come to be part of the imagined Netherlands (although there is still some way to go), and in the process they have changed the country’s image. The search for a sense of who we are today is never-ending, since new groups of outsiders are arriving all the time.

Genuine acceptance of the changes brought about by migrants does not imply resignation, a sense that things are the way they are and there’s nothing anyone can do. In every discussion of immigration controls, people in the West are told that they live in a borderless world and people will come whether they like it or not, indeed that what they’re experiencing now is only the start of a vast wave of immigration. Statements of this kind certainly haven’t helped to encourage tolerance. Too much has been obscured by a factual observation: ‘People are increasingly mobile.’

Immigration and integration should be part of a civilized ideal that functions both as an aspiration and as a subject for public debate. If discussion is stymied by a belief that globalization means people can no longer shape their own societies, then we shouldn’t be surprised to see freedoms brought into disrepute. How can anyone value a democracy that declares itself impotent in the face of the most far-reaching issues affecting citizens’ daily lives?

Integration Requires Self-Examination

The movement of peoples over the past few decades has had a considerable impact. Natives and newcomers often seem far apart, and beneath a veneer of harmony countless stories can be heard – by those willing to listen – about daily cultural clashes. A conflict successfully avoided for years has erupted all the more fiercely. Where silence reigned for so long, too much is now being said and too stridently. Multicultural diplomacy alone will not be enough to build mutual trust, but for a long time few awkward questions were asked, both because no one was particularly interested in the answers and because it was felt too much would be stirred up if they were. Nooriel remarks that crises surrounding migration ‘are moments in which the social rules for the whole of the receiving society are ruptured and redefined’.69
This process is now well under way. In migrant communities, one generation after another puzzles over the nature of its relationship not just with the society it finds itself in, but with its countries of origin. In an autobiographical account Ziauddin Sardar writes: 'As we, the Asian community, became more British, more rooted in time and place, here and now in Britain, we also needed to build more barricades against losing touch with where our parents came from. We needed barricades to protect us from the increasing sense of being rejected by British society.'

Ambiguity is rife in countries of immigration and it can easily lead to distrust on all sides. When relations between people are coloured by suspicion, anything anyone does can be interpreted as malicious: on closer examination an offer of help is mere meddling, a question can easily sound like an order, apparent uncertainty is taken as some kind of subterfuge and, before you know it, all attempts at sincerity have run into the sand. The conclusion drawn by German writer Hans Magnus Enzensberger seems justified: 'Today the preparedness and ability to integrate cannot be taken for granted in any country or on any side. The multicultural society remains an empty slogan as long as the difficulties the concept raises are declared taboo but not resolved.'

There has been too much avoidance on the part of receiving societies, and it goes some way to explain the current impasse. The twentieth century was marked by attempts to reduce social inequality and bridge cultural divides; no issue has disturbed European public life so much as the effort to elevate a whole range of population groups so that full citizenship would be available to everyone. This determination to achieve equality of opportunity arose out of a fear of social unrest, but it was also inspired by moral convictions.

Generally speaking, past efforts to integrate all social groups could be described as successful. Rank and class lost their edge; people became less and less bound by their origins. This made the resigned response to the rise of a new, perhaps more pernicious divide seem all the more troubling. Newcomers and their families often lag behind, and at the same time institutions are not sufficiently open to new talent. The absence of urgency was the product of a consensus that prevailed for decades, the idea that integration is purely a matter of time, a natural outcome of socio-economic progress. What’s lacking now is a clear notion of citizenship that goes beyond a plea for improvements to the position of migrants in the jobs market and in education.

Timidity on the subject points to a more general failing. The call for integration prompts the response: 'Integration, fine, but into what?' A society that has little or nothing to say for itself will quickly be exposed as flawed. This has not escaped the attention of migrants, who respond with a combination of 'What do you actually want from us?' and 'For heaven’s sake leave us alone'. As one student remarked: 'You never know where you stand here. What is integration, in fact? What are Dutch or French or British norms and values? I have a feeling politicians are deliberately vague about them, so that they can always say: no, that's not what we meant.'

