

## **Parallel Lives or Overlapping Worlds?**

Explaining the development of the social lives and interactions of Mediterranean migrants in the Rotterdam port region, 1960 – 1980.



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## Abstract

The integration of Mediterranean migrants in Dutch society has received significant scholarly attention, but it has rarely been approached from a bottom-up perspective. This is especially true for migrants in Rotterdam. In this thesis I have partly filled this gap by applying a qualitative analysis to primary sources that reflect migrants' own experiences. My aim has been to analyse migrants' social lives to see to what extent their lives overlapped with Dutch society and how (and why) this changed during their stay (and in some cases settlement). I have done so by focusing specifically on Mediterranean migrants that worked in the Rotterdam port, mainly because the port industries were one of the biggest employers. An implicit question that my thesis poses is whether this bottom-up perspective leads to different conclusions than those drawn in earlier historical works on Mediterranean migrants' integration.

The short answer to this is: not necessarily. The general conclusions that I make are the same as those presented in earlier works. Namely, the social lives of migrants became more 'parallel' to Dutch people from the 1970s onward. Consistently high recruitment numbers followed by an economic crisis – which hit port industries especially hard – made migrants' stay more difficult. Their social lives in part turned inward as a protective measure to rising discrimination, but also because this was promoted by failing Dutch policy aimed at helping migrants integrate. However, the bottom-up approach has allowed for more nuance: it shows that there are cases of continuity between the 1960s (the period of early settlement) and the 1970s. The resulting image of migrants' social lives is more diverse, shows that migrants were not unwilling to integrate and that their lives were never fully 'parallel'.

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**Key words:** Mediterranean migration, labour migration, 'guest workers', integration, assimilation, social lives, port industries, shipyards, workplace interactions, lived experiences.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction, Historiography and Theoretical Framework

## Introduction

As a port city, Rotterdam has always attracted diverse groups of migrants. The unique character of this ‘superdiverse’ city nowadays is largely the result of historical processes of migration, settlement, integration, appropriation and exchange. The influx of Mediterranean migrants – coming from countries such as Italy, Spain, Turkey and Morocco – from the 1960s onward has played an important role in changing the culture and social structure of Rotterdam. These migrants were attracted (pulled by the possibility to earn money, and in some cases pushed by the economic and political situation in their own countries) to the growing Dutch industrial economy. While in the 1950s the Netherlands was seen as a country to emigrate out of rather than migrate into, this changed quickly as industries started growing rapidly resulting in labour shortages.<sup>1</sup> Companies began recruiting ‘guest workers’, and in the early 1960s the Dutch government made the first bilateral recruitment agreements with Spain and Italy. Many of the migrants however moved on their own or used middlemen to find work in Western Europe.<sup>2</sup> In Rotterdam, a significant amount of them found jobs on the many shipyards or in the docks in the port region.<sup>3</sup>

This thesis aims to research the lived experiences of these migrants: people who arrived in Rotterdam from the early 1960s onward and who began working at one of the many companies known to the 20<sup>th</sup> century Rotterdam port region. In popular discourse it is often thought that migrants lived separate lives to the autochthone Dutch population. This thesis will show that this was not the case: migrants spent their social lives interacting with the city and people of Rotterdam in diverse ways. However, from the 1970s onward this changed. Migrant workers’ live seemingly became more parallel to that of the Dutch host population. The social lives of Mediterranean migrants in the Rotterdam port region are used as a case study to analyse to what extent and why this happened. This is done through answering the following main question: How and why did the social lives of Mediterranean migrants working in the Rotterdam port region develop from 1960 until 1980? An underlying inquiry is whether

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<sup>1</sup> Jan Lucassen, Marinus Penninx, and Michael Wintle, *Newcomers: Immigrants and Their Descendants in the Netherlands 1550-1995* (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 1997), 52.

<sup>2</sup> Marinus Penninx and Marlou Schrover, *Bastion of bindmiddel? Organisaties van migranten in historisch perspectief* (Amsterdam: Instituut voor Migratie en Etnische Studies, 2001), 40-41; Ellen Krijnen, ‘De Stichting Hulp aan Buitenlandse Werknemers en de organisatievorming bij Zuid-Europese, Turkse en Marokkaanse arbeidsmigranten in Rotterdam,’ in *Vier eeuwen migratie: bestemming Rotterdam*, ed. Paul van de Laar et al. (Rotterdam: MondiTaal Publishing, 1998), 241; Van de Laar, *Stad van Formaat*, 527.

<sup>3</sup> Paul van de Laar, *Stad van formaat: geschiedenis van Rotterdam in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw*, (Zwolle: Waanders, 2007), 526.

focusing on first-hand experiences leads to different conclusions than those drawn in earlier works. The remainder of this introduction provides context to the case study by examining post-war labour migration to the Netherlands.

The large migration flows that started after the Second World War can be divided into two groups: postcolonial and labour migration. The groups of Mediterranean migrants that are the focus of this thesis belong to the latter. The flow of labour migrants slowly started in the decades after the Second World War but took off from the 1960s onward, a period in which many Dutch companies faced labour shortages. These shortages were the result of increasing industrialisation, but also of an increase in the school age, the introduction of the five day workweek and the fact that little married women were working.<sup>4</sup> In Rotterdam especially – a city that had to be rebuilt and that wanted to expand its industries – migrants willing to do jobs characterized by low pay and high physical demand were a necessity. This was especially true for industrial companies, as indigenous workers used the shortages to move to better paying jobs.<sup>5</sup> While at first these issues were solved by internal migration, shortages grew increasingly widespread, forcing the government and companies to recruit workers outside of their national borders.<sup>6</sup>

To do so, the Dutch ministries of Social Affairs and Justice signed recruitment agreements with Mediterranean countries, starting with Italy in 1960. In 1961, Rotterdam housed few foreign workers – around 1300 – but these numbers increased to over 23,000 in 1975, amounting to 3% of the city's population.<sup>7</sup> The main groups in 1961 were Spanish and Italian migrants (almost 80% of the total migrant population). Many Italians and Spaniards however remigrated, resulting in increasing migration from Turkey, Morocco, and Greece. Consequently, by 1975 Turkish migrants had become the largest group of migrants in Rotterdam, making up 34,7% of the total migrant population.<sup>8</sup> Many of the migrants were not recruited by companies or the Dutch government but migrated to Rotterdam out of their own motivations, hoping to find employment in the city. In the late 1960s and 1970s, recruitment was complicated and eventually halted due to an economic downturn which was partly the result of the first oil crisis. However, migrant numbers – specifically Turkish and Moroccan –

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<sup>4</sup> Annemarie Cottaar and Nadia Bouras, *Marokkanen in Nederland: De Pioniers Vertellen* (Amsterdam: J.M. Meulenhoff, 2009), 79.

<sup>5</sup> Paul van de Laar and Arie van der Schoor, 'Rotterdam's Superdiversity from a Historical Perspective (1600–1980),' in *Coming to Terms with Superdiversity*, eds. Peter Scholten, Maurice Crul, and Paul van de Laar (New York: Cham Springer International Publishing, 2019), 48.

