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1. Introduction

This paper represents the first set of empirical results of a project designed to study the free movement of professionals within the European Union. Brussels is an obvious location in which to start, with its role as the putative capital of Europe and its very high resident population of foreign EU citizens. Yet in many ways it is an exceptional location. Although one of the core missions of the European Union has been to break down barriers to free movement in Europe, a surprisingly low number of Europeans move and permanently settle outside their country of origin, particularly when we compare the EU to free movement within the United States of America. I explore the hypothesis that we can understand this reluctance to move by considering the 'informal' barriers to integration experienced by European residents in their everyday life in foreign cities. I take a close look, therefore, at the experience of foreign EU residents in Brussels on the housing and labor market, as parents with children, in terms of welfare, medical services and retirement, as political participants in local elections, and as consumers of particular services in the city. The research centers on 20 in-depth interviews with European residents of diverse backgrounds, along with background research on the policy response of the city-region and on the services provided by 'expat' oriented businesses in the city. The research in Brussels has been complemented by exploratory comparative work in the city of Amsterdam

The research also addresses a number of other key academic issues. It offers a novel approach to the study of globalization and Europeanization, by seeking to humanize - through intimate oral history and participant observation methods - many of the sweeping exaggerations made by sociologists and economic geographers of globalization. I take a skeptical look at just how possible it is to live out the ultra-mobile global or transnational family lives predicated for these people, who are wrongly classed as 'elites'. I offer evidence on the participation of foreign European residents in the gentrification of a typical post-industrial city in Europe. I also seek to operationalize categories and theories more familiar from the study of the integration of non-European 'ethnic minority' populations in Europe. Finally, the study offers a good deal of skeptical evidence about the reality of European citizenship and Europeanization in Europe.

I find that Brussels offers a relatively high access to 'quality of life' benefits for foreign residents. This openness is due to the exceptional combination of a cosmopolitan, multicultural bi-national nature, its European role, and its deregulated markets. As a case, it exposes some of the limitations of other seemingly open 'global' cities like Amsterdam and Paris. The report only offers inconclusive evidence on the explanation of the limited rates of free movement in Europe, but it does show in detail how complicated a long term foreign settlement is for committed free movers, *even* in a city as open and easy to settle in as Brussels. I predict that a full scale study on the free movement of professionals in Europe will reveal just how deeply embedded are nationally-specific and locally-rooted forms of urban life in Europe, and that this is the underlying secret of the resilience of European nation-states in an age of apparent nation state decline and globalization.

2. Conceptual Issues

The study of foreign resident professionals in Brussels is an excellent strategic research site for a number of key research questions taken from the current literature in various different disciplines and sub-fields. Here, I will outline the contours of these bigger questions underlying the study.

2.i. The puzzle of free movement in the EU

Despite an economic union premised on free movement (of capital, services, goods *and* persons), and increasing kinds of mobility across Europe (retirement migration, student mobility, tourism, cross-border shopping and so forth), official population statistics have consistently reported that a very low percentage of West European migrate and settle permanently in other European countries (OECD-SOPEMI 2000: 31-32). This percentage is, with the exception of Belgium and Luxembourg, well under 5% in all countries, and well behind percentages of non-West European migrants. Amazingly, in highly 'global' internationalized countries such as the Netherlands (a country which regularly tops globalization indexes; see Kearney 2001), or Britain (home of London, the favourite 'global city' example in Europe; see Taylor 2000), the figure is under 1.5% (Eurostat 1997; Koslowski 1994, 2000; see Appendix 3). Working figures used in official statements by the cabinet of Commissioner Diamantopoulou, which is responsible for labor mobility issues, suggest that each year only 0.4% of EU citizens move to another member state to work each year; this is compared to 2.4% in the USA. Discounting ongoing working class migration from the south, and growing retirement migration to the south, we are left with the fact that middle class Europeans show a remarkable propensity to stay put in their native countries. When put alongside the rates of internal economic mobility or persons in North America, one can only conclude that the European economic and social system – on the question of free movement of persons at the very least – must function in ways that scarcely resemble at all the free movement premises of its founding principles (on US mobility trends, see Fischer 2001).

Certain qualifications need to be made. International migration data – of the kind documented by the annual OECD-SOPEMI reports – is notoriously unreliable when measuring mobility that does not fit neatly into its definition of an act of international migration (more than one year official settled residence, plus de-registration of residency back home). Mobility and cross-border movement in Europe 2000 is surely much more significant than it was in the mid 1970s or 80s. But even allowing for this, there is an obvious puzzle here, given the economic incentives for movement. Much concern has been expressed in EU circles about the dangers of asymmetric shocks to national economies, particularly as a consequence of European Monetary Union (EMU): business will move to wherever it is most viable to locate, and people will follow the economic opportunities, stripping countries of human resources, or burdening others with new influxes. EU economists, meanwhile, assume this mechanism will come into effect, in order to model how an integrated Europe will deal with such shocks. Yet the figures apparently do not bear these assumptions out. Why is this?

Focusing on intra-EU migrants in cities would obviously change the picture: percentages will rise dramatically. We may then be able to speculate about transposing models of internal national migration to the EU scenario: of movement from periphery (provincial) regions to centre (international) cities, and the relation of this spatial mobility to social mobility (Watson 1964; Fielding 1995). Is there an 'escalator' phenomenon here, as there would be at national level? More importantly, is it an escalator for individuals to surpass what they would have achieved by staying at home?

The EU has, if nothing else, worked tirelessly to break down formal barriers to free movement of workers: both in terms of legal reform (on discriminatory practices, recognition of qualifications, access to benefits) and in terms of 'citizen' information and advice services (Siegel 1999). Obvious practical targets that remain are the monopolistic national organisation of certain professions, and the non-transferability of retirement funds around national welfare state systems. But we might easily hypothesise any number of 'hidden' or 'informal' barriers to successful free movement at a social or cultural level. Even the most casual traveller around Europe quickly understands that the continent remains a babel of national cultures, which demands of any European an extraordinarily high level of nationally specific 'know how' or 'local knowledge' to feel comfortable living and working outside their country of origin. Could this be the underlying reason for the lack of intra-European migration? When combined with the probability of formidable professional barriers, there is a strong case for focusing study here.

Yet Brussels, on the face of it, presents itself as a dramatic counter example to this general reluctance to move. Its high population of resident professional Europeans (which accounts for between 10 and 15% of the total city population) suggests that if successful free movement is not possible here then where could be it possible? Studying what makes Brussels special – perhaps in comparison with other similarly open, international cities – may enable spelling out the conditions of a genuine free movement, while understanding better its 'hidden' limitations. This approach leads the focus of the study away from 'eurocrats' as such. *Fonctionnaires*, who have mainly been recruited as a group through national *concours* and now have jobs for life, are not good examples of free movers, who typically made individual decisions to migrate for professional reasons, and whose positions are often unfixed and unpredictable in nature. It also leads the study away from the already well-studied example of highly structured international mobility within multinational corporations: the people usually referred to by the term 'expats'. Here, again, such employees are usually treated as a group whose mobility is usually built in structurally to their careers within the company, often on short rotations from one country to another. The structures provide by working within international organisations and corporations are thus in a sense structures which shelter these employees from the true conditions and choices of free movement; they are less interesting for this present study. I do include such people (*fonctionnaires*, career expats) within my sample, but they are peripheral to my focus of attention.

The real focus, then, will be to understand the choices, career trajectories and personal problems faced by professionals who have individually chosen the path of individual free movement within Europe. To understand constraints on movement, it is necessary to

understand the various issues they face in recreating a 'normal' pattern of professional and domestic life as a consequence of moving to work in the foreign city. But there are likely to be significant benefits as well costs.

2.ii. Eurocities or global cities?

The historical economic geography of Europe suggests that the continent developed through the concentration of wealth in a central broad band of old, affluent cities running from Northern Italy, through Switzerland, up through the Rhineland to the cities of the north west (Therborn 1995: 181-93; Dunford 1998; Bagnasco and Le Galès 1997). Cities enjoyed wealth and power through their relative independence from nation states, the local rootedness of their populations, their inclusive welfarist orientation, and their geographical proximity in the building of cross-border ties and networks (Kaelble 1990: 59-74). Brussels, which so often puts itself at the 'heart' of Europe, has clearly benefited from its location and its identity in this sense. One only needs to look at its centrality at the centre of the developing high speed train network to appreciate this elementary point of geography. Yet this stable, territorial arrangement of wealth and power is challenged by the new models of global city networks in the 'information age', which suggest that wealth no longer needs to be accumulated in fixed points centered on established cities and connections. Rather, it can be mobile between very distant points, and hence businesses and people themselves are likely to opt out of local rootedness in cities and regions. (Castells 1993; Taylor and Hoyler 2000; Kotkin 2000). Some, like Castells, argue that European cities' inability to move with the times is leaving its economies stranded in the new age (Castells 1997: 401-403). But it may also be that he is missing the point about the specificity and durability of the older European model (see also Mann 1998; Fligstein and Merand 2001) .

The tension at stake here runs through attempts by cities to struggle against and/or harness globalization by promoting local modes of governance through 'glocalization', combining national, regional and local government power with national and international business interests (Swyngedouw 1997; Brenner 1999). At a more human level, the tension also runs through the obvious distinction between settled, accumulation-based models of classic 'bourgeois' life, and the economic strategies of the highly mobile (on this, see the ultra-libertarian manifesto of Angell 2000). When city planners try to bolster arguments about location and quality of life in their efforts to attract businesses or retain highly qualified staff, they are in effect trying to square this circle. Brussels, where the Region is highly aware of the implications of these questions on its status as a prosperous business location and 'emergent' global city, offers an excellent site for studying these questions at both the structural and human level (see also Baeten 2000).