Such reactions are all too often expressed in aggrieved tones, but anyone aiming to close the chasm nevertheless needs to come up with a convincing response. 'Diversity' is a commonly deployed concept, but it does little to clarify matters. It ought to go without saying that an open society is characterized by divergent outlooks, lifestyles and beliefs, but even in a liberal democracy there are limits: not everything that’s different is valuable. Embracing diversity indiscriminately is tantamount to protecting traditional habits and customs from critical scrutiny. There’s a tendency to address migrant families as members of the groups to which they’re presumed to belong. This applies not only to the first generation, which is to some extent preserving the traditions of its countries of origin, but to the children and grandchildren of migrants as well. They are regarded as perpetuating a particular culture, whereas it may well be that many 'Turkish' children prefer listening to American rapper 50 Cent than to Turkish pop star Sezen Aksu – quite apart from the fact that many different influences can be found in Aksu’s work.

There’s another reason why the prevailing view of diversity doesn’t necessarily represent progress. If minorities continue to see themselves primarily as ethnic groups, there’s a real danger that majority populations too will increasingly conceive of themselves in ethnic terms, especially when in many cities they find themselves outnumbered. American sociologist Charles Gallagher has observed: ‘Like it or not, middle-class and lower-middle-class whites see themselves as a minority and have adopted a posture of being the victims.’ This is the risk we run by emphasizing ethnicity. Why should one group be allowed to appeal to its own ethnic identity if another group is not?

It’s important always to keep in mind the aim of creating a society in which people are asked how they see their futures, not one in which they’re judged according to their pasts. Getting there will be a process of trial and error, and all citizens will need to look beyond ethnic dividing lines.

It’s often argued that integration should engage both newcomers and natives, but what does this actually mean? Instead of emphasizing the differences between minorities and the majority, we should concentrate on shared citizenship as an ideal to which everyone can aspire. Migrants can be invited and challenged by a society only if it has a strong culture of citizenship. Problems surrounding migrants and their children are general social issues writ large. They concern not only important
institutions such as education but constitutional rights like freedom of expression. This is the reason migration cuts so deep: it goes to the heart of institutions and liberties.

The basic principle is simple: native populations cannot ask of newcomers any more than they are themselves prepared to contribute. Those who encourage others to see themselves as fellow citizens must have at least some notion of what it means to be a citizen and, as far as possible, turn that notion into practical reality. Hence the embarrassment that typifies debates about integration. An established population that asks newcomers to integrate will sooner or later find itself facing similar demands. This is all part of an ongoing quest, a process of social renewal.

Take linguistic skills. There can be no doubt that the command of a country’s official language is a prerequisite for all those trying to hold their own as citizens. The Dutch have therefore talked a great deal over the past few years about language deficits in migrant families, a problem currently referred to as ‘low literacy’. It was only a matter of time before people started asking: How good are the reading and writing skills of the indigenous Dutch population? It quickly became clear that hundreds of thousands are struggling, and initiatives are now being implemented that are aimed at raising levels of literacy across the board.

This is just one example of how debates about integration can make hidden social problems visible, introducing issues that go far beyond the emancipation of migrants. The growing divide between low-skilled and educated people demands attention; Flemish writer David van Reybrouck regards this as the most important cause of current dissatisfaction with democracy. Many people with little more than a basic education no longer feel represented: ‘As in the Netherlands, a parallel society has grown up in Belgium. The low-skilled are in the majority, but they genuinely feel themselves to be a minority that is subjected to discrimination.’

Integration conceived as a reciprocal process confronts society with profound questions about what it means to be a citizen. What skills are essential? What kind of knowledge is required? Those who think migrants should know more about the development of their adoptive country’s constitution, for example, cannot avoid the question: What exactly do you know about it yourself? This has revealed another weakness of Western societies. Doubts about the historical awareness of the average citizen matter, because citizenship involves a realization that something came before us and something will come after us. It’s hard for any sense of responsibility to develop unless people see themselves as part of a continuing history.

This prompts a number of questions. What image of the past is presented to newcomers? Might there not be a need to discuss this image with everyone, irrespective of background and origin? The issue of integration has forced many countries to take a fresh look at school curricula. Are schoolchildren taught in any meaningful sense about colonial history? Is any attention paid in schools to migration into and within Europe over the centuries? It would change the way history is treated. Gestures are of little use. It’s essential to hand down as truthful and self-critical an account of the past as possible.

Self-examination is going on outside schools as well. New museums are being established, such as the French museum for the history of immigration and the Dutch National History museum, while those already in existence are reassessing the stories they tell. The aim is not so much to win people over as to use migration as the starting point for a reexamination of commonly held assumptions.