<sup>6</sup> Krijnen, 'De Stichting Hulp,' 240.

<sup>7</sup> Van de Laar, *Stad van formaat*, 526-527.

<sup>8</sup> Van de Laar & Van der Schoor, 'Rotterdam's Superdiversity,' 49.

increased as family reunification saw wives and children following their fathers.<sup>9</sup> Nowadays, Moroccan and Turkish migrants make up more than 26% of the total population of Rotterdam.<sup>10</sup>

As a result of the aforementioned labour shortages, especially in physically demanding industries, port-related companies such as shipyards were prominent among companies employing Mediterranean migrants, who were willing to do ‘heavy, irregular and relatively poorly paid work’.<sup>11</sup> It is estimated that around 16% of all foreign workers in Rotterdam were employed at shipyards in the Rijnmond area, who actively recruited migrants in their own countries. For example, Verolme – a company which operated multiple shipyards – recruited around 1,000 foreign workers in the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>12</sup> In 1987, almost half of all Verolme employees were foreign.<sup>13</sup> Among these were 150 Yugoslavians, but the company mainly employed Portuguese, Spanish and Turkish men which they themselves recruited in the migrants’ countries starting in 1961. Their shipyard in the Botlek for example employed 217 foreign workers out of a total of 518 employees.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, Wilton-Feijenoord – a shipyard in Schiedam – employed 700 foreign workers in 1976, while the Rotterdamse Droogdok Maatschappij (RDM) employed 350 at the time.<sup>15</sup> Clearly, a significant number of Mediterranean migrants found employment at one of the many shipyards in and around Rotterdam.

In collective memory and in the historiography, the relations between these immigrants and the host country population, as well as migrants’ social lives, are often defined by segregation, clashes and conflict.<sup>16</sup> In Rotterdam, the riots in the Afrikaanderwijk – in which Turkish inhabitants clashed with Dutch people who lived in the same neighbourhood – are a noticeable feature of studies or conversations on Mediterranean guest workers arriving in the city.<sup>17</sup> Clearly, the discussion is focused on incidents while the majority of Mediterranean simply worked and lived in Rotterdam. In doing so, they interacted with their social

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<sup>9</sup> Penninx & Schrover, *Bastion of bindmiddel*, 41.

<sup>10</sup> ‘Statistieken gemeente Rotterdam,’ *AlleCijfers.nl*, accessed 10-01-2023, <https://allecijfers.nl/woonplaats/rotterdam/>.

<sup>11</sup> Van de Laar & Van der Schoor, ‘Rotterdam's Superdiversity,’ 49.

<sup>12</sup> Van de Laar, *Stad van formaat*, 527.

<sup>13</sup> City Archives Rotterdam (CAR), Archief van het Aktiekomitee Pro Gastarbeiders (AKPG), inv.nr. 1452-39, ‘Verolme is dood – lang leve Verolme-Botlek’.

<sup>14</sup> CAR, AKPG, inv.nr. 1452-39, ‘Vragen aan de gemeenteraadscommissie voor de haven en economische zaken,’ 30-10-1987.

<sup>15</sup> Van de Laar, *Stad van formaat*, 527.

<sup>16</sup> Jozefien de Bock, *Parallel Lives Revisited: Mediterranean Guest Workers and Their Families at Work and in the Neighbourhood, 1960-1980* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2018), 73.

<sup>17</sup> Examples of studies which take the riots as a starting point include Jutta Chorus, *Afri: leven in een migrantenwijk* (Amsterdam: Contact, 2009); Jurrien Dekker and Bas Senstius, *De tafel van Spruit: een multiculturele safari in Rotterdam* (Amsterdam: Mets & Schilt, 2001).

surroundings in various ways besides clashing with their Dutch counterparts. Foreign workers visited parties organised by their companies, but also went out on their own, going to dancing clubs and mixing with Dutch men and women. They showed agency to not just integrate or assimilate into an existing society but rather create new forms of social and cultural interaction.

The idea that migrants tend to live separately from the host country population is expressed through the notion of ‘parallel lives’.<sup>18</sup> In this thesis, this notion – which will be explained and expanded on in the Theoretical Framework – will be compared to the lived experiences of migrants working in the Rotterdam port region. The settlement of Mediterranean migrants will be the focus of research, as this group dominated port-related industries. Similarly, the time frame – starting in the 1960s up until 1980 – is taken as this period frames the beginning and end of the major Mediterranean migration flows to Rotterdam. The 1980s additionally signal the decline of the industrial economy, which meant that many migrants lost their jobs and had to find employment elsewhere. Thus, it adequately showcases how Mediterranean migrants – part of the large flows of ‘guest workers’ – experienced working and living in the Rotterdam port region.

## Historiography

Traditionally, historical work on Mediterranean migration to the Netherlands or other Western European countries focuses on integration, assimilation, policy (related to for example housing or integration), and labour.<sup>19</sup> This strong emphasis on policy and integration has led scholars to critique the historiographical debate for being characterized by an ‘integration perspective’: research is often dominated by top-down discussions on policies and whether migrants successfully integrated, but does not take the perspective of migrants themselves into account.<sup>20</sup> This is not always the case however, and in works on Mediterranean migration written in the 21<sup>st</sup> century the voices and experiences of migrants are included in increasing and various ways. The following section will analyse both academic literature on topics related to the migration of Mediterranean migrants which took place after 1960 – in the context of Europe and the Netherlands as well as Rotterdam – and literature on port labour in post-war Rotterdam.

As stated, traditional literature on guest workers in the broader European context has mainly focused on policy and integration. Typical works consist of large overviews of the

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<sup>18</sup> Bock, *Parallel Lives Revisited*, 1.

<sup>19</sup> See for example; Leo Lucassen, Jochen Oltmer, and David Feldman, eds., *Paths of Integration: Migrants in Western Europe (1880-2004)* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006).

<sup>20</sup> Liza Mügge, *Beyond Dutch Borders: Transnational Politics among Colonial Migrants, Guest Workers and the Second Generation* (Amsterdam University Press, 2012), 41.



integration of guest workers in different European societies.<sup>21</sup> A frequent hypothesis challenged or tested within this body of literature is the idea that migrants live in a ‘separate ethnic enclave’. The outcome of this hypothesis differs, with scholars for example stating that migrants did integrate into host country societies, however very slowly and minimally. Policy failures are a frequent explanatory argument for this outcome.<sup>22</sup>

In a more local context, migration to Rotterdam has received a significant amount of scholarly attention. Like the broader debate on migration to Europe or the Netherlands, the discussion is characterized by a focus on policy and integration. This is especially the case for Mediterranean migration, perhaps because of the initial temporary nature of guest workers’ stay: at first, migrants were not expected to integrate, something which changed after the reunification policies were put in place in the 1970s.<sup>23</sup> Works on Mediterranean migration to Rotterdam focus firstly on giving overviews of migration flows – where migrants came from and their numbers – as well as the impact migration had on the city.<sup>24</sup> The main focus within these works lies on policies and issues that resulted from the recruitment of guest workers. For example, guest workers are thought to have run into problems as they were difficult to educate or could not communicate with other workers. Besides this, they were housed in improvised and temporal buildings, often segregated from the rest of the population. Until the 1970s, their integration was not stimulated and often opposed by the Dutch government.<sup>25</sup> This was mainly due to the supposed temporal character of their stay; policymakers saw no use in integrating migrants who were supposed to leave a couple of years later.<sup>26</sup>

Works on Mediterranean labour migration to Rotterdam are frequently characterized by a focus on clashes, mostly being centred around the 1972 riots in the Afrikaanderwijk – a neighbourhood in Rotterdam which traditionally housed Rotterdammers who worked in the port, but in which a growing number of migrant workers resided. Eventually, these two groups

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<sup>21</sup> See for example Leo Lucassen, *The Immigrant Threat: The Integration of Old and New Migrants in Western Europe Since 1850*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 169; Lauren Stokes, *Fear of the Family: Guest Workers and Family Migration in the Federal Republic of Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022).