2.iii. Humanizing the sociology and economic geography of globalization

The economic geography literature, however, has on the whole proceeded apace with scant attention to the human dimension of global city issues. Flows and networks between locations are measured by counting the number of offices corporation have in different cities, measuring foreign direct investment and information exchange, or by

quantitatively charting shifts in business from production to service industries (Taylor, Walker and Beaverstock 2000; Castells 1997; Sassen 2000; Esping-Andersen 1999). But rarely is any kind of human face given to these macro-level transactions and data-sets. The ever-growing mobility and migration of professionals is always assumed to be an integral part of these flows (Sassen 2001), but more often than not the mobility of individuals alongside capital, services and goods is simply deduced from the macro-level data. It is rarely asked whether real individuals, with everyday family lives and human relationships, could actually live out the lives predicted for them by the macro economic data about flows and networks (a partial exception: Beaverstock 2001b). Moreover, the decline of the nation state, signaled and in some cases celebrated by these global theorists, is almost never checked against the basic everyday durability of nationally specific practices and identities in organizing the behavior of people in Europe (Billig 1995).

The sociology of the global fares little better. Global functionalists have taken us beyond the nation state into a postnational world of human rights and transnational politics (Meyer et al 1997; Boli and Ramirez 1997; Soysal 1994). But the macro-focus on policies and institutions has nothing to say about whether this has changed persistent national differences in Europe in the shape of the life-cycle, family life, professional careers, social practices, and so on (on these, see Crouch 1999). Global Marxists have identified a transnational capitalist class running business corporations, flying around the globe, and manipulating international organizations like the EU to their own ends (Sklair 2001, van Apeldoorn 1999).[1] But again, the studies never penetrate further than macro-level political economy, and a general cynicism about elites (an exception: Burawoy et al 2000). Theoretical writers on globalization, meanwhile, have been guilty of a terrible excess here (Bauman 1996; Hannerz 1996, Urry 2000, Papastergiadis 2000; see Favell 2001b). Increased world migration and mobility (a dubious assumption to begin with) has, for these theorists, completely dissolved the stable structures of the nation-state-society. The world according to them is now a compressed 'postmodern' time-space continuum of virtual flows and networks that link up cities and cultures across the globe, creating new global identities and politics.

But who exactly are the *übermensch* predicated by these theorists?[2] Do these people who populate the niche marketing of in-flight magazines and global hotel chains really exist or

[1] Far better empirical studies assessing the emergence of a new European elite in conjunction with European integration – minus the Marxist baggage - have however been done from a political sociology perspective. See the collection in French, edited by Guiraudon (2000), and suggestive work by American scholars Neil Fligstein (1996; 1998) and Sid Tarrow (1995).

[2] This was a question I first asked myself after picking up a copy of the global yuppie magazine *Wallpaper** (*= "the stuff that surrounds you") for the first time in May 2000 – appropriate enough at that high temple of European modernity, Frankfurt airport. Although this was undoubtedly the best looking, most entertaining, most intelligent in-flight magazine I had ever read, I found it hard to believe that there really exists a 'demographic niche' for this (now) wildly successful magazine. An archly ironic feature on the demise of the nation state summarized the attitude of the magazine perfectly: "The nation state is *so* 20th century. A rising regionalism around the world is dissolving old national borders. The global city-region, cross-border region, and super region (presumably they mean the EU?) is the new parlance of a borderless world of swashbuckling businessmen, high speed commuters and jetsetting teenagers… (but) We must not ring the death knell of the nation state just yet. We will still suffer custom guards pawing through our

live out real lives? What are the human costs and consequences of this lifestyle? What has changed in the everyday shape of their lives beyond the nation state? The only economic literature to recognize this issue in a sensible, humanistic way is the human resources literature on expatriation, which pragmatically puts at its core the management dilemmas of dealing with the personal and family difficulties of dealing with mobility and relocation (Beaverstock 2001a). This naturally focuses on the problems of following spouses and children, but also the psychology of dealing with foreign culture and the weariness of distant family ties and contacts. When adding these issues to the obvious difficulties linked to economic accumulation or building a career beyond the national, it is amazing that globalization theorists have been able to get away with their sweeping generalizations about the effortless mobility of highly educated professional 'elites'. The Europe of free movement may offer a more realistic version of possible transnational opportunities beyond the nation-state-society, but this is at best an unstudied empirical question that demands something more than wild theoretical speculation. Exceptions to this lack of research can, however, be found in French, in the interesting work of Tarrius (1992; 2000) and Wagner (1998).

This, then, is a further goal for this study: a genuine empirical study about the lives of the prototypical European 'fourmis', the still anonymous and faceless heroes of the transnational global theorists. Going beyond human resources management questions, I seek to map out in intimate detail how living abroad has made alterations to career structures and everyday life that would not have occurred had they stayed back home. Clearly there are costs as well as benefits to stepping out from regular patterns of professional advancement; to leaving behind regular forms of family life rooted in locality and national culture; or opting out from the cradle of national welfare states, dedicated increasingly to protect only their own citizens from the effects of the global economy. The one instance of a study that focuses on the human consequences of the new economy in a similar way is Richard Sennett's (1998) extraordinary study of the impact of the post-industrial era on the lives of professional Americans, *The Corrosion of Character*. But are these rootless and vulnerable euro-lives as difficult and potentially tragic as his work might suggest? This study aims to find out.

Vuitton bags after over-enthusiastic impulse splurges in duty-free airports. But if a borderless world is truly in the making, then the tool of choice for the 21st century cartographer won't be the pencil but the eraser. *Wallpaper** patiently awaits the new World Atlas *sans frontières*" ('The New World Order', *Wallpaper* April 2000: 59-64). Or again, in a feature rating their favourite commuter helicopters and private jets in the way *What Car?* rates automobiles, they rate their favorite airport landing: "If you want a truly multimedia experience, few things beat flying back into London City Airport at tea-time Friday on the Crossair shuttle from Geneva. For the well connected media tart, the final nerve wracking plunge past the glass-and-steel towers of Canary Wharf offers the perfect opportunity to wave at half the commissioning editors in Britain… If only they'd let us switch on our mobile phones we'd be able to hear what their cute little faces were mouthing back…" ('Top 25', *Wallpaper* May 2000). The magazine is edited in London by a Swede called Tyler Brûlé (sic), and a "UN-like" editorial team of global free movers. The somewhat queasy feeling all this irony leads to can be linked to darker undercurrents. A Swedish academic living in London pointed out to me how the aesthetic of *Wallpaper* – which is full of glistening Aryan models in après ski wear, and modernist dreamworlds built of perfect kitchens, exotic holidays and soaring architecture - owes much to dark and discredited pre-World War 2 ideas of European futurism (on this, see Mazouwer 1998).

2.iv. Comparing the integration of 'ethnic' and 'elite' migrants

A very different literature, however, has paid a great deal of attention to the fine-grained, intimate 'moving stories' of migrants (Thomson 1999; King 1997, King 1998). The field in question is migration studies. This literature has also been effective in revealing the way the divergent backgrounds and experiences of migrants reveal the persistent national structures and cultures of settled populations (Favell 1998). Following the life experiences of migrants is, in fact, one of the best ways of gaining a perspective on the sedentary lifestyles of the vast majority of people who do not move internationally. The study of 'elite' or professional international migration is, however, peripheral to the main questions of migration studies (see, however, King et al 2000; Salt 1992; Gaillard/Gaillard 1998). This field in Europe has been dominated by the study of working class, 'ethnic', non-European migrants: post-colonial, guest worker and refugee migration, and the typical models of migration, settlement and integration that follow from this. Behind most ideas of what happens to these migrants as they integrate into European countries, is a model that owes much to the example of the USA and Canada, as the prototypical ideal of countries of immigration (see Favell 2001).

The one-way narrative from immigration to (assimilated) citizenship that anchors this model has been challenged in recent years by the anthropology and sociology of transnational migrants. Transnational migrants, whose lives are often located neither fully in their new country of residence nor back home where they came from, are often pointed to as the new heroes of a 'globalization from below' (Portes 1996; Glick Schiller et al 1995). The emphasis in this field on their economic and cultural networks, the flow of business transactions and remittances, and their political and social influence on events back home, has also opened the door to a new perception of such 'ethnic' migrants as educated and influential 'elites' and 'pioneers' (Portes 1999). One limitation is that transnational approaches notoriously have a hard time with the classic question of assimilation and integration (Alba/Nee 1997). While tracking global or cross-national networks, it is essential to recognize the simultaneous processes of settlement and accommodation taking place as migrants continue to encounter the older style pressures to integrate in their new national place of residence. Sometimes the tensions surrounding the uncertain place of transnational migrants has led to the sort of outcomes - like ghetto formation, defensive ethnic identity formation and socially downward assimilation - that would have been noted in the past for more classic 'ethnic' immigrants (Portes/Zhou 1992).