There’s an even more fundamental sense in which the principle of reciprocity prompts societies to question themselves. It concerns the rights and duties attached to citizenship. Citizens are now well aware of their rights but far less likely to have been given a clear understanding of their duties. This is a crucial problem, since freedoms unaccompanied by a sense of responsibility will start to erode. The issue of religious freedom illustrates the point. Muslims invoke the right to practise their religion and that right is non-negotiable, as long as it’s exercised within the bounds of the constitution, but it also confers upon them a responsibility to defend the rights of people of other faiths or none.

There’s a need for shared norms to which both the majority and minorities feel bound, and they include the right to freedom of conscience. The question that needs to be addressed is: What do the difficulties surrounding integration tell us about the strengths and weaknesses of society as a whole? The search for ways to live together demands self-examination on all sides. That’s the deeper significance of the reciprocity we seek: those who ask migrants to take a critical look at their traditions must be prepared to hold their own cherished assumptions up to the light.

Citizens, whether newcomers or otherwise, should not be required to absorb themselves into society as it is now but rather to identify with society as it has the potential to be. Everyone should feel invited to help society move closer to its ideal of equal treatment. Reciprocity as a basic principle of citizenship means that anyone trying to combat discrimination against migrants and their children must be prepared to oppose forms of discrimination within migrant families, against unbelievers, for example, or homosexuals. We can’t pick and choose when it comes to equality.

This became clear on a visit to a school in Antwerp where a large majority of pupils are from Muslim families. One commented, as a joke: ‘I’ve counted the Belgians at our school. There are 23.’ The school has
a long tradition and many of the children do well, but the teachers say
it's become difficult to talk about evolution in biology lessons, about the
Holocaust during history lessons and about 'perverts' like Oscar Wilde
in literature lessons. A choice has to be made. Should teachers give in to
the religious prejudices many children bring from home, or oppose them,
with all the patience and dedication that requires?

The reverse is also true, of course. A society that cherishes the principle
of equality must be willing to listen to those who claim they've been dis-
criminated against at work or in pubs and clubs. Sometimes legal action
is necessary, but in many situations the key to success is persuasion, not
compulsion. Campaigns and rules may help to combat discrimination,
but we all need to confront prejudices publicly, challenging them as a
step towards developing mutual trust.

Not everyone favours such reciprocity, as is clear from comments like:
'They came to us, we didn't go to their country.' This amounts to saying
that the majority has the right to force minorities to adapt. Such an
imbalance of power can never produce a truly integrated society, if only
because the protection of the rights of minorities is a defining element
of democracy. The opposite view is equally unproductive. It often takes
the form of claims that there can be no reciprocity while the imbalance
between the established and newcomers is as great as it is now. In other
words: 'You can't ask the same of those at the bottom as you do of those
at the top.' This attitude leads nowhere, except to the paternalistic notion
that people in migrant communities are not responsible for their fate.
Shared citizenship means, by definition, that we are all invited to enter
the public arena as equals.

We started by identifying a sense of alienation and loss among both
immigrant and indigenous populations. If the shock of the new can inspire
self-criticism and change, real progress will have been made. Efforts to
ensure that people from all regions of the world can be part of today's
urban society should prompt a reassessment of prevailing notions. This
is not a matter of being disloyal to everything Europe and America have
contributed to the ideal of an open society, but of becoming more faithful
to that ideal.

In other words, the arrival of migrants is not only irreversible, it offers
a unique opportunity for introspection. American sociologist Henry
Pratt Fairchild was aware of this almost a century ago. Much of what he
wrote is now outdated, but surely he was right in saying that the degree
to which migrants were able to feel part of a new country was not down
to them alone: 'Before laying tardy assimilation too readily at the door of
the immigrant we should thoughtfully consider whether our own house
does not need to be set in order.' In short it makes sense to talk about
integration only if it's seen as part of an effort to improve society as a
whole. As Fairchild puts it: 'If the immigrant is to love America he must
first have the opportunity to experience America, and having experienced
it he must find it lovable. No amount of lecturing, legislating, and threat-
ening can make the alien love America if he does not find it lovable, and
no amount of original strangeness and unfamiliarity can keep him from
loving it if in the final event he finds it worthy of his love.'

The subject of immigration and integration - and therefore of
citizenship - creates uncertainty because it affects so many areas of
life: education systems, welfare provision, constitutional rights such as
freedom of expression. The public debate now under way sparks conflict
time and again. This book is an attempt to reach beyond existing divides.
That will be possible only once we've explored the causes of discontent
and developed a realistic view of society as it is now, irrevocably altered
by migration.