<sup>22</sup> Lucassen, *The Immigrant Threat*, 169; Krijnen, ‘De Stichting Hulp,’ 263.

<sup>23</sup> Penninx and Schrover, *Bastion of bindmiddel*, 41.

<sup>24</sup> Paul van de Laar and Arie van der Schoor, ‘Rotterdam’s Superdiversity from a Historical Perspective (1600–1980),’ in *Coming to Terms with Superdiversity*, eds. Peter Scholten, Maurice Crul, and Paul van de Laar (New York: Cham Springer International Publishing, 2019), 48-50.

<sup>25</sup> It took until 1983 for the Dutch government to declare a clear set of policies aimed at minority groups’ integration through the *Minderhedennota*; Rob Witte, *Al eeuwenlang een gastvrij volk: Racistisch geweld en overheidsreacties in Nederland (1950-2009)* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 75 – 76; Lucassen and Penninx, *Nieuwkomers*, 146.

<sup>26</sup> Van de Laar, *Stad van formaat*, 527-530.

would collide as a Dutch woman was evicted by a Turkish landlord.<sup>27</sup> Once again, this issue is approached from the perspective of policy – for example by analysing which policy failures led to the riots or which followed them. These works challenge the idea that the riots were the results of white racism and frustration, as is often thought. Instead, it is argued, the clashes resulted from long held frustrations by both groups, which were ignored by the municipality.<sup>28</sup>

In the Dutch context, migrant organizing is also given considerable attention – most likely a result of post-1970 government policy which promoted self-organization as a means of integration.<sup>29</sup> This approach thus once again emphasizes the integration approach taken by many scholars: it applies a top-down perspective by focusing on government policy.<sup>30</sup> Studies for example research the effects of government subsidies on the organizations and identity of migrants – migrants often changed how they presented themselves to receive subsidies – or test whether subsidizing separate migrant organizations actually led to increasing integration.<sup>31</sup>

The focus on organizations is echoed in the historiography on Rotterdam. Aside from housing and basic integration policies, supporting organizations was an important way for the municipality to promote the integration of migrants in the city. According to policymakers, belonging to a group would prevent seclusion and help migrants retain their own identity, but would also help them participate in Dutch society. As such, groups were founded in Rotterdam which aimed to help migrants form their own organizations. An example of such a group is the *Stichting Hulp aan Buitenlandse Werknemers*, however research shows that this migrant support organization was not aimed at helping migrants organize themselves, but rather at helping individual migrants. Some migrant groups, such as Yugoslavs, Greeks, and Portuguese did have ‘one or more strong organization of their own’, but these were initiated by themselves. This was not the case with the Spaniards and Italians, who were much more internally divided. The governments’ emphasis on organizing and group building in order to enforce integration

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<sup>27</sup> Chorus, *Afri*; Dekker and Senstius, *De tafel van Spruit*.

<sup>28</sup> Van de Laar, *Stad van formaat*, 531-532.

<sup>29</sup> Ulbe Bosma, *Terug uit de koloniën: zestig jaar postkoloniale migranten en hun organisaties* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2009).

<sup>30</sup> See for example; Penninx & Schrover, *Bastion of bindmiddel?* 45; Floris Vermeulen, *The Immigrant Organising Process: Turkish Organisations in Amsterdam and Berlin and Surinamese Organisations in Amsterdam, 1960-2000* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 136.

<sup>31</sup> Marlou Schrover, ‘Multiculturalism, Dependent Residence Status and Honour Killings: Explaining Current Dutch Intolerance towards Ethnic Minorities from a Gender Perspective (1960-2000),’ in *Gender, Migration and Categorisation: Making Distinctions between Migrants in Western Countries, 1945-2010*, eds. Marlou Schrover and Deirdre M. Molony (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013), 247; Krijnen, ‘De Stichting Hulp,’ 263.

thus did not match its results on the ground in Rotterdam, as the organizations of migrants had little effect on emancipation and integration.<sup>32</sup>

Besides integration policies and organizations, a significant part of the academic literature on migrants in Rotterdam focuses on labour. This focus is expressed through studies aiming to explain unemployment, wage gaps or inequalities that migrants face on the labour market. From the 1970s onward, the focus lies on the changing Dutch attitudes towards migrant workers: because of an economic downturn Dutch workers felt that migrants were ‘stealing’ their jobs.<sup>33</sup> In literature on the period before this however, a frequently expressed argument is that migrants are unable to fully integrate and thus participate in the labour market or at the workplace due to cultural differences. The influence of cultural differences on labour relations is for example emphasized, as migrants are thought to act ‘Dutch’ at work, while they were seemingly only able to truly be themselves and express themselves culturally within their own circles or at home.<sup>34</sup> Most of these types of studies are problem-oriented, a result of the concentration of migrants in low-skilled jobs or unemployment, however they fail to offer any real causes or solutions.<sup>35</sup> Finally, some of these reports echo the focus on self-organizing present in the literature on migrants in the Netherlands.<sup>36</sup>

While research reports and earlier discussed literature do identify migrants working in the port industry, the historiography on port labour in post-war Rotterdam does not mention migrant workers at all. Instead, it focuses solely on labour relations and strikes while not including the voices and experiences of migrants working in the port. At least two authors have analysed labour relations and strikes in the Rotterdam port, both with a strong focus on dissatisfaction with working conditions and resulting strikes.<sup>37</sup> They include detailed descriptions of the famous port strike of 1979, however it does not become clear whether migrants working in the port were also involved.<sup>38</sup> Reasons for this exclusion could be numeral,

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<sup>32</sup> Krijnen, ‘De Stichting Hulp,’ 246 & 262–263.

<sup>33</sup> For changes in the perceptions of (mainly Muslim) migrants, see for example; Martijn de Koning and Thijl Sunier, ‘Page after Page I Thought, That’s the Way It Is’: Academic Knowledge and the Making of the ‘Islam Debate’ in the Netherlands,’ *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 10, no. 1 (2021): 97.

<sup>34</sup> Ruijter, ‘Kansen voor sociale mobiliteit,’ 101–3.