But can the heroic tales of Asian astronauts or Hispanic diasporas offer a directly transposable guide to the mobility of Europeans within the EU? There may indeed be something to learn from applying this rich and developed literature to the case of professional European migrants within the EU. The creative tension between the transformative impact of transnational networks and identities, and older, more predictable processes of integration/accommodation might, in theory, no less apply to professional migrants moving from Germany to the Netherlands, or Portugal to Belgium. This, at least, is an open question posed by applying the typical framework of migration theories to questions concerning the integration and participation of European migrants

in, say, Brussels or other international eurocities. Here, too, are cities with ample other forms of migration and ethnic relations with which to compare and contrast. Applying a migration studies problematic to professional European migrants in European cities leads to typical integration questions: measuring their participation as economic and political actors in the city, their social impact on the host country, questions of 'ethnic' identity or ghetto formation, their degree of socialization into local national culture(s), the persistence of ties and activities elsewhere, and so on.

Plausible as this kind of approach may be, it remains an open question to what extent applying such theories can be applied to the predominantly white, middle class European professional 'class'. Global cities theories in fact are premised on identifying a sharp 'polarization' between the new immigrant 'ethnic' underclasses who fill service industry opportunities in these cities, and the emergent 'global' elites in the financial, media and service businesses at the other end of the social scale (Sassen 2001). Although international in origin, these privileged, educated elites are assumed to face none of the barriers and discriminations felt by poorer immigrants; nor are they ever thought to be subject to the same coercive integratory pressures that 'ethnic' migrants might face from their host nations. It is assumed that elite migrants are free to exploit the opportunities of their transnational lifestyles and mobility with few of the obvious costs that other, less privileged migrants face. Yet all of these assumptions – including whether they are in fact 'elites' - need checking by tracing the actual migration origins, patterns and stories of the new kind of European 'transnational pioneer'.

2.v. The impact of foreigners on gentrification and change in cities

Urban geography has experienced a renaissance in recent years, charting among other things the interlinked dynamics of change in post-industrial cities alongside the gentrification of residential pockets within the inner city. Studies have focused on how a young set of middle class urban pioneers have sought cultural diversity and new urban lifestyles in inner city areas abandoned by a previous generation during suburbanization. This has led on to new forms of political activism and a dramatic cultural transformation of certain cities (Ley 1996). Brussels offers a particularly sharp scenario of this kind, in that this is a city that faced both dramatic large-scale suburbanization and steep industrial decline in past decades (Kesteloot 2000). Poorer immigrants here, like in the US and Canada, have played a major role in re-habilitating abandoned parts of the city with commerce and street life. Middle class urban pioneers have followed them back into the central city. What is interesting for the present study is the not inconsiderable role of foreign European residents in leading the gentrification process in certain neighborhoods of Brussels (van Criekingen 1997). Moreover, this has led to a somewhat different kind of multicultural interaction, leading to new types of housing and commercial development, and new forms of culture in certain parts of the city. The study of housing patterns can indeed be a proxy for the study other social and political processes. It is for this reason one of the central empirical foci of this study (see Bourdieu 2000). No other city in Europe has quite seen, as Brussels has, the emergence of distinctly European neighborhoods within the multicultural mosaic typical of international cities. This new social geography - which combines the features of an ethnic enclave and a gentrifying

middle class - offers a rich new field of study. One may also consider the potential comparisons to be drawn between Ixelles or Sint Kathelijne in Brussels and de Pijp or Jordaan in Amsterdam, Shoreditch or Islington in London, and Bastille or Oberkampf in Paris, sites where similar dynamics could be observed in the last decade or so.

2.vi. The emergence of multicultural spaces in national societies

The emergence of such multinational enclaves within multicultural cities leads to consideration of the nature of these new Euro-enclaves within the nationalized space of the society around them, particular the freedom and empowerment it may furnish those able to step outside the caging power structures of the nation-state. Again, taking its cue from the impact of non-European 'ethnic' migrants in western cities, certain writers have sought to identify transnationalism with specific locations that emerge within cities (Keith/Pile 1993; Massey 1994; M.P.Smith 2001). These transnational spaces represent the nodes of cross-national networks, linking together cultural, economic and political activities in the city with the diasporas and transnational communities around the world. They suggest the possibility of cross-national 'inter-stitial' social power (Mann 1993), that draws on the ability of free movers to benefit from and identify with the space created by their non-national 'anomie', their 'not-belonging' to any one nation or the other. Do the new Euro-spaces function in such a way? Or are Euro-movers just a milder, modern day version of Arendt's statelessness, stranded outside the national structures that make social and political struggles meaningful? The question can be specified further by looking at to what extent the new kinds of commercial and cultural activities that take place here – often in the form of shops, clubs, pubs and restaurants – represent a similar transnational challenge to the overwhelmingly nationalized activities of European cities. Are they creating specifically 'Euro' spaces, or are they just a European version of the generic global market? In Brussels, as I have noted, there is the extraordinary confluence of multinational, multicultural and multileveled influences, that perhaps generate even more space or opportunity for the presence of the transnational in the city.

2.vii. Is there such a thing as European citizenship?

A great deal of academic effort has been spent in the last decade in specifying the counterfactual conditions for the development of a 'true' European citizenship. This is taken almost unanimously to be the core normative requirement for the emergence of a European democracy, and European public voice worthy of the EU integration project (Weiler 1998; Wiener 1997; Meehan 1993). The EU has led the way with numerous attempts to bring itself close to the public, and encourage a sense of European citizenship among apathetic national voters. Foreign European EU citizens have the rights to vote in local elections across the EU – which in Brussels means the highly localized, but important, Commune level elections every six years. Uniquely among European cities, the high percentage of European residents, coupled with their concentration in certain communes, in fact creates the possibility of a serious electoral impact of this population on Belgian politics as a whole (Bousetta and Swyngedouw 1999). Brussels thus offers a natural setting for exploring the reality of European citizenship. Do foreign residents vote, hold opinions, or participate in any way in the Belgian political system around

them? After all, this is a highly euro-conscious population, many of whom work in some contact with the European institutions. If there is no real sense of emerging European citizenship here, then where in Europe could there be (see also the work of Strudel 1999)?

2.viii. Assessing the Europeanization of Europeans

Finally, there is the related but much wider issue of the emergence of genuinely Europeanized behavior, beyond the national customs, identities, practices that European nationals have inherited from their nation-states of origin. Most of the anthropological literature on Europeanization suggests in fact limited evidence of Europeanization in this sense (see Borneman/Fowler 1997). It appears limited to sport (European football leagues and the free movement of players), to tourism, to the Europeanization of restaurant cuisine styles, to certain cross-border activities in some regions. Brussels again can be thought of as a privileged site of research into this question, given the high European population and the *prima facie* likelihood that residents here will be living a more Europeanized life than others. This is a premise that should by no means be limited to eurocrats (as in, for example, Shore 2000, Abélès 1996). For reasons to do with the structure of their careers, *fonctionnaires* will only represent a certain limited form of Europeanization in their behavior. Beyond the rhetoric, is a Europe of Europeans really being built? And again, there is that feeling: if this is not happening in Brussels, then where?

It is my hope that a Brussels-based investigation can offer a way of addressing all eight of these wider issues.

3. Construction of a population

The question of how to study this population is first and foremost a methodological one.[3] For a variety of reasons that will become clear, this is a population whose features and range are inaccessible to conventional survey means. Walking through the process of tracking down and characterising the population thus becomes an ideal way of explaining why so little is known about them – apart from crude stereotypes – and why existing studies, both official and academic, tend to misrepresent them.

3.i. Official statistics

The Belgian National Institute of Statistics makes available general population data on foreigners, that can be broken down to the commune level. It is said that a total of around 145,000 Europeans of EU origin are resident within the 19 communes of the region (just under 120,000 are potential European citizen adult voters). This represents 14.5% of the

[3] Two methodological reference points and inspirations for this present study are the work of Sennett (1998) and Lamont (1992; 2000). On issues of 'constructing the research object', on understanding the limitations of data, and on the need to actively 'construct' population samples from official representations, see the discussions in Bourdieu/Chamboredon/Passeron (1968); Champagne et al (1996).

total population.[4] Registration of residents is normally collected at the commune level. The registration of some *fonctionnaires*, however - who have always enjoyed a kind of 'diplomatic' status in Belgium - is handled through a central office which transmits figures to the communes after. All other Europeans have to go through the self-registration process with commune and police, which officially should take place within days of arrival. The reality is that the container of the Belgian state is highly porous: I know of several instances of people who have lived in Brussels for years without ever registering. A number split their lives between this and other locations – Brussels is a lot more porous than cities in the Netherlands, less so than London. One strongly *bruxellois* Irish respondent told me that if was only after five years of accumulated parking tickets that he was forced to go in to the Ixelles commune offices for the first time, which were in fact two minutes walk from his apartment.

National statistics provide a good, rough guide to percentage proportions per commune of this population, but are too vague and unwieldy beyond this. No information is available on the composition of this foreign population beyond nationality – and communes are unwilling to release details such as names and addresses for legal reasons. More to the point, the headcount by nationality does not distinguish between the newer 'middle class' Europeans in the city, and the very significant numbers of Italians, Spanish, Portuguese 'working class' migrants who came to Brussels in an earlier generation but have never needed to give up their original nationalities. A commune like Saint Gilles, for example - a multicultural, working class neighborhood that is now a front line of gentrification because of its abundance of beautiful 19th century townhouses – has around 36% foreign European (EU) population of adults; but at least 25% of these are of South European origin, hence probably mostly working class. However, as several Italian respondents pointed out to me, their presence itself is an additional attraction for middle class Italians moving into the area. Ixelles, next door, has around 28% European population (counting adults only; it falls to 24% including children), but Southern Europeans here account for only around 10% of these. Among the rest, there are the largest number of French (around 8% of the commune), British (3%), German (2%), Danish and Swedish residents in the city. Moreover, while over 4% of the commune are Italians, in this case are probably mostly middle class professionals. Eastern suburban communes Uccle, Watermael-Boitsfort, Woluwé-St.Lambert and Woluwé-St.Pierre all have between 10% and 20% European resident populations, and all would be excellent sites for studying the mainly affluent European professionals here. Schaarbeek, at around 18%, is like St.Gilles, a fascinating mixed commune. But cross the city to the post-industrial, working class Anderlecht, where there are 17% Europeans residents, and it would be big mistake to start sampling Europeans here, and expect to find many of the target population.