Perhaps integration has in fact been successful in recent years and
newcomers are now just as disengaged as the established population.
A society without clear ideas about citizenship will be unable to inspire
migrants to see themselves as citizens. It's time for some thorough renova-
tion. An open society cannot survive without self-criticism. We must
aspire to become what we say we are.

So What's New?

Immigration is all about crossing borders and its study requires not only
specialists but generalists who are willing to step beyond the boundaries
of disciplines and genres. In making clear how deeply migration affects
society as a whole, I have drawn freely on a wide range of sources,
including the insights provided by urban sociology, history, cultural
anthropology and studies of international relations. This approach is
reflected in the book's essayist style. The essay is a genre that combines
academic study with journalism and literature, and although a great
deal of academic research is included here, I've also been inspired by
reportage, novels and the public debates of the past 10 years.

I've sought to clarify the experience of migration, placing less empha-
sis than is usual on the differences between countries and migrant groups,
thereby revealing patterns that fail to emerge from studies of those groups
in isolation. Turkish and Pakistani migrants obviously differ in many
respects, just as Turkish migrants in Germany are different from those
in the Netherlands. Indeed, close examination reveals a contrast even
between Turkish immigrants in Berlin and Cologne. All this is relevant -
and later we'll focus specifically on these diverse groups of newcomers

but the aim here is to develop some well-founded generalizations about migrant experiences and the reactions their arrival provokes.

I'm interested above all in the social dynamics that result from migration, especially of post-war migrants from what used to be called the third world — more so in fact than in policy or in models of integration, although these will certainly come up. An undue emphasis on differences between models, such as French republicanism and British multiculturalism, tends to obscure the many similarities between living conditions in the major conurbations of Europe. This book focuses on comparable developments in cities such as Lyon, Rotterdam, Bradford and Malmö.

Views that touch upon policy will frequently be discussed, but this is not a political book, ending with a list of recommendations on how to proceed. A great deal of the existing research on the subject of human migration focuses on policy, since its funding is provided by governments. Nevertheless, we will look at opinions about which kinds of immigration may or may not be desirable, as well as at adjustments to the welfare state in societies of immigration, how to deal with segregation in neighbourhoods and schools, ways in which Islam can find a place in an open society and much more along those lines.

What are the consequences of this approach? First, experiences in America and Europe have more in common than we tend to assume. Here lies one hallmark of this study: a comparison between the two continents crops up time and again. Of course, the differences are discussed as well — especially the impact of Islam in Europe and the consequences of the continent's comprehensive welfare state — but it soon becomes clear that behind the proud self-image of America as a 'nation of immigrants' more uncertainty and conflict lurk than is generally recognized.

Further examination reveals that European and American experiences are broadly comparable as far as the extent of immigration, public opinion, the degree of segregation and the patterns of integration are concerned.

I therefore disagree with American writers such as Christopher Caldwell and Walter Laqueur, who are extremely gloomy about the future of Europe in this respect and at the same time see America as a fairly unambiguous model. Caldwell writes: 'Immigration is not enhancing or validating European culture; it is supplanting it. Europe is not welcoming its newest residents but making way for them.' He is quick to contrast this with the situation in the United States: 'Mass Hispanic immigration can disrupt a few local habits . . . but it requires no fundamental reform of American cultural practices or institutions. On balance, it may strengthen them.'

While accepting that a contrast exists, it's important to realize the extent of the similarity. The history of America teaches us that practically every sizeable new group encounters opposition, and this has been the pattern in Europe too across the centuries. It will suffice to cite the conclusion of French researcher Denis Lacorne, a view shared by most historians: 'A land that receives immigrants of every provenance and every social class, the United States is also, paradoxically, a country that rejects immigrants.'

A recent comparative study shows that 55 per cent of Britons and 50 per cent of Spaniards believe there are too many immigrants in their countries, while 48 per cent of Americans are of the same opinion, although less resistance is expressed in Germany, France and the Netherlands, with figures of 28, 29 and 32 per cent respectively. Furthermore, 61 per cent of Americans are worried about illegal immigration, compared to an average of 67 per cent in the European Union, while 58 per cent of Americans think illegal immigrants cause crime and an average of 61 per cent of citizens of the EU agree with them. The proportion of those questioned who favour the granting of legal residence status to illegal immigrants is practically identical: a minority of 44 per cent in America compared to 43 per cent in the European Union. In short, attitudes to legal and illegal immigration coincide.