<sup>35</sup> Ria Vogels et al., *Allochtonen in Rotterdam: de maatschappelijke positie op het gebied van arbeid* (Rotterdam: Centrum voor Onderzoek en Statistiek (COS), 1997), 80.

<sup>36</sup> Hein de Graaf, ‘Plaatselijke organisaties van Turken en Marokkanen: een beschrijving en analyse van de functies van Turkse en Marokkaanse organisaties in Rotterdam en de Turkse organisaties in zes Brabantse steden’ (’s-Gravenhage: Nederlands Instituut voor Maatschappelijk Werk Onderzoek (NIMAWO), 1985).

<sup>37</sup> Sjaak van der Velden, ‘Stakingen in Nederland: Arbeidersstrijd 1830-1995’ (PhD diss., Amsterdam: Stichting Beheer IISG, 2000), 41; Erik Nijhof, ‘Gezien de dreigende onrust in de haven...’: de ontwikkeling van de arbeidsverhoudingen in de Rotterdamse haven 1945-1965’ (PhD diss., Amsterdam: Stichting Beheer IISG, 1988).

<sup>38</sup> Van der Velden, ‘Stakingen in Nederland,’ 57.

among those the possibility that migrants were not involved in labour strikes or did not mix with their Dutch colleagues. On the other hand, migrants could have been real contributors to the strikes who were not mentioned as a separate group, simply because their numbers were too small, or because they contributed much like their Dutch colleagues: as regular workers.

Contrary to the discussion on Mediterranean migrants in Rotterdam, works focusing on postcolonial migration – both in the Dutch as well as Rotterdam context – take a more bottom-up approach which is often characterized by a focus on cultural expressions.<sup>39</sup> The literature on postcolonial migrants in Rotterdam consists of extensive descriptions of each groups' cultural impact on the city – for example discussing Indonesians who, after their arrival, impacted the cultural scene in Rotterdam through performances of so-called *Indorock* – an Indonesian version of Rock 'n Roll. The focus of such studies is often contemporary; aimed at explaining how Rotterdam became the 'multicultural' city that it is today.<sup>40</sup> In these works, the cultural impact, expressions, and influences of migrants on the city of Rotterdam are emphasized – however as a result of their focus they rarely contain mention of the expressions and experiences of Mediterranean migrants.

The topic of Mediterranean migrants living in Rotterdam has thus been approached from multiple different angles. Most of them can however be characterized as top-down measurements of integration and assimilation. Whether focusing on groups helping migrants organize themselves, clashes between migrants and Rotterdammers, or the housing and segregation of migrants in Rotterdam – the perspectives and experiences of migrants themselves are missing. These works lack a bottom-up analysis of migrants working in Rotterdam: how did they experience working and eventually settling in an unknown country; and how did they interact with their social surroundings? Bottom-up, cultural approaches to postcolonial migrants living in Rotterdam do exist, but such an approach has not been applied to Mediterranean migrants who lived and worked in the city in significant numbers from the 1960s onward.

Comparable approaches have been applied to post-1960 guest workers in Europe – for example in Austria and Belgium. Taking an Austrian factory as a case study, an essay titled 'The Other Colleague' has tried to analyse the intertwined nature of the working life, social life and living space of migrants. In doing so, it moves away from the top-down focus, however it

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<sup>39</sup> An example of a broad study which focuses on migration and culture is; Isabel Hoving, Hester Dibbits, and Marlou Schrover, eds., *Cultuur en migratie in Nederland: Veranderingen van het alledaagse 1950-2000* (Den Haag: Sdu Uitgevers, 2005).

<sup>40</sup> Captain, 'Een (t)huis vinden in Rotterdam,' 421–422 & 434.

does not directly include the perspectives of the migrants themselves.<sup>41</sup> A case study on the lives and work of Mediterranean guest workers who came to Ghent from the 1960s onward does so by challenging the hypothesis that migrants lived a ‘parallel life’ to the host population through their own perspective. Themes such as housing and finding work do remain relevant but do not dominate, as they are supplemented by analyses of social relations in the neighbourhood and at work.<sup>42</sup> The information for these stories is mostly taken from interviews, thus (in part) enabling the people who arrived as migrants to put forward their own stories.

A similar development can be recognized in the broader Dutch context as the experiences and voices of migrants are increasingly being included in specific case studies on Mediterranean migrants. In 1994 already, a study on Mediterranean migrants in the Netherlands included interviews with the migrants themselves as a necessary source ‘to paint a complete historical picture’. In this work, migrants are ‘given’ a stage to discuss their experiences, however the study seems to focus on negativity and victimhood.<sup>43</sup> More recent studies move away from the emphasis on victimhood and can be seen as empowering, ascribing more agency to the migrants. These works, one of which is aptly titled *Moroccans in the Netherlands: The pioneers explain*, place the personal experiences of migrants at the centre. In doing so, they aim to refute long held biases and paint a more complete picture of Mediterranean workers in the Netherlands.<sup>44</sup> For example, works oppose the image of a ‘failed generation’ of silent and mistreated *allochthones* as victims. Instead, they put forward diverse images of migrants as daring individuals, willing to take a risky first step to improve their own lives.<sup>45</sup> Of course, the aim is not to propagate an overly positive image of Mediterranean migration, but to diversify the debate and describe the migrants as active players instead of victims. As such, this body of works moves away from the focus on integration and policy, and towards new themes of workplace experiences, daily life, and interactions with the home land.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Anne Unterwurzacher, ‘‘The Other Colleagues’’: Labor Migration at the Glanzstoff-Fabrik in St. Pölten from 1962 to 1975,’ in *Migration in Austria*, ed. Günter Bischof and Dirk Rupnow, vol. 26 (University of New Orleans Press, 2017), 159.

<sup>42</sup> Bock, *Parallel Lives Revisited*, 72 & 131.

<sup>43</sup> Will Tinnemans, *Een gouden armband: een geschiedenis van mediterrane immigranten in Nederland (1945-1994)* (Utrecht: Nederlands Centrum Buitenlanders, 1994), 414.

<sup>44</sup> Annemarie Cottaar and Nadia Bouras, *Marokkanen in Nederland: De Pioniers Vertellen* (Amsterdam: J.M. Meulenhoff, 2009), 16; Ineke van der Valk, *Harde werkers: migranten van het eerste uur langs Rijn & Lek, 1945-1985* (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2009), 7.

<sup>45</sup> Annemarie Cottaar and Nadia Bouras, *Marokkanen in Nederland: De Pioniers Vertellen*, 10.

<sup>46</sup> Valk, *Harde werkers*, 7.