No realistic sampling frame can be found here, and the search for European professionals in any of these communes will require a good deal of 'local knowledge' to sort out class from nationality. Similarly, if one were to proceed using the available data on the inscription of European voters, the same problem would occur. The main striking point about these figures is how low they are: under 10% of the resident European population

[4] My population statistics are a composite of information taken from the NIS website, official regional and commune sources, the Chabert report (1998) and data held by IPSOM. See Appendix 3 for further data.

bothered to register for the 2000 communal elections.[5] My evidence is that that the majority of these were probably working class long-term residents. Interestingly, communes controversially make available much richer data on those inscribed to party political campaigners in the city: data-bases with names, addresses, age and sex. Although it is strictly illegal to use these data for research, they could be one potential source for sorting out who is who among the European population.

A survey of the available secondary studies on the population needs to consider to what extent they are flawed by basic oversights about the heterogeneity of the European population in Brussels. The single most detailed report on the population is the so-called Chabert report, made by Iris Consulting for the then Minister of Finance of the Brussels-Capital Region, Jos Chabert (1998).[6] The report was apparently shelved by politicians after it first came out, but has since been re-habilitated with the recent renewal of interest in promoting multicultural Brussels during its year as Cultural Capital of Europe (2000) and six months of Belgian presidency of the EU (2001). The report is currently being revised and updated. The report offers a mine of details about the economic impact of the presence of European and international institutions in the city. It proceeds from the insight out. First, it discusses Europeans working within the EU institutions, then moves to the profile of workers in the international institutions (most notably NATO headquarters), then sectors dependent on the EU (diplomatic corps. Press, regional representatives, interest groups), and then sectors partially dependent on the EU (international associations, banks, finance, lawyers, consultancies, etc). Although impressive, the figures it offers leave a majority of Europeans unaccounted for. The report estimates only 16% of the Europeans resident in Brussels (23,000 persons) are *fonctionnaires* and their families (over a quarter of all *fonctionnaires* are in fact Belgian). Half of the 3,000 personnel said to be working for other international organizations are Belgian, nearly a third of the 9,000 working for EU dependent sectors, and 65% of the 20,000 in the partially EU dependent sector. Minus the Belgians, these figures still account for less than half the European population in Brussels. Even were to we to separate out the working class southern Europeans (a figure which can only be guessed at), it still leaves a significant number of resident European professionals who are not directly countable as *fonctionnaires* or quasi-*fonctionnaires*. Indeed, most of those in the partially EU dependent sector (7,000 or more persons) should of course be counted as professional free movers of the kind in which we are interested.

The statistical artifacts produced here do not at all explain why the region continues to regard all resident European professionals as if they were *fonctionnaires* on the special 'diplomatic' status (which also offers this class of people the special low EU tax rate, and many other exemptions from Belgian residency requirements). I attended a one-day workshop for Commune office workers on how to deal with Europeans, which reduced most of the problems the bureaucrats face to either legal technicalities about their special diplomatic status of Europeans, or face-to-face dilemmas of handling their often arrogant and irate demands. Yet most of these resident professionals are not 'eurocrats' as the

[5] Data provided on the Brussels-Europe Liaison Office.
[6] *De Sociaal-Economische Impact van de Europese en Internationale Instellingen in het Brussels Hoofstedelijke Gewest. Verleden en Toekomst*. Iris Consulting: Brussel, Juli 1998.

region and press likes to describe them, and most of the clichés about resident European *fonctionnaires* – with their lucrative but boring jobs-for-life, living rich and utterly disconnected lives out in the suburbs of the city - are not likely to be representative at all of these other resident, tax-paying European professionals. These people moved to and stay in Brussels out of free choice, and are likely to face a very different set of everyday career and domestic questions.

The Brussels-Europe Liaison office is the main go-between for Europeans and the city. The office does a great deal of positive work, and is now expanding its vision of the population, but it is essentially an office set up by the region to liaise specifically over practical issues such as legal status or housing with the EU Commission and its staff. The information the office generates, therefore, simply reproduces the exclusive focus on 'eurocrats' as typically of all Europeans in Brussels. Their main report is a 1998 study on the life and work of Europeans in Brussels, based on a survey of nearly 4,500 employees of the EU institutions.[7] It is an excellent source of data on these workers, their residency patterns (it is a useful quantitative guide to suburbanization and gentrification patterns), certain problems of living in the city, and their cultural activities. But, clearly, it is not representative of the much wider type of 'free mover' in which we should be interested. A complementary study by the Brussels Office of Tourism, which telephoned 80 EU employees and conducted a number of round table discussions, offers a similar overview of their cultural and leisure preference in the city.[8] This is highly useful in considering the general cultural impact of the population in the city, but a shaky foundation for wider generalizations. A more recent academic study by Ilse Thienpont (2001) of the University of Antwerp very usefully collates together these official sources of information about the cultural preferences of Europeans in the city, combining these data with a qualitative analysis of how European and International organizations have attempted to promote Brussels to their employees, and on the work of other go-between agencies.

3.ii. Academic studies

The few other relevant academic studies that can be foundare all based on, and limited by, the official statistical sources listed above. A large study of the housing patterns of Europeans in Brussels was made by social geographer Christian Kesteloot in the mid 1990s, using NIS data. The study offers an excellent insight into gentrification processes in the central city. It was disappointing however to note how little effort was made to separate out differences between *fonctionnaires* and other Europeans, or even to discuss difficulties that follow from separating out the class background and professional origin of, say, Italians in different parts of the city. The study was presented in a series of major articles in *De Standaard* newspaper in 1997 with the usual clichéd misrepresentation: "*Eurocraten* trekken van de rand terug naar Brussel (italics my emphasis)".[9] Hassan Bousetta and Marc Swyngedouw (1999) have made an interesting analysis of the possible electoral impact of Europeans in Brussels, which offers many interesting statistical

[7] *Les conditions de vie et travail à Bruxelles*, Bureau de Liaison Bruxelles-Europe (BLBE) 1998.
[8] *Étude sur les comportements culturels, de loisirs et touristiques des residents étrangers*, Office du Promotion du Tourisme, Bruxelles 2000.
[9] 11-14 December 1997, *De Standaard*

insights. However, this too does not attempt to really separate out the European 'free mover' population, and how they might specifically impact on Belgian politics. Political parties and commune officials certainly would like to have an accurate socio-economic profile of this population, but it is clear that their knowledge of them as a group of persons is at best intuitive, at worst, jaundiced. The Multicultural Brussels 2000 initiative (see Corijn/de Lannoy 2000), meanwhile, only produced scant further information on this very significant multinational population in the city (d'Hondt 2000). Kesteloot's research group at Leuven, which was actively involved, certainly intends to do more work on resident Europeans, but it did not impact on the vivid discussions that took place during 2000 in terms of promoting multicultural politics in the city. The *eurocraten* are not seen as true *zinneke* by the *bruxellois* population, who are now, however, more open than ever before to embracing Islamic and African cultures within the identity of the city.

3.iii. Service providers

To proceed further in my efforts to 'find' the population in question, I turned at an early stage to the kind of data sources that service providers may have accumulated about Europeans in the city. The logic here is simple. National statistics give only the crudest overview of who is present in the city, dictated by the outdated, territorial state-bureaucracy model by which they are 'counted'. The statistical representations of public officials and bureaucrats are, meanwhile, for obvious political reasons, unlikely to be interested in certain dimensions of the life and presence of fluid Europeans in the city. The Communes and Region are essentially only interested in Europeans who work for the EU institutions, because their concerns are limited to relations between the city and Belgium with the EU hierarchy. A huge effort is now being made to prepare the city for the new 'massive' influx of *fonctionnaires* that will follow enlargement, but the city remains oblivious to the equally significant inflows and settlement of a much wider range of EU nationals (indeed, many young and upcoming Central and East Europeans are also moving to the city for this reason). Fortunately, commercial businesses do not base their representations on what is only of politically significance in Brussels-EU relations. Rather, their bottom line is commercial: hence their business is to target all affluent Europeans in the city, regardless of whether their work has anything to do with the presence of European institutions.

It is immediately obvious from this perspective that the magazine *Bulletin*, for example – with a weekly circulation of 52,000 – owes its success to having a much broader, pluralistic view of its target population. *Bulletin* is the flagship of Ackroyd publications, a company with numerous other transnational publications (for businesses, airlines etc) and a very successful 'expat' website. It has had to develop new forms of non-nationally specific niche marketing techniques that are quite different from the strictly national consultancy sources (for example, which profile people according to national norms of age, values, interests, etc) that other magazines would use. Accordingly, it has had to set up its own readership survey, the latest of which surveyed around 452 of its readers on their interests, employment, attitudes to Belgium, shopping habits, income and leisure activities. Less than 8% of its readers are Belgian, so this represents a very interesting cross-section of foreign residents. One or two corrections of typical ideas can be noted.