Europe and America are converging in another sense too, namely in the extent of immigration over recent decades, measured as a share of the population. Until the First World War, America received far more migrants; indeed in the nineteenth century millions of Europeans crossed the Atlantic. By 1900, roughly 15 per cent of the US population was foreign-born. The figure is slightly lower today, but it's now in line with the percentages in member states of the European Union: in the United States 13.6 per cent of residents are immigrants, compared with 12.9 per cent in Germany, 10.2 per cent in Britain, 10.7 per cent in the Netherlands, 13.4 per cent in Spain, 8.5 per cent in France, 11.4 per cent in Austria and 6.5 per cent in Italy. The average for Western Europe is around 11 per cent.

The degree to which populations live apart is another example. If we leave aside America's history of slavery and the forced segregation of its black population — a past still at work in maintaining the profound divides seen in cities such as New York, Detroit and Chicago — and look at how migrant communities in Europe cluster together in their own neighbourhoods, then we may well share the conclusion of Amsterdam social geographer Sako Musterd: 'The differences are much smaller than perhaps expected and in some European cities they are even comparable with US metropolitan area averages.' Generally speaking, although the level of segregation is higher in America, it does not differ dramatically from that of migrants from Bangladesh and Pakistan in cities like Birmingham, Bradford and London. The spatial concentration of Moroccans in Brussels, Turks in The Hague and Iranians in Stockholm is considerable as well.
Finally, and this will come as no great surprise in light of the foregoing, integration has taken a roughly comparable course on the two continents. The cycle of avoidance, conflict and accommodation described by American sociologists in the early twentieth century contributes to an understanding of contemporary Europe, and indeed of contemporary America, which is now facing mass migration from Mexico. Of course reality is rather messier than this model suggests, if only because new groups are continually arriving and in large cities all three stages of the cycle occur simultaneously.

Out of this situation arises another hallmark of my approach: the dynamism of societies of immigration is generated by the loss of familiar worlds and the need to come to terms with new environments. The attitudes of both the established and newcomers are coloured by that experience, and both points of view must be taken into account by anyone studying immigration and integration. This would seem to go without saying, but much current research concentrates primarily on the fortunes of migrants and their children. If the native population is discussed at all, it is mostly seen as a hindrance, its members regarded as the personification of prejudice and all too rarely as citizens helping to shape a new kind of society.

The cycle of avoidance, conflict and accommodation can be understood as resulting from ways of dealing with this loss of certainty. Some commentators, such as author Geert Mak, have drawn a parallel with the grieving process. It’s an enlightening analogy. What after all are the phases of grief, in which we cope with loss? Surely they include at the very least denial, anger and acceptance. At first people refuse to acknowledge what has happened, next they rebel against it – why me? – before finally coming to terms with circumstances they cannot change and making the best of things. This reflects the cycle some historians of immigration have described.

The stress on a shared experience of loss throws fresh light on the role of prejudice. The conflict that accompanies all major migratory movements means that prejudices on both sides will be challenged sooner or later. Much of today’s research, however, is rather one-sided in its approach. In their informative survey of population movements, Stephen Castles and Mark Miller write of anxieties about Islamic fundamentalism but insist that ‘such fears are based on racist ideologies rather than social realities’. They go a step further by assuming that a fearful response by the majority fuels Muslim fundamentalism and therefore amounts to a self-fulfilling prophesy. This is to ignore 9/11 and the influence of worldwide radicalization on Muslim communities in Europe and America.

We come upon an identical tendency in the work of German immigra-

tion historian Klaus Bade, who ends his wide-ranging historical account by saying that European reluctance to admit refugees is ‘an historical scandal by which future generations will judge Europe’s understanding of human rights in the last twentieth and early twenty-first centuries’. He clearly has no sympathy for ‘fortress Europe’, but should we not try to comprehend the desire to reduce the influx of refugees in the 1990s before describing it as a scandal? Should we not also, in passing judgement, take into account the large groups of refugees that have already been given access?