As made clear through the historiographical analysis, such an approach has not yet been applied to Mediterranean migrants working in the Rotterdam port region. The scholarship on migration to Rotterdam can in part be characterized by an ‘integration perspective’, while the daily lives, interactions and agency of migrants has been under researched. The historiography in the broader Dutch context has moved away from this approach, yet research in the context of Rotterdam has not followed suit, even though studies on postcolonial migrants in Rotterdam are increasingly being approached from a bottom-up perspective. This thesis partly fills this gap through combining both bottom-up stories on migrants’ social lives with a more traditional ‘integration perspective’ to explain why migrants’ social lives tended to develop as they did. The main research question – in short: how and why did migrants social lives develop over time? – reflects this combination. It is focused on researching lived experiences (how did migrants spend their social lives, and how did this develop over time?), while at the same time using arguments related to integration, policy and demography to explain this development. Contrary to the more traditional perspective, the aim however is not to explain failing integration, but rather to explain decreasing social interactions between groups of migrants and the Dutch population.

### Operationalization

The thesis is divided into three chapters, excluding the introductory section and the conclusion. The introduction includes the historiography, theoretical framework, methodology and operationalization. The remaining chapters are aimed at answering the main question through three separate sub questions. The first sub question is: How and why did migrants arrive at the Rotterdam port and what kind of housing and working conditions did they find? The corresponding chapter describes the context of Mediterranean migrants working in the Rotterdam port. This chapter focuses on diversifying the image of Mediterranean migrants in the Rotterdam port region, by opposing the idea of that these people were voiceless and mistreated workers. It analyses their motivations for migration, the ways in which they were recruited and their housing and labour activities.

The second sub question is: How did the social lives and interactions of Mediterranean migrants in and outside of their companies differ between the 1960s and 1970s? The corresponding chapter is based mainly on primary source material and uncovers how migrants interacted with their co-workers at the workplace and how they spent their free time outside of it. It examines to what extent migrant workers were actively involved in interacting with their

companies or co-workers. Outside of the workplace the chapter analyses how migrants spent their free time and how they interacted or mixed with their social surroundings. The emphasis here lies on the personal experiences of migrants. Besides analysing the development of social lives and interactions over time, the third chapter thus partly uncovers what it was like living and working as a migrant in the Rotterdam port region.

Besides describing how social interactions and lives of Mediterranean migrants in the Rotterdam port region can be defined, the thesis aims to also explain *why* their social lives developed in a certain way. This is done through answering the third and final sub question, which is mainly analytical and focused on identifying the explaining factors behind the changing/developing social lives of migrants: Which factors influenced the development of Mediterranean migrants' social lives and interactions from 1960 until 1980? The aim of this chapter is to connect the personal experiences of individual migrants to broader developments that took place from the 1960s until the 1980s. Consequently, it will aid in answering the analytical part of the main research question aimed at uncovering why the social lives and interactions developed in a certain way.

### Theoretical & Conceptual Framework

As a tool for analysis, this thesis makes use of the notion of 'Parallel Lives' similarly to the excellent work of Jozefien de Bock on Mediterranean migrants in the city of Ghent. The notion represents the idea that Mediterranean migrants in (Western) European countries live a life separate or segregated from the host country's population following their settlement. The initial term on which it was based – *Parallelgesellschaft* ('parallel society') – stems from a 1996 German debate on the presumably failed integration of Mediterranean migrants. The term and the ideas behind it spread to the rest of Europe, and became a prominent part of debates on 'failing' multicultural societies on the continent. Parallel lives has been used to refer to minority groups' self-organization and segregation, resulting in minimal 'spatial, social and cultural contact' with the majority society.<sup>47</sup> Within the thinking behind the notion, relations between host country and minority populations are assumed to operate 'on the basis of a series of parallel lives' which do not overlap at any point or 'promote meaningful interchanges'.<sup>48</sup> The implicit blame for these parallel lives clearly lies with the migrants and not with the host country population: they are at fault for 'preferring' to live separately, however empirical research on

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<sup>47</sup> Bock, *Parallel Lives Revisited*, 1.

<sup>48</sup> Ted Cattle, 'Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team,' *Home Office London*, January 1, 2001, 9.

the ground often shows that migrants are willing to intermix and get along in workplaces or shared urban spaces.<sup>49</sup>

Parallel Lives has formed the inspiration for this thesis and has led to its main aim: using migrants' lived experiences to see to what extent social lives did overlap. Furthermore, the theory offers a lens or way of viewing the source material for this thesis. It has led to questions regarding the development of interethnic interactions and sincere relations. This approach differs from the 'integration perspective' in that it focuses solely on social lives, and not on other assumed measures of integration – such as income, job performance or housing situation.

Supporters of the thinking behind the idea of parallel lives are guilty of employing methodological nationalism and viewing the issues migrants face through an ethnic lens. For this thesis, it is essential to discuss these concepts in order to prevent making the same mistakes. Methodological nationalism first of all is an intellectual orientation that assumes that all social and historical processes are contained within the national borders of individual states. The members of these states are assumed to share a unique common history, values, customs and institutions. Within this orientation, migrants are socially and culturally discrete 'outsiders' who, upon entering the borders of the state, are supposed to integrate into the nation state. An important aspect of this orientation – which was the result of long processes of nation-state building beginning in the nineteenth century – is that individuals are only 'allowed' to have one country and thus one identity.<sup>50</sup> Employing an ethnic lens secondly means seeing social and cultural division as solely the product of differences in national origin. In Dutch society, an example could be stating that Turkish people 'failed' to integrate because their culture differs too much from Dutch culture. This discursive act, which separates natives and foreign migrants, assumes the two groups to be separate and homogenous. In reality, both overlap and internal differences can be recognized.<sup>51</sup> The challenge of this thesis lies with discarding this binary while keeping focus on the migration experiences.

Besides offering a theoretical base it is important to discuss the terminology that will be used in this thesis. First of all, when discussing Mediterranean migrants themselves, this thesis will interchangeably employ the terms 'migrant (port) worker', 'foreign (port) worker' or 'Mediterranean migrant'. Occasionally, the term 'guest worker' is used, either to emphasize

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<sup>49</sup> Bock, *Parallel Lives Revisited*, 2.

<sup>50</sup> Ayşe Çağlar and Nina Glick Schiller, *Migrants and City-Making: Dispossession, Displacement, and Urban Regeneration* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 3-4.

<sup>51</sup> Ayşe Çağlar, 'Still 'Migrants' after all those Years: Foundational Mobilities, Temporal Frames and Emplacement of Migrants,' *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 42, no. 6 (May 2, 2016): 953.



how the men were viewed at the time (as temporary guests), or when quoting from the source material. However, it is essential to recognize the problematic nature of the term ‘guest worker’ as it disregards the fact that many Mediterranean migrants eventually became Dutch citizens, rendering their stay more permanent. In line with the opposition to employing an ethnic lens, the terms ‘migrant worker’ versus ‘non-migrant’, ‘Dutch’ or other are used not to emphasize differences or pursue categorization in binary oppositions, but simply to enable comparison, efficient analysis and description. Furthermore, as it is not the aim of this thesis to measure the integration of migrant workers, the term ‘integration’ is used not to describe a ‘failed’ or a ‘successful’ process of assimilation. When using the term, the emphasis lies on the social aspects of integration: to what extent relationships developed or people interacted in their daily social lives, and not on which migrant groups integrated ‘more’ or ‘less’ and why.<sup>52</sup>

To enable distinction between the trajectories migrants took before arriving in Rotterdam, the thesis makes use of the terms ‘official migration’, ‘spontaneous migration’ and ‘chain migration’. The first of these refers to people that arrived through official recruitment channels and who were thus recruited directly by the government or companies. The second term refers to people who arrived ‘on their own’ or through using middlemen to skip the official recruitment agencies. Finally, the latter refers to people that arrived through contacts with friends, family or acquaintances and thus includes people who arrived in the process of family reunification.