Nearly half of the readership have lived in Brussels for five years or more, with well over 70% owning or seeking to own their own home (they are not transient); they have a high appreciation of the cultural and culinary life of the city (they go out in, and appreciate the city); the most popular part of the magazine is the news about Belgium and Brussels (they have a genuine interest in the country); more are learning Dutch than French (they are not automatically biased towards *francophonie*). As we might expect, the readership is overwhelmingly professional, high income, frequent flyer, wine drinking, and so on. The largest part of the readership in fact comes from multinational employees in the city, rather than *fonctionnaires*; some companies take multiple copies every week for distribution to foreign staff. Interestingly, the survey is skewed in certain revealing ways: from other types of indicators of the population in the city, and an analysis of the advertising taken by the magazine, it is obvious that *Bulletin* has a readership that is older (the average reader is 42), more culturally conservative, much richer (94% own some form of investment), more dependent on organized expat services, and certainly more anglo-centric than the European population on the whole in Brussels. *Bulletin*, in fact, is signally unpopular with the younger 'sojourner' types that I interviewed – who tend to keep a distance from overtly expat behavior – and practically ignored by Germans and Southern Europeans. But the survey remains an excellent partial guide to this population.

Bulletin monopolizes a certain space in Brussels life; it is seen among newcomers as absolutely indispensable for its housing offers and its small ads. Indeed it is internationally unique as a newspaper. There is no other major weekly newspaper of this kind in other eurocities. This is significant because *Bulletin*, like any other media source, actively seeks to construct the population it services. This is apparent from its smart expansion into lifestyle marketing (special features on high fashion shopping, or outdoor restaurants), and its early move into the website market, which it also dominates. Using other marketing insights from the other major website in Belgium (Expatica.com), together with material from the expat services of Belgian banks, expat relocation services and guides and cultural associations and schools, and informal information from shop and bar owners, it is possible to get a much more accurate overall view of the European population. We may then 'detect' those people not identified by official regional reports, national statistics or the efforts of one service provider alone, and seek out interviewees more representative of the group as a whole. It is important to note, that most of these services have themselves a strong bias towards an equally stereotyped population: that of the 'expat'. The 'expat' is a transient individual working in some kind of commercial business or international organization, whose decisions are dictated by career alone, who socializes exclusively with his/her own co-nationals, has excess disposable income, and who never settles long term. The banks for example clearly target their material at young or middle aged, traditional married couples with a male breadwinner, who have moved to Brussels as part of a lucrative multinational corporate package move. In other words, each of these specific target niches must be cross referenced with others in order to avoid the commercial biases. However, the overall picture that emerges is one that has provided a good basis for the selection of interviewees that I went on to make.

Taken together, then, these sources provide a crucial resource for understanding the diversity of a population that cannot be understood adequately by any of the formulae

generally used by official Belgian observers under heading of 'eurocrats' or 'expats'. The most important innovation here is getting away from the state-centered political or institutionalized ways of counting and characterizing this population, in favor of one which allows that commercial, market-led knowledge of the population might, with suitable qualification, provide a better, more grounded, guide to who these people are.

3.iv. My own project

The step-by-step dismantling of these other statistical constructions, led me to construct a rough 'subjective' sample frame to guide my own selection of interviews. The approach turned out therefore to be a kind of snowballing approach, finding my respondents through a number of well placed key informants. The sample I ended up with was thus loosely structured by age, type (sojourners or settlers), profession (a wide range) and nationality. Within the group anglophones are significant, but do not dominate; there are also important examples of Southern Europeans, and countries nearer to (north, east and south of) Belgium. A smaller number than I had hoped had children; but this followed from the significant discovery that a much higher percentage of resident Europeans in Brussels than the national average are settled couples without children.

As mentioned before, *fonctionnaires* and career expats were included only at the margins of the survey. Those that I interviewed had other, more unique features that recommended their cases. I avoided those with a deep connection to Belgium by marriage or family. Clearly, intermarriage can be an important signal of integration and cross-national Europeanization. However, although it may be growing as people move around more during their 'eligible' years (as students, or for work experience), inter-marriage is not a qualitatively new phenomenon in Europe. Significantly, it does not usually lead to innovative transnational developments, because such married couples tend to subsume themselves in one or other of the national cultures nearest to their families. In contrast, Brussels, and other 'global' eurocities, are interesting precisely because they often provide 'third locations' for couples of different nationalities, unable or unwilling to live together in one of their own countries of origin.

Unsurprisingly, virtually all my respondents were university educated professionals; one or two has risen to a middle class status by efforts outside these typical channels. It is important however not to start calling these people 'elites' for this reason alone. They are basically just the kind of people who would be average, professional middle classes in their home countries. To characterize Europeans living and working abroad an 'elite' is a gross exaggeration, that only feeds the Marxist style paranoia that has developed around the so-called 'transnational capitalist class' (Sklair 2001). Indeed, one thing that characterizes nearly all these free movers is their peripheral, unpredictable, and original life trajectories relative to the people who remain the real national elites back home. They are, rather, pioneers and entrepreneurs; more often than not, ambitious social climbers from modest or humdrum backgrounds.

I mention one or two limitations. I struggled to find French respondents in the city; important because I wanted to compare the French and Dutch experiences of the city.

Brussels still suffers from Parisian snobbery. Now, with the remarkably rapid Thalys train connection, many French working in the city commute back and forth, either daily or weekends; as if the city were Lille or Tours. One might also point out the over-representation of professional lobbyists in the list. However, this heterogeneous group in fact span all kinds of work: some of it commercial (and linked mainly to Belgium), some for INGOs outside the EU sphere (such as trades unions, charities), and some straightforwardly EU-centered interest group representation (for both regions, and for industrial concerns).

I will make no gross generalizations on the basis of this quite microscopic sample of people in the city. I will, in fact, stress the exceptionality of these cases, while asserting my belief that this rich and diverse range of people offers a qualitative insight into the life and experiences of foreign European residents in Brussels that no quantitative survey could provide. These are oral histories and real life stories; and these are remarkable people. In what follows, I present an overview of the most important empirical findings of the study.

4. Europeans in Brussels: findings

4.i. The question of integration

Much of the negative stereotype of Europeans in Brussels plays on the idea that they can be criticized because they do not 'integrate' into Belgian life. Yet the idea that Europeans are not 'integrating' into Brussels is wholly wrong. And the idea that they should be 'integrating' into Belgian life is completely absurd. This vital point will need explaining.

Our ideas about integration are dominated wrongly by the nation-centered idea of immigrant integration that prevails across European nation-states. This is the idea that nation-states can become more multicultural, and absorb to some extent a wide variety of 'foreign' cultures, only if immigrants also 'integrate' into the national culture. This idea is dubious at best for the Netherlands, France or Britain where it predominates in official thinking (Favell 2001). In Belgium, the idea simply does not work, even for non-European immigrants. It is peculiar and highly paradoxical that indigenous Belgians expect foreign (non-European) immigrants to become prototypically 'Belgian', when in fact Belgians themselves – sharply distinguished between flemish and walloon cultures – are not even themselves 'integrated' into a national Belgian society of the traditional singular kind found, say, in France. It is essential, I believe, to admit here that Belgium is really composed of two relatively autonomous national societies, unified within a single federal state. It is also essential to recognize that Brussels belongs to neither.

European 'immigrants' in Brussels thus should feel absolutely no pressure whatsoever to integrate into Belgian life, whatever that term actually means. Meanwhile, Brussels as a truly international, multicultural city offers a context where they can participate and integrate in a variety of ways – and develop strong identification with the city – without *ever* needing to be concerned very deeply by what is going on in Belgium. Of course, as

visitors there it is desirable that they develop an interest in the country beyond the city: but it is not essential to their 'belonging' in Brussels, and should not be expected. Cities in any case are not 'integrated' places: they are places of 'anomie' in both a positive and negative sense, at least some of the time. This is as true for Belgians in Brussels as it is for foreigners, and it is why most people choose to live here. The source of creativity and empowerment in Brussels lies indeed in the fact that this is a city which cannot captured by any one national conception of integration, or any one dominant 'elite' culture.

'Integration' in my study was thus not interpreted as centering on contact and social links with Belgians, whether francophone, flemish or *brusselaar*. A person can be perfectly well 'integrated' into Brussels life, while no knowing no Belgians at all. Although this may offend Belgian readers, it is essential that they recognize this fact.

4.ii. Impact on economy

It was impossible to gauge any further quantitative evidence about the economic impact of Europeans in Brussels through the interviews alone. On an anecdotal basis, it is clear that these high earning, culturally active, highly sociable individuals are high spenders in the city. The Chabert report estimates that 85% of the income of *fonctionnaires* is spent in Brussels; a similar figure or higher can be counted for European residents more generally. *The Bulletin* survey offers further evidence of the dynamic consumerism of this population. Incomes are generally higher on average than Belgian incomes, but the majority of people that I met had (combined) monthly household incomes in the range of 75,000-150,000 BEF after tax a month (between $1500-$3000 a month after tax).

They are not the super-rich, tax-dodging Europeans of the public perception, but fairly regular middle class professionals, comparable in status to Belgian professionals in the city, and equally important to its economy. It should be remembered that foreign residents always have basic costs higher than national residents, for the simple fact that many everyday costs for national residents are absorbed by family and long-term friends. Another notable part of the positive economic impact of Europeans is on the development of entertainment services in the city: on restaurants, pubs, cafés, and certain shops. Moreover, one could not imagine many of the taxi businesses and night shops in the city without these customers. The rue Baillit area near Châtelain is a remarkable example of this dynamism: a large number of the shops and services in the street cater to demands led by resident Europeans, and those who work in the large office blocks nearby on Avenue Louise.