Surely neither avoidance nor the conflict that arises in countries dealing with large-scale immigration can be laid entirely at the door of majority populations. The causes of prejudice described in a classic study by American social psychologist Gordon Allport – including a precarious position in society, strict religious beliefs and an authoritarian upbringing – are to be found in migrant communities as well. This too affects relationships between the established and newcomers. Hostility is no less deeply felt in migrant circles, nor is it merely a response to rejection by the majority. The imbalance in power between majorities and minorities is obvious to all, but in many major cities in Europe and America the majority is gradually becoming a minority, and migrants and their descendants now have considerable influence.

Which brings us to another hallmark of my approach, namely the argument that integration requires both natives and newcomers to engage in self-examination. Migration brings about changes on both sides, such that the phrase ‘integration with the retention of identity’, which has been used to define multiculturalism, becomes an unhelpful concept. Many changes may pass unnoticed, becoming obvious only when migrants return to their countries of origin after many years and suddenly realize the extent to which they have been moulded by their new homelands. Aside from this tacit form of integration, one of the potential benefits of migration can be derived from a conscious reassessment of routines and traditions long taken for granted. Once again this applies both to newcomers and to members of receiving societies.

As long as reciprocity is its guiding principle, this kind of re-evaluation will not be directionless. The open society is founded upon equality before the law. Consistent application of this principle encourages a sense of responsibility, especially in societies of immigration, as regular visitors to a Turkish mosque in Amsterdam found out when, to their astonishment, they won a court case against the local authority. The experience of victory in a legal battle against a powerful city council certainly made an impression. The constitutional state became their constitutional state. Outcomes like this build trust of the kind that oils the wheels of social interaction between people of widely differing backgrounds.
But beyond equality, reciprocity means ‘do unto others as you would have them do unto you’. Those who hate being treated with condescension on the grounds of their convictions or disposition would do well to avoid treating others with condescension for similar reasons. Those who require of others that they question their own habits and customs must be prepared to do the same. Those who ask questions must be not only open to the answers, but willing to think about the questions others are asking. In an open society, reciprocity is not something people can be forced into; it needs to be accepted freely. Philosopher of law Dorian Pessers writes that it means ‘people do more than they are legally obliged to do, and more is expected of them than the law demands’.88

What if people refuse to acknowledge others as equals, because of their faith or lifestyle or ethnic background? What if they demand freedoms for themselves that they are not willing to grant to fellow citizens? Is freedom of expression, for example, a constitutional right that must be accorded even to those who attempt to use it to restrict the freedom of others? To take a concrete example: Should that particular right be defended in the case of people who want to place limits on the religious freedom of Muslims? Should Muslims be expected to feel obliged to defend such people’s rights? If so, and if equality matters, then freedom must be safeguarded for all, even for Muslims who embrace radical beliefs and advocate the introduction of sharia in whole or in part – just as long as they are merely voicing their opinions, not inciting others to violence.

To put it another way, the open society must make room for those who adhere to a closed worldview and reject reciprocity. This is the liberal paradox: orthodoxy, whether religious or secular, has a place in a lively democracy. Equality extends that far. But an open society needs a majority of its citizens to believe fundamentally in reciprocity, to try to live according to the notion that the right of one entails the duty of another. Such a majority will not come into being of its own accord. Indeed, this is precisely the reason the open society is vulnerable. There can never be any guarantees.

One final hallmark of my approach is therefore that it takes history seriously, although without drawing the unambiguous conclusion that all migratory shifts will ultimately end in accommodation. There are clear indications to that effect, and historian Leo Lucassen is right to remark that current developments point more ‘in the direction of ongoing integration than toward the dawn of a multicultural society where descendants of immigrants remain visible and culturally distinct groups’.89 Yet however familiar this trend may seem from history, it’s impossible to derive from the past any assurance that integration will be successful in the future.

Indeed there are a number of features of post-war immigration that make its long-term outcomes uncertain. While religion has always been of crucial importance to immigrant communities, Islam is a new phenomenon in the Western world. The fact that around 1.5 million Muslims are living in the member states of the European Union is a challenge in every sense. For a religion that has always held either a majority or a monopoly position in migrants’ countries of origin, existence as a religious minority means practices will have to be reshaped to suit quite different circumstances. Receiving societies, for their part, need to look for ways of dealing with a religion that has not been part of the modern history of Europe, aside from the Balkans. The migration of Muslims is an unprecedented event and we cannot be certain that Islam will find a natural place for itself in the Western world. The attacks of 11 September and since do not make any of this any easier.