Finally, the thesis makes use of a distinction between a ‘first phase’ and a ‘second phase’ of Mediterranean migration. The first phase takes places roughly from 1960 (the first migrants arrived in 1956, however settlement in large numbers began from 1960) until 1970, while the second phase lasts from 1970 until 1980. This distinction is based on a couple of factors. Firstly, migrants themselves often make a similar distinction when discussing their own experiences, explaining why is partly the aim of this thesis. Secondly, the second phase differs from the first phase in that the economic, political and cultural character of Dutch society had changed significantly, as well as the type of migration. The distinction between the two phases is further expanded on in the third chapter of the thesis.

## Sources & Methodology

The primary source base of this thesis consists of a wide variety of sources, which are selected because they are (in some way) able to illustrate the experiences of Mediterranean migrants

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<sup>52</sup> De Bock, *Parallel Lives*, 4.

living and working in the Rotterdam port region. For example, this thesis makes use of the archives of migrant support organizations in Rotterdam, such as the *Stichting Hulp aan Buitenlandse Werknemers* (foundation for supporting foreign workers) and the *Aktiecomitee Pro Gastarbeiders* (action committee in support of foreign workers, AKPG) to find descriptions of problems migrants faced, either at the workplace or in their daily lives. Furthermore, it makes use of newspapers such as *Het Vrije Volk* (The Free People, a social democratic newspaper with a local orientation on Rotterdam) to find interviews with or reports on the ‘guest workers’ in Rotterdam. Additional archival material is taken from the archives of individual companies in the Rotterdam port region, as well as company newsletters which often contain extensive reports or interviews.

The main challenge with using these sources lies with their top-down perspective. Most of the documents within the archives of migrant support organizations are for example focused on how Dutch inhabitants helped migrants. When they do include the migrants’ perspective, it is important to keep in mind the biases or interests of the person or company behind the document. Most of the material is not taken from ego documents, but rather from company publications or newsletters. A company might be hesitant to publish an interview if a foreign worker was critical, and the questions asked (and thus the information that can be taken from the source) are also dependent on the interests of the interviewer, the company or newspaper, and their public. Besides this, newspaper articles and company newsletters on foreign workers are often characterised by a paternalistic and condescending undertone.

To overcome these challenges and to be able to illustrate and analyse the experiences, interactions and social lives of foreign workers in the Rotterdam port region, the thesis additionally makes use of oral history as process-generated data. This means using interviews created by other researchers or historical actors for purposes other than those in mind for the research at hand. These sources must still be seen as oral histories, as they are different to other primary source material, most significantly ego documents. Unlike eyewitness testimonies or personal accounts, interviews are conversational narratives, where one person shares their story with another. Recognizing their nature as complex and subjective social constructs, it is crucial to understand that these narratives cannot be simply extracted for factual information or data.<sup>53</sup>

Oral history interviews allow for deeper levels of analysis compared to traditional primary source material, but their contents are also strongly directed by the questions of the

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<sup>53</sup> Alexander Freund, ‘Oral History as Process-Generated Data,’ *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung* 34, no. 1 (2009): 23 & 32.

interviewer. In the case of this thesis, the interest mainly lies with the interviewee, and as such, it must be kept in mind that they are not able to freely express themselves. Examples of oral history as process-generated data used by this thesis are contemporary interviews in newspapers, the company newsletters, but also life story interviews with former migrant workers looking back on their experiences. For example, the thesis makes use of source material from the project *Turkish pioneers in Amsterdam*, by the Amsterdam Museum, which is based on life story interviews with Turkish employers of the NDSM-shipyard in Amsterdam. Additional material comes from documentaries and a PhD-project on the religious experiences of Moroccan migrants.

Using oral histories as primary source material does come with several challenges. Until the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, oral history was seen as the historical method most susceptible to subjectivity and historical falsities. In the 1950s, the first oral history projects were created in the United States, and from that time onward the oral history ‘movement’ gained increasing methodological support.<sup>54</sup> Paul Thompson’s 1978 *Oral History: Voices of the Past* was especially formative for the academic credibility of oral history as a historical method and oral histories as primary sources. Like with any kind of primary source, doubts regarding subjectivity and trustworthiness do remain. A prominent and well-known issue is of course the difference between people’s memories and the actual historical events. People also tend to have positive memory biases, viewing the past as more ‘rosy’ than it actually was.<sup>55</sup> This is where additional primary source and historiographical material comes in, which is used as a verification of the accounts as retold by interviewees.

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<sup>54</sup> Donald A. Ritchie, ‘Introduction: The Evolution of Oral History,’ in *The Oxford Handbook of Oral History*, ed. Donald A. Ritchie (Oxford University Press, 2010), 5.

<sup>55</sup> Orly Adler and Ainat Pansky, ‘A ‘Rosy View’ of the Past: Positive Memory Biases,’ in *Cognitive Biases in Health and Psychiatric Disorders*, eds. Tatjana Aue and Hadas Okon-Singer (Academic Press, 2020), 139–71.

## Chapter 2: Mediterranean migrants arriving in Rotterdam

During the 1950s the first Mediterranean migrants began arriving at various shipyards and port-related companies in Rotterdam. They were recruited directly by chiefs of staff who travelled abroad, before the national government took over official recruitment in the early 1960s.<sup>56</sup> In 1956, a first group of around 80 Italians arrived at the *Rotterdamsche Droogdok Maatschappij* (RDM), described by the company itself as ‘belonging to the first guest workers in our country’.<sup>57</sup> In the following years, more companies began recruiting Italian workers, but they only made up small shares of the total workforce in the port. From 1961 onward – when the Spanish and Dutch government agreed on a recruitment treaty – companies began recruiting large numbers of Spanish workers, with Verolme for example employing around 400 Spanish workers for its VDSM shipyard.<sup>58</sup> By 1963, the *Wilton Fijenoord* shipyard in Schiedam employed a similar number of 383 foreign workers, making up around 6% of their total workforce. After the arrival of the first groups of officially recruited foreign workers, more tended to follow as spontaneous migrants.

Besides the large shipyards, smaller companies, such as the *Graan Elevator Maatschappij* (GEM) and smaller shipyards like *Van der Giessen-de Noord* also began employing workers from Spain, Italy and later on Turkey. The migration of Turkish workers to Rotterdam took off from 1964, when the Dutch and Turkish governments agreed on a recruitment treaty. In the following years, Turkish migrants would become the largest group of foreign workers in the Rotterdam port region. Both smaller and larger companies within the Rotterdam port region employed Mediterranean migrants throughout the 1960s and up until the 1980s, with their numbers peaking around the mid to late 1970s.<sup>59</sup> Migrant workers are often seen as voiceless workers who came solely to earn money and fell victim to poor working and living conditions, but was this the case in Rotterdam? This chapter answers this question and provides context to the remainder of the thesis through answering the following sub question: How and why did migrants arrive at the Rotterdam port and what kind of housing and working conditions did they find? This is done by analysing migrants’ experiences prior to and after beginning to work in the Rotterdam port region.