In terms of economic integration, this point is not difficult to grasp. Residents participate actively all the time as consumers and service users; the evidence is that resident Europeans are rather more participative in this sense on average than Belgians.

4.iii. Employment and quality of life

Another very positive factor about Brussels for resident Europeans is the relationship between employment opportunities and accessible housing and lifestyle options: the

crucial ‘quality of life’ factor (Committee of the Regions 1999). It accounts for why so many who come with very short term plans end up staying for years. The job opportunities are well known – and it accounts 100% for why people come. They do not come because of Brussels’ famous nightlife, restaurants or multicultural ambiance. These are things that are discovered with surprise and pleasure later. This is sharply different when compared to why people move to Amsterdam or London. These cities also offer abundant opportunities, but are also famously attractive for cultural and historical reasons. In these cities, the downsides of moving to them appear after. It is the number of *ad hoc* employment opportunities – that is, outside of the structured paths of *fonctionnaires* and career expats with multinationals – that makes Brussels remarkable, together with the network-based, word of mouth means by which people often find new work.

Employment possibilities being good elsewhere, it is an open question why many of them in fact settle in Brussels. It is certainly not because Belgium has a high reputation internationally: it is surely the most ‘uncool’ major city destination in Europe! But why people stay has more to do with just the structure of the job market or career satisfaction – a criteria which I found of little use in explaining settlement decisions. I stress this because the people in question are *not* high flying elites (who are predisposed to move on because of career opportunities), but simply averagely successful professional middle classes, who aspire to average ‘bourgeois’ satisfactions. The main focus for settlers, then, is on how the city enables or restricts their achievement of a satisfactory ‘shape’ to their lives. Decisions thus were rarely dictated by career alone: they had as much to do to with the ‘domestic’ and ‘leisure’ quality of life issues alluded to above. That is, they discover very quickly that Brussels is a city with manifold attractions beyond any they expected on arrival. And that that the kind of income they receive here offers them a level of disposable income and a quality of life that would be absolutely impossible in rival cities.

The single most important factor in convincing Europeans of the quality of life to be had in the city, and the crucial attraction that takes them from sojourner to settler, is the way the housing market works in the city. In stark contrast, housing is the one thing most likely to cause people to leave Amsterdam. Amy and Stephen, an English/Dutch couple who both work in commercial lobbying firms, explained how they had been working separately for several years with the idea that Brussels was temporary before they together realized that this perception was holding them back from fully benefiting from the quality of life offered in the city. After marrying and boosting their high joint incomes, they consciously said that they were here to stay. This translated this into a move into a marvelous apartment on the Ixelles lakes, and a whole range of plans to buy in Brussels and the Ardennes at a later stage. Here, the initial perception of the extraordinary opportunities available in the rented sector (I have seen so many extraordinary single flats in the city), leads on to a realization that settlement is a real option in the longer run. The line between sojourner and settler is a fine one; many talk for years about leaving, or about how accidental it is they are living here. The good life in a good flat – that will be incomparably better than what might be found or afforded in London or Amsterdam – can often make the difference. In general monthly rent or mortgages would be in the BEF 20,000-30,000 range ($400-$600), which would be

between a quarter and a fifth of typical household incomes – a much better ratio than is typical in London or Amsterdam. A simple material factor then can lead to a strong 'Brusselsization' of the person, even if little or no other social or material ties have been made with the Belgian city.[10]

The rental market remains accessible and flush, despite the rising prices and perception that it is harder to find good places. The balance of views was positive. There were of course negative stories about landlords (which is a constant in any city), but most felt the longer term contract system worked well, if you were able to commit to at least two years. Brussels' Belgian residents tend to perceive and complain of the large European presence in some neighborhoods as negative, because of its effects on prices for everyone. But it has to be noted that main people that profit from this are Belgian landlords and Belgian real estate agents, who are simply responding to market signals.

Brussels too has clearly benefited from the willingness of Europeans to buy into older, sometime wrecked town houses in less affluent areas. Belgians of a previous generation in fact left the city in droves: causing one of the most dramatic examples in Europe of American style suburbanization and the degradation of the inner city (Kesteloot 2000). Exacerbated by the often brutal way property developers and the EU worked together to wipe away various central-eastern neighborhoods in the city produced by the 1970s, a partially destroyed city emerged out of what had once been an architectural marvel. It did, however, at least leave a city remarkable for its openness to new architecture and its abundance of abandoned, but beautiful old buildings, and hence a real estate market way behind the values expected in other European capitals. The driving up of prices by the demand of European gentrifiers is then merely the positive effect of Europeans recognizing the opportunities that abandoned town houses represent. Communes such as Ixelles, Etterbeek, Saint Gilles, Schaarbeek and latterly Sint Kathelijne in the centre, have in parts been transformed by these tendencies: the gentrification, of course, has been pushed forward by Belgians too, and notably a new generation of younger Flemish returning to the city. The point about specific dimensions of integration also works very well socially and culturally. Europeans' networks and the cultural activities may not intersect with Belgians, but are nevertheless evidence of a strong integration into the city which enabled these activities.

4.iv. Family life

The scant literature on expats has tended to stress the rather conservative family structures of dominantly male earner households, and lifestyles oriented to national cultures 'back home' (Wagner 1998). In contrast to this, the examples of the people I met in Brussels suggests to me that they are pioneering some genuinely new form of transnational, or perhaps a-national life, that does not conform to conservative family structures, or re-affirm at every step an unthinking version of their original national identity (see Smith 2001).

[10] I use the term 'Brusselsization' in an opposite sense to the negative, jaundiced views about the city and EU *fonctionnaires* portrayed by the British anthropologist Shore (2000), a study which displays little intimate knowledge or understanding of the city.

Those who have children in Brussels were mostly positive about the experience. Brussels clearly has an advantage over other cities such as Amsterdam in its public provision of crèches. Longer waiting lists, together with insider advantages for longer resident nationals, can make childcare an expensive struggle or even a nightmare for foreign residents in the Netherlands. In contrast, this is a considerable 'quality of life' benefit to the city. In Brussels, provision is accessible and affordable. It has the additional advantage of having crèches (especially on the Flemish side) that offer services in a wide variety of languages. Although Brussels is never likely to opt for the 'third way' and embrace English as its official language, as advocated by some commentators such as Philippe van Parijs (van Parijs 1999), the fact English is widely recognized as an 'unofficial' third language in the city eases this.

Unsurprisingly, those that had sent their children to the international schools – for example, Gunther and Bent, two high earning consultants from Germany and Denmark – were highly satisfied with the service they were getting, and the experience their children were having. These privileged and fascinatingly multinational schools are likely to produce very intriguing multinational adults. Those who come through these schools are not isolated 'eurocrat' products, but rather genuinely 'international' students, who belong neither here nor there, and often have some degree of affective connection to Belgium and Brussels, while remaining the product of their own national backgrounds (that are explicitly cultivated in the schools). One of Bent's children had turned to his surprise into a Danish nationalist; the other had married into a Belgian family

What was more interesting for my study, was the fact that I interviewed several parents – an English couple, John and Ellen, Inge, a long term Danish resident and Siobhan, an Irish single mother - who had sent their children to internationally-open Belgian schools (francophone). John discussed in great detail the decision behind giving his children a francophone education, and their positive experience with a school in Etterbeek which had a syllabus open to international students, although nearly all the teaching took place in French. Inge's half-Danish children, like Bent's, had gone through Belgian schools to become ambiguously integrated. Siobhan's situation was rather different, in that as a single mother with three half-Irish children, she had had to take difficult decisions about local public schooling on a tight budget. She reported some 'inner city' problems that had followed for her children from the fact that they attended schools with a large North African population. She had herself, however, used this as the spur to become highly involved as a parent governor of the school.

4.v. Political participation

The points about integration, however, become much more difficult to sustain when it comes to political integration. European citizenship in this context is the dog that does not bark (see Strudel 1999). Europeans are in effect excluded from full political participation in the city – often as a result of their own choices. However, I met several examples of people who were involved in more local ways in public life.

Despite huge efforts by the Region, by communes, by Belgian political parties, by the Brussels-Europe Liaison office, and by Bulletin magazine, very few resident Europeans bothered to register or vote in the October 2000 local elections. Why not? These European citizens, who are often engaged in work that makes them highly aware of European issues, proved to be un-mobilizable despite the opportunity of influencing local Belgian politics. My interviews provide some evidence as to why this is. All were aware of their rights; many felt uncomfortable that they had not got involved; most were 'political' animals by nature. But almost all did not vote in the election, or even register. Less than 10% registered for the election, and many of these might have been longer term working class foreign residents.

Jeroen, a Dutch journalist, explained his own reasons why. Having found out all the information and motivated himself, he found out that there was a penalty for registering and then not voting. Although this rule is rarely enforced, it was enough to put him off because, for family reasons, he could not be sure of being physically present in Brussels on that day. Janet, an English interviewee, had the unpleasant experience of being dragged by her commune to do electoral bureau duties after making the 'mistake' of registering like a good citizen. This duty apparently had been evaded by numerous other Belgians of her age, who knew how to come up with excuses to dodge the system. Others were very much aware that they might be awkward bureaucratic consequences from registering to vote, in situations where their interest in influencing the local political issues was marginal. All expressed a lack of motivation over the flemish-walloon struggles that dominate much Belgian politics even at the local level, and did not perceive that the elections would make much difference to the kinds of issues that might matter to them at the local level: such as the troublesome rubbish collection, local security and policing, housing developments, parking problems, and so on. These clearly are issues that could motivate *all* residents – Belgian or not - but it appears that the Belgian parties are often much more concerned with more grandiose, and quixotic, political issues. There was surprisingly little awareness at Ixelles commune of who the large European population are, or what they might want – despite being 28% of the electorate there!