In regions such as the Arab world where Islam is dominant, religion, culture and politics are intertwined, whereas in modern societies they have become separate domains. If Islam is to be part of liberal society it will have to free itself from the cultures of its countries of origin, if only to prevent certain customs and traditions from acquiring an aura of sanctity. Canadian Muslim Irshad Manji is unimpressed by the argument that critics of Islam fail to draw a clear distinction between religion and culture. ‘Why would Islam be so hard to extricate from local customs – tribal customs – if there wasn’t something profoundly tribal about the religion to begin with?’ No one should be forced to abandon Islam as a spiritual tradition, but Muslims must find ways to live as a religious minority in a democracy.

For the receiving society too, the arrival of a new religion ought to be an incentive to ponder afresh the issue of religious freedom. Many countries have regulations that are at odds with the principle of the separation of church and state – think of the church taxes Germans and Danes have to pay, the constitutional status of the Anglican Church in Britain, faith schools in the Netherlands or the crucifixes in Italian courts and classrooms. Only if there is a willingness to re-evaluate the relationship between church and state will it be possible to formulate a proper response to the arrival of Islam.

Past and present migration differ in another sense too. That migrants are often poor is nothing new, but the extent of unemployment in migrant communities, in Western Europe especially, certainly is. One of the causes of low participation in paid work is a generous social benefits system. The combination of mass immigration and the welfare state is unique, lacking any historical precedent. The consequences are plain to see: large groups of migrants find themselves in a situation of dependence. What ought to be an innovative segment of society – immigrants are the pre-eminent survivors – has become the most passive segment of all.
Indeed, the subsidized isolation of all those migrant families has turned out to be an obstacle to them, to their children and to society as a whole. The entrepreneurial instincts of those who left their home countries to earn money abroad is stifled by a society that attempts to protect people against every conceivable risk. In Amsterdam, for example, more than half of all Moroccans and Turks are unemployed or classified as unfit for work. A comparative study leads American researcher John Mollenkopf to conclude that Amsterdam is doing less well than New York, where over 90 per cent of the first generation is in work. He shows that labour inactivity among migrants in Amsterdam has led to 'a polarisation between productive, employed natives and unproductive, unemployed immigrant minorities'. If arguments in favour of large-scale migration are based on the contribution newcomers make to society, then the high rates of long-term unemployment among them make it harder to justify.

There is one other difference between old and new migration. The fact that the first generation of migrants is still steeped in its countries of origin should come as no surprise. It's a feature of all immigration. Irish-Americans have always been profoundly engaged with their mother country's struggle for independence. Similarly, Germans in America remained concerned about the changing fortunes of the old country, and this had a direct impact on them during the First World War. After 1918 they paid a high price for their neutrality during the conflict. It was no longer desirable to be identified as of German extraction and many changed their names.

Relations with the country of origin are a recurring theme in the history of migration, but because of modern communications technology and the growth in opportunities for cheap travel, ties with the old country are now easier to maintain than they were. Nowadays migrants are occasionally described as transnational citizens, meaning they have a presence in more than one society. Many commute, if only in a psychological sense. Will today's migrant groups increasingly function as diaspora, or will they, as in the past, become more oriented towards their new countries with each generation that passes?

The fact that governments in their countries of origin are keen to keep a grip on migrant communities often escapes attention. Dual nationality is important in this respect. Many countries, including Germany and Japan, resist the concept, while others go even further. The Moroccan government believes it can control its subjects and their descendants as it sees fit; it's impossible to relinquish Moroccan nationality. This autocratic stance is bound up with economic interests, since around 13 per cent of Morocco's national income is derived from its emigrants. The refusal of governments to leave emigrant communities free to choose their own path also stems from a fear that liberal ways of thinking will be brought back from the countries where migrants have settled.

All these novel circumstances - the presence of large Muslim communities, the rise of the welfare state and the increasing importance of transnational ties - may mean that integration will no longer follow the old pattern of three generations at most. It is questionable whether the cycle that would see the third and subsequent generations of all population groups living in the Netherlands thoroughly absorbed into society will run its course if the second generation has achieved so little progress. In the decade since that conclusion was drawn, the picture has grown more mixed. There are indications that generational change is developing according to familiar patterns, but the most recent generation to emerge, composed of the grandchildren of immigrants who arrived from the early 1960s onwards, is still relatively few in number, and the effects of new circumstances are hard to predict. For this reason alone, patience is a bad councillor. Living together requires commitment on both sides. Integration really is more than a question of time.