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<sup>56</sup> Valk, *Harde werkers*, 13.

<sup>57</sup> ‘Smid G. Lanzillo werd 65: Italiaanse RDM-er zorgde voor primeur,’ *Nieuws van de R.D.M.* 8, no. 11 (1972): 11.

<sup>58</sup> ‘Spanjaarden van Verolme thuis op feestdagen,’ *Het Parool*, December 21, 1961, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ABCDDD:010841050:mpeg21:a0245>, accessed on 16-02-2023.

<sup>59</sup> Van de Laar & Van der Schoor, ‘Rotterdam's Superdiversity,’ 49.

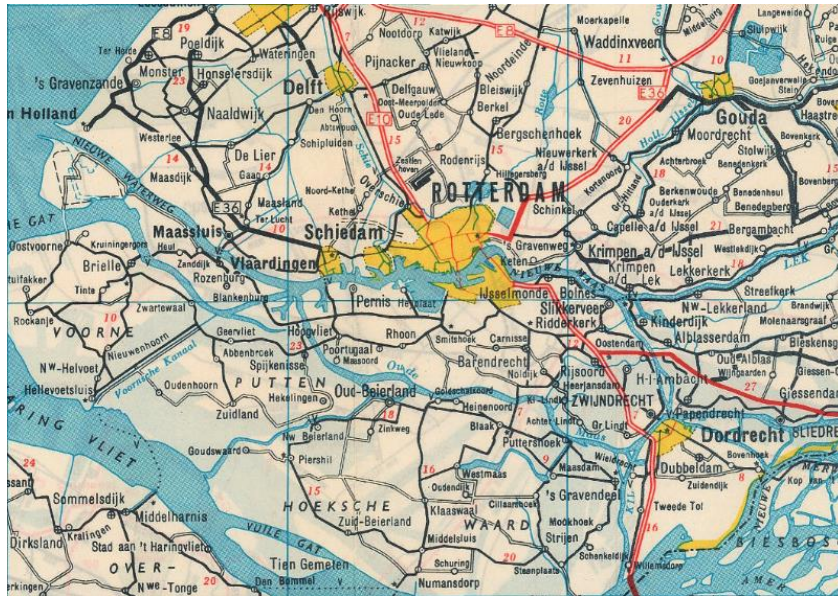


Figure 1: 1960 map of the Rotterdam port region.

## 2.1. Before arrival: motivations to migrate and the road taken to the port

The most well-known and dominant popular explanation for the migration of Mediterranean migrants is that people came to Western Europe to earn and save up money, support their family, and return to start a business with their newly gathered capital. In the academic literature this image is frequently nuanced by explaining the multifaceted nature of migrants' motivations. Often, making more money played an important role in their decision to migrate, however there were other factors at play.<sup>60</sup> When looking at the recruitment of migrants on the other hand, it is often believed that they were convinced or persuaded by recruitment agents against their own will or on false pretences. While such practices did occur, many people migrated out of their own free will and on their own, often skipping the hassle of official recruitment agencies and middlemen. Additionally, while it is often thought that migrants arrived either through large scale employer recruitment or by chain migration through personal networks, the historical reality is more complex.<sup>61</sup> This first section examines the motivations and recruitment of Mediterranean migrants in the Rotterdam port: Why did they decide to migrate, why did they choose to migrate to Rotterdam (if they did), and how did they end up in the port region?

<sup>60</sup> Cottaar and Bouras, *Marokkanen in Nederland: De Pioniers Vertellen*, 61.

<sup>61</sup> Jozefien De Bock, 'Of Employers, Uncles and Interpreters : The Diverse Trajectories of Guest Workers to the Belgian City of Ghent, 1960–1975,' *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44, no. 7 (2018): 1233.

## *Motivations*

Migrants' reasons for migrating to the Rotterdam port were mainly but not solely influenced by economic incentives. These incentives came in different shapes, stemming from the need to make ends meet or the allure of higher wages, which allowed migrants to support their families. The most dire situations and reasons for migration can be found among those living in the more remote areas of Italy, Spain, Turkey and Morocco. For example, A. Yarba, a port worker from a small village in South-eastern Turkey, had to help his brother provide for their family as a shepherd after their father had died. They struggled to make ends meet and to provide for their mother and sister.<sup>62</sup> Similarly, some farmers were very much dependent on the harvest in weak economic areas, which meant they suffered from hunger and cold in less forgiving seasons.<sup>63</sup> Their reasons for migrating are clear: the step they took was a necessity to move towards a better life for them and their families. Some, such as most of the foreign workers at the *Graan Elevator Maatschappij* (grain elevator company, or GEM) worked mainly to provide for their families.<sup>64</sup> The Turkish Mahir Engin – who ended up at the shipyard *Wilton-Fijenoord* in Schiedam – was forced to be his family's breadwinner but could not make enough money in Turkey to comfortably do so and thus decided to migrate.<sup>65</sup> Others worked to save up enough money to purchase some land or begin a business in their own country.

In addition to economic motivations, various other factors influenced migrants' decision to migrate. For example, among Spanish men, the political situation in Spain (which was a dictatorship ruled by Francisco Franco until 1975) could also play a role. In a survey taken among 100 Spanish migrants in the Rijnmond area in 1967, 10% of respondents indicate that they moved because of the political situation in their country.<sup>66</sup> Some – such as the metalworker Angel Muñiz – even arrived as self-proclaimed political refugees and found likeminded people at the organization for Spanish workers in Rotterdam, *La Union*, which was strongly anti-Franco.<sup>67</sup> One member of *La Union*, a pipe fitter at *Verolme IJsselmonde*, names

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<sup>62</sup> 'Levensverhaal van Ali Yarba,' *WAR* 77, no. 5/6 (1978): 9.

<sup>63</sup> Süeda Işık. 'Het sombere gevoel bij migratie: Turkse gastarbeiders in Schiedam,' *Stedelijk Museum Schiedam* (blog), accessed March 14, 2023, <https://www.stedelijkmuseumschiedam.nl/het-sombere-gevoel-bij-migratie-turkse-gastarbeiders-in-schiedam/>, accessed on 14-03-2023.

<sup>64</sup> 'Buitenlanders bij de G.E.M. hebben het goed naar hun zin,' *De Does: Personeelsblad van de Graan Elevator Maatschappij (GEM) N.V. te Rotterdam* 10, no. 12 (1969), 129.

<sup>65</sup> 'Van Tabaksplukker tot volksvertegenwoordiger,' in *40 Yil/Jaar in Schiedam*, 2003, 19.

<sup>66</sup> The Rijnmond area is the area surrounding the rhine as it nears the North Sea, thus including Rotterdam and the area of focus of this thesis; Felix Geyer, *Buitenlandse arbeidskrachten: resultaten van een onderzoek onder Spaanse en Nederlandse werknemers in het Rijnmondgebied* (Rotterdam: Stichting tot onderzoek van de arbeidssituatie in het Rijnmondgebied, 1967), 9.

<sup>67</sup> Sjoerd Klaas Olfers, *Arbeidsmigrant of vluchteling? Achtergronden van de Spaanse migratie naar Nederland, 1960-1980*, (Amsterdam: Centrum voor de Geschiedenis van Migranten, 2004), 23.

the ability to ‘speak freely’ as one of his motivations to migrate to the Netherlands and describes how he hopes to return to Spain when it is a ‘democratic country’.<sup>68</sup>

A similar situation can be recognized among Moroccan refugees, as the country was ruled by the dictatorial king Hassan II from 1961 until 1999. Most Moroccans suffered from a lack of personal freedom and room for social mobility, which likely influenced people’s decisions to move. It is however quite rare that people explicitly name political motivations as their reason for migration. None of the Turkish, Italian or Moroccan workers found working in the Rotterdam port explicitly do so, for example. At most, some indicate a lack of personal freedom and social mobility or getting out of military service as one of the driving forces behind their migration. This is most likely due to the fact that people migrating from dictatorial or authoritarian countries are often hesitant to critique their homeland’s regimes in fear of repercussions for their family or themselves upon a potential return. These fears were not unfounded either, as foreign workers in Rotterdam were actively being shadowed by Greek and Spanish regime spies posing as fellow migrants.<sup>69</sup>

Another factor that influenced peoples’ decision to migrate was a longing for adventure. Most of the Spanish respondents in the 1967 survey report money (70% of respondents) and adventure (26%) as their biggest incentives for migrating.<sup>70</sup> This combination of economic motivations with a yearning for adventure is a common phenomenon among foreign workers in the Rotterdam port region. In Morocco, stories and images of compatriots returning from Western Europe – carrying ‘many suitcases and wearing beautiful clothes’ – motivated others to migrate as well. One Moroccan-Dutch man indicates that, as a child, he thought the Moroccans returning from Europe ‘came from paradise’.<sup>71</sup>

While a longing for adventure thus often supplemented economic motivations, there were exceptions. Some migrants in the Rotterdam port state that they were motivated solely by curiosity and adventure.<sup>72</sup> Alex Novratidis, a Greek crane operator at the RDM, had a well-paying job but migrated because he simply felt the need to ‘see something besides his own country’.<sup>73</sup> In a similar vein, Manuel Garcia Lopez – a Spanish foreman-scaffolder at the *Van*

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<sup>68</sup> ‘Visum: Antonio Guerrero,’ *Het Vrije Volk: Democratisch-socialistisch dagblad*, 17-04-1974, 13, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010958438:mpeg21:a0260>, accessed on 06/04/2023.

<sup>69</sup> ‘Buitenlandse arbeider wordt geschaduwd,’ *Algemeen Dagblad*, 12-08-1972, 27, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=KBPERS01:002895011:mpeg21:a00215>, accessed on 06-04-2023; ‘Griekenland roept spionnen terug 'flater voor Nederlandse regering',’ *Het Vrije Volk*, 08-08-1972, 5, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010958532:mpeg21:a0163>, accessed on 06/04/2023.

<sup>70</sup> Geyer, *Buitenlandse arbeidskrachten*, 9.

<sup>71</sup> Cottaar and Bouras, *Marokkanen in Nederland: De Pioniers Vertellen*, 61.

<sup>72</sup> Cottaar and Bouras, *Marokkanen in Nederland: De Pioniers Vertellen*, 61-62.

<sup>73</sup> ‘Alexis Novratidis,’ *Nieuws van de R.D.M.*, 1965, 12.

*der Giessen-de Noord* (GN) shipyard – states that he earned a decent living in Spain but that he felt that he could raise his family better in Western Europe. His reason for staying remains economic however; namely the free education that his children are receiving.<sup>74</sup> Turkish men who worked at Verolme also state that there were small differences in income, in some cases men could even earn more money in Turkey. They were mostly attracted by a ‘European dream’, propagated by countrymen returning in expensive cars and clothing.<sup>75</sup> Of course, the economic chances that these men had in their home countries men could be seen as exceptional, however it goes to show that economic motivations were not always the driving force behind Mediterranean migration.

Interestingly, while migration often was a conscious choice, this was not always the case for migrating to the Netherlands specifically. Many migrants knew that they wanted to move to Western Europe, but knew little about the Netherlands or had heard more positive stories about Germany or Belgium. Mahir Engin for example indicates that he had no real preference for the Netherlands, a country he knew little about and which was not ‘really a sought after destination’.<sup>76</sup> He preferred to work in Germany, but this was not possible when he enrolled with the local emigration centre. Ali Yarba, another Turkish man who worked at *Thomsen’s Havenbedrijf*, similarly ended up in the Netherlands after there was no work for him in Germany and Belgium.<sup>77</sup>

The question that remains is of course why migrants chose to work specifically in port-related companies in Rotterdam. While many of the migrants – especially in the early years – were experienced in shipbuilding industries (for example as welders), the main reason for this was simply because these companies were almost always looking for more workers.<sup>78</sup> Even in 1970, after a small recession and almost a decade of recruiting foreign workers, shipyard *P. Smit Jr.* issued a ‘cry of distress’ because they desperately needed more workers.<sup>79</sup> The shipbuilding industry, together with the mines, metal and textile industry, consisted of constantly growing companies that – instead of investing in more efficient production methods – decided to hire more workers to meet the demands of a growing worldwide economy. Additionally, the harbour industry failed to attract young Dutch workers who – as a result of a

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<sup>74</sup> ‘Een geslaagde Spaanse werknemer,’ *Werfnieuws: Maandelijks persorgaan van Van der Giessen-de Noord NV*, no. 4 (December, 1966), 27.

<sup>75</sup> Fidan Ekiz, ‘Zwaar Weer,’ *Veerboot Naar Holland*, documentary series, BNN - VARA, June 3, 2013, 08:00 - 09:00, [https://www.npostart.nl/veerboot-naar-holland/03-06-2013/VARA\\_101324439](https://www.npostart.nl/veerboot-naar-holland/03-06-2013/VARA_101324439), accessed on 12-04-2023.

<sup>76</sup> ‘Van Tabaksplukker Tot Volksvertegenwoordiger,’ 20.

<sup>77</sup> ‘Levensverhaal van Ali Yarba,’ *WAR 77*, no. 5/6 (1978): 9.

<sup>78</sup> ‘Van Tabaksplukker Tot Volksvertegenwoordiger,’ in *40 Yil/Jaar in Schiedam*, 2003, 21.

<sup>79</sup> ‘Wij zoeken vakbekwame medewerkers,’ *Contact: Bedrijfsblad van de machinefabriek en scheepswerf van P. Smit Jr. B.V.*, no. 14 (1969), 23.



contraction in the labour market – moved to more attractive and better paying jobs.<sup>