Belgian political parties had however made some attempt to woo these voters, being aware that they could make a significant impact on the balance of flemish-francophone representation in certain communes. Parties were able to obtain classified lists of registered voters, which signaled if they were foreign residents or not. Sometimes this backfires: Jeroen was furious that he could be identified as a foreigner by parties, and that the commune of Uccle had registered him automatically as 'francophone', even though he was Dutch (apparently all foreigners in the commune were simply assumed to be francophone). Bernhard, a young German lawyer was typical of many north west Europeans in expressing a sympathy for flemish interests in the city. He was a regular reader of the *Brussel Deze Week* newspaper, and uninterested in Anglophone expat publications. Hedwig, the owner of the well known German bar in Schuman, was likely to run as a candidate for a flemish party at the next communal elections. Flemish parties have been extremely negative and defensive about the impact of Europeans on the political balance in the city, who are assumed to be francophone, if anything. Yet the evidence is that that a lot more than 15% of this population (all that is needed to affect the

current balance) have more sympathy with flemish interests. Incidentally, Agalev, the Dutch speaking green party were apparently able to make a breakthrough success in Brussels-Centre by targeting young European voters in this way. A handful of extra votes enables the election of one representative, Bruno de Lille, who then became a crucial flemish representative within the new ruling left-green coalition.

For sure, the apparent lack of local public participation of European residents in housing associations, self-help groups and the like, has to be seen as a disappointment. Yet, as I have stressed, these are people who are generally are highly participative in the life of the city. Many of them, too, are highly 'political' animals – some who work in the orbit of the EU institutions indeed had made politics their way of life. Their lack of participation – which stands in deep contrast to the growing participation and electoral successes of other immigrant populations in the city – perhaps can be explained by something other than apathy or ignorance. Belgian politics is already an extremely 'full' space, with parties and personalities crammed into all the different local levels of activism. Europeans are not excluded from this, but it is difficult to push into the political agenda issues that have nothing at all to do with the typical Belgian obsession with flemish-francophone struggle and maneuvering, or the new, emerging agenda of multicultural immigrant politics in Brussels. To some degree their political efforts may be expended in their politicking and networking within exclusively EU and international centered issues. Furthermore, with a relatively high quality of life and degree of contentment, they feel no great pressure to get involved for social change. Many of the structures set up by the Region and the EU institutions in fact are designed to deal with their problems in ways that deflect them from political engagement. Eurostars are much more likely to express their political opinions through their activism as consumers, and the kinds of choices they make about their lifestyles and culture in the city. On this score, their political impact has been considerable.

There is a need then to step away from the kind of idealist conception of European citizenship, by which these individuals participation in Brussels or Belgian life will always rated as proof of 'apathy' or 'non-integration'. They are obviously hampered economically or culturally in the city as consumers, and it is as consumers, therefore, that their political impact should be evaluated. Voting is more or less irrelevant in the context of intense Belgian political debate, that is not in any significant way addressed to them. Yet in their dynamic occupation as gentrifiers of various neighborhoods of the central city and in their extensive use of services in the city, they have expressed themselves in a way far more significant that turning out to vote in communal elections (see Ley 1996).

As an example, I can cite the experiences discussed above of European parents in francophone schools. These were good parents, highly involved in their children's education. Siobhan had become a school governor; John and Ellen had cooperated with the school and followed their children's experiences in great detail. Yet, in both cases, they stressed that this involvement had not especially led to making new Belgian acquaintances. Though they did have Belgian friends, their social world still revolved around people of other nationalities. Another way of putting this, is to say that in measuring their 'integration' here (which was high) it is irrelevant whether or not their

friends are Belgian. They did not need to integrate into Belgium to have a full and richly 'integrated' social life. One might speak of what occurred to them as 'structural integration', rather than the mistaken cultural idea of integration that lies behind Belgian worries about this population and their euro-ghettos.

One might add to this by pointing to the experiences of older residents. In Inge's, Michael's and Bent's case, these were individuals who had settled totally in the country, but who were not 'integrated' in the sense prescribed by Belgian ideas of what 'immigrants' should do. Brussels was their home, but they were never going to become Belgian. These of course were the people who, after 20 or so years living in the city, we would expect to be the most integrated. It would absurd therefore to expect anything more of people who have been in the country for less than ten years. However wonderful it might be if all foreigners had the level of understanding and engagement with Belgium shown, say, by Olivier Guilbaud (who was married to a flemish woman), it is completely wrong to expect it of them. Indeed, it is one of the great things about Brussels that one can live in this city and never need attempt to integrate as a national of the country – something which cannot be said, in the long run, of Paris or Amsterdam, for all their 'global' openness. In these cities, there are always aspects of city life monopolized by nationals, and a social pressure for foreigners to imitate the dominant cultural behavior of nations in order to 'integrate'. In other words, in order to gain access to these specific quality of life benefits, one has to make the quixotic attempt to become Dutch or French. Short of intermarriage and children, 'full' integration never occurs for European free movers. In fact, it is doubtful whether it ever occurs for any immigrants in Europe. those *fonctionnaires* I interviewed (two of my sample), and several others I have met, themselves still do not correspond to the negative image of indifferent and overpaid virtual residents of the city. One, Rik Jellema, is a well known Dutch political activist and local elected representative, who has worked tirelessly to improve the quality of life of his commune, Etterbeek, while mastering the intricacies of flemish/francophone brinkmanship. Two other, older interviewees represented very positive images of considerate, engaged European residents, who after thirty years or so, had become part of the city, as the city had become part of them. One, Michael, a retired senior *fonctionnaire* who lived with his wife in Tervuren (a well-to-do suburb east of Brussels), perhaps corresponded to the idea of an affluent suburbanite, but he offered a more articulate vision of integrated and engaged European life in Brussels than any other person I met. The other, Inge, a middle rank administrator nearing retirement, living alone in St.Gilles, and identified strongly with the multicultural benefits of the city. My one or two friends who now work at the Commission, had in fact become *fonctionnaires* (through contacts and good fortune) because they wished to stay in Brussels (rather than the reverse), and had engaged in longer term planning about housing that had led them into pioneering gentrification. None of these people had attitudes about Brussels that correspond to the clichéd vision of the arrogant, unengaged *fonctionnaire* living in remote suburban isolation from the city.

4.vi. Identification with the city

Despite certain common negative themes, the overwhelming opinion of European residents towards Brussels as a city is positive. Towards Belgium, opinion is much more ambiguous. It is perceived very positively as a national culture that is underrated and perceived unfairly by those that do not know it. European residents are wonderful ambassadors for fine Belgian products abroad, such as its chocolate and beer, or its art and architecture. But it is also perceived as a country that is constantly shooting itself in the foot: with a political system riven by infighting, an economy whose basic wealth is being squandered, and an alarming ethnocultural political struggle over the future of the country, that had led to the emergence of unpleasant right wing politics. For them, Brussels incarnates the good things about Belgium; but it also defines itself as the contrary of many of the negative aspects of Belgian society outside. Interestingly, this is the reverse mirror image of how most Belgians outside the capital perceive Brussels!

Many European residents have internalized their instrumental choice to remain in Brussels as a positive cultural identification with the city, and what it had to offer them. It was where their European lives belong; it is their home. Moreover, those who are settlers, or who are likely to become so, are very unlikely to leave the city itself for suburban life outside.

Eurostars, indeed, have an intriguing relation with 'home'. In many ways, excellent transport links by air and rail; the extraordinary availability in Brussels of multilingual television from all over Europe (compare this to television in a so-called 'global' city in the US!); the ease of communication with 'home'; all of these make life abroad in Europe much less onerous than it might seem. Brussels is now much closer to London by rail, than London is to Newcastle or Edinburgh. Brussels to Paris on the train is much faster than flying. New high speed connections to the Netherlands and Germany make transnational European life very easy indeed in this part of the world. But eurostars do not go home every weekend, or live a commuting lifestyle (with the exception perhaps of some Parisians). This is very false cliché that is often referred to by Belgians and others in order to explain their lack of 'integration' in Belgian life. For sure, Germans remain attached to Germany for career and business reasons, but would not now return home; the Dutch have to make a large mental leap in order to live in (and accept) Brussels successfully, but retain an outside Dutch perspective; the British and Irish who live here are here by choice because they prefer it to London, yet also perceive it as a comfortable anglophone environment. Yet all – if they stay and settle – appreciate the benefits of Brussels. The psychological distances in being 'abroad' in Europe are more often than not generated by the majority of Europeans who have not traveled or had any experience of living abroad. All eurostars reported the delight and pleasure of older parents visiting them in the city, and how this has become so much easier in recent years. Their positive veiw of Brussels contrast with the paralysis of mainstream views among Belgians of all kinds towards the city.

The attitude of the mainstream disgusts Olivier Guilbaud, a remarkable young French cultural entrepreneur, who has set up *Album*, a small private museum about Belgium for foreigners in Brussels. The marvelous little museum, located in Saint Géry is but one of the treasures to be found in a neighborhood transformed by the efforts of young

entrepreneurs. Olivier recounted his frustration at is own attempt to convince the office of tourism that they should be trying to sell Brussels with something other than pictures of the royal palace, or Baedecker-style promises that make out Brussels to be a cut-price Paris. Rather, he, like many of the young European residents I know, sees very clearly that Brussels must portray itself in future in distinction from Paris (especially), as well as other 'national' cities, that have nothing like the multicultural diversity of which Brussels can boast. He also talked me through the highpoints of the development of the Saint Géry area, and his regret that it had now been captured by more powerful financial interests that would now domesticate and tame the area for a more conservative mainstream public.

The vitality of the alternative cultural scene in Brussels is certainly enhanced by the presence of many young Europeans who are also open to new ideas being brought in by young flemish, and to a lesser extent, francophone cultural entrepreneurs. There is a rich market here waiting to be tapped. I followed with some interest the efforts of Alistair, a Scottish cultural entrepreneur, who was attempting to promote a series of party nights aimed at the 'slightly older' Euro crowd, who may no longer find themselves wanting to go to *stagiare* parties. The promotion company 'Freshly Squeezed' had had some success by targeting this public alongside a young, hip 'francophone' crowd. Some of the institutions of young flemish life in Brussels, meanwhile, such as Beurs café, have always attracted a sizable number of young Europeans. The Saint Géry area now hums with numerous bars and restaurants where a young, cosmopolitan crowd mixes with little or no concern for the mean-spirited cultural politics that dominate squabbles in the city over the same neighborhood. It is images of these cafés, restaurants and shops that should be put on the front of tourist brochures, not images of royal palaces and Mannekin Pis.

There is a perception, perhaps rightly so, that the tensions of the flemish-walloon conflict would be felt a lot more living outside the 'multinational' space of the city. Siobhan, who had lived in a commune with facilities before returning to Brussels, confirmed this. She was shocked by the way neighbors there could allow these 'ethnic' tensions to ruin interpersonal relations between people in the same street – and she herself felt a complete outsider on all sides. Only one of my interviewees, Dave, a successful businessman, had actually chosen to move away from Brussels. He had found a new 'expat' life in Leuven, enjoying the Dutch speaking context, cheaper housing, and a lively foreign resident scene very different from the one in Brussels. All the others who were settled could be described as loyal *bruxellois*.

European residents do need to pay attention to the Belgian national struggle: not so that they can 'integrate' in some way, but rather so that they can learn both sides of the story and be able to strategically play off of it. As a foreigner, one can usually be treated very positively by both sides. There are many tragicomic aspects to the Belgian break up from a Belgian point of view – but from a foreign European resident's perspective, in many respects it is this evolving, unfinished struggle which creates the denationalized social spaces in which eurostar life can thrive. The Region is unlikely to be able to promote this in a policy sense, but it could begin to realize that the real strength of Brussels lies in its

uniqueness as a ‘free’ multicultural, multinational city; precisely, in other words, in its liberating lack of an overriding ‘national’ cultural identity.

Saïd, a French charity worker, eloquently summed up the unique sense of freedom he felt on the streets of Brussels. Providing you stay out of the way of the police, he said, there was an infinite amount of creative, unusual things going on in all the spaces left unoccupied in this porous capital city. None of the usual national pressures applied: in this, Brussels is so different to Paris, where the weight of unavoidable ‘Frenchness’ can be felt pervasively in every aspect of social and cultural life in the city, however ‘global’ it became. Brussels also compared favorably in this respect to London, Amsterdam, and Stockholm, another city he knew well. For free movers, it is this sense of freedom that make Brussels attractive: the fact it is possible to be a resident foreigner, and never really need to become a ‘national’ of the place. However, there is more to it than this. In Brussels, where being ‘international’ is also a recognized lifestyle, one also never really need either to give up on a more personalized form of a-national urban identity, that is linked to that of many other residents in the city. There is, in other words, no need to depend upon the kind of heavily ‘nationalized’ expat ghettos that characterize international life in London or Amsterdam. Brussels is open in both ways, offering a spread of possibilities and lifestyles, and the chance for a genuine long term commitment to a transnational life in the city.

5. Conclusion: Eurostars and Eurocities

One of the most visible manifestations of Europeanization has been the success of the Thalys and Eurostar train links that now speed regularly between Paris, London, Amsterdam and Brussels. Part of a developing trans-European network (TEN) of high speed rail links sponsored by the European Union, the passengers of these trains perhaps offer another distinctive sample of the highly visible, yet still mysteriously unknown individuals on which this study is focused: the ‘eurostars’ at the vanguard of European free movement. Adapting my marketing niche research strategy, we might find that their lifestyles, consumer profile and cosmopolitan attitudes can be read off from the editorial content and advertisements found in the glossy on-board magazines. Their carefully targeted marketing effort is, in other words, pitched at what they see as an emergent future population of ultra-mobile cross-national professionals and upper bracket tourists that ride these fast trains. The multi-lingual text and the polyglot cultural references reflect the emergent ease of cross-national exchange and travel in this highly interlinked part of North West Europe. Yet the emergent European culture reflected in these pages also remains anchored in the national specificities of the four capitals, in which each city markets itself as the distinct embodiment of national treasures and cultural excellence, alongside proud invocations of their international openness and diversity.

Even at its most cosmopolitan, then, Europe remains an imagined landscape of national cities, national cultures, and national differences. The resilient, even thriving distinctiveness of European national cultures has been overlooked and downplayed by a generation of ‘globalization’ scholars concerned with impersonal macro-level structural

changes in the economy and international political system that are said to signal the inexorable decline of the nation state in Europe and elsewhere. The vast and growing literature on 'global cities' points towards the major cities of Europe as the very locus of this process. Yet these national capitals remain the essence and embodiment of the distinct national cultures in which they are centered, even as they also embody a far wider range of internationalized and Europeanized cultures than their still solidly nationalized hinterlands.

This study is part of a wider investigation into the human dimension of globalization and Europeanization. It sets out to see to what extent foreign European residents of major European cities still experience barriers in their access to social and economic participation in everyday aspects of life in the city, such as the housing market, education, welfare institutions, consumer services and political representation. Just as the street names, neighborhood identities and architectural features of capital cities embody an implicit, sedimented 'banal nationalism' (Billig 1995; Latour/Hermant 1998) that is imprinted into the very structure of the city – a coded social history which only fully socialized nationals of the country are ever likely to understand – these other everyday structures may be organized and structured in ways that perpetuate nationalized forms of 'know-how' that create a 'natural' national monopoly on access to the 'quality of life' benefits of life there. These informal barriers reflect what can be thought of in terms of the heavily nationalized 'structure of everyday life' (echoing de Certeau 1990, and Braudel 1992) that I suspect lies at the heart of the distinctiveness and resilience of European national cultures.

Brussels is one European capital that appears to offer some of the most open conditions and opportunities for foreign European residents to access the highly sought after benefits of a high 'quality of life' that remains the primary object of political and social struggle of urban dwelling professionals. My study has offered indicative, if inconclusive, evidence of both its open and closed dimensions. Although much can be said that is negative about Brussels, its relative accessibility only really comes to light to light when the city is considered in comparative perspective. Much further study of comparable places, such as Amsterdam, London and Paris, will be needed to substantiate this, but it does seem clear that the peculiarly non-nationalized situation of Brussels – between national cultures in a federal state – has given it certain dimensions of openness that is not necessarily to be found in these other cities, that are habitually seen as better or more obvious examples of truly internationalized cities.

The limited cross-national mobility of professionals in Europe suggests that the dominantly national organization of access to 'quality of life' benefits might still constitute the major barrier to sustained intra-European migration, despite the growing economic and cultural opportunities of such movement. Capital cities offer the most open opportunities, but they are also the sites of the most intense competition over resources and territory. For reasons to do with its location, its complex cultural character, and its extraordinarily open housing market - as well as the sheer number of foreign European residents in the city - Brussels is perhaps the European capital that has been most physically marked, and internally transformed, by the free movement of Europeans.

However, as we have seen, the experience of these pioneers even here remains somewhat marginal to the life of the city, as well as largely misunderstood by the host population. The principle of free movement of persons, and the systematic breaking down of national barriers to economic migration and re-settlement across borders in Europe, remains one of the core achievements on paper of the European Union. Yet the difficulties of fulfilling this kind of lifestyle, and the slight number of individuals willing to embark on a new and complicated cross-national life, point towards how fragile the European dream remains in this continent of still heavily nationalized nation states.

Appendix

Figures for resident foreign populations (stocks) in Europe

EU citizens in the foreign population of the 15 member states

% Share of EU Citizen (approx absolute figures)

	in total foreign population	in total population
Austria	12.6	1.1
Belgium	57.0	4.7
Denmark	28.2	0.8
Finland	22.4	0.2
France	33.8	2.0
Germany	26.5	2.3
Greece	13.7	0.2
Ireland	75.2	2.0
Italy	21.3	0.1
Luxembourg	90.5	30.0
Netherlands	28.7	1.4
Portugal	53.7	0.3
Spain	41.2	0.3
Sweden	42.4	2.1
United Kingdom	40.4	1.4

(source: OECD-SOPEMI 2000)

Approx population figures of foreign EU residents (total population)

EU 15 5 500 000 (374 000 000) = 1.5%

Belgium 562 100 (10 200 000)
Netherlands 190 200 (15 700 000)
UK 857 000 (59 000 000)
Germany 1 850 000 (82 000 000)
Denmark 48 900 (5 300 000)

(source: SOPEMI 1999)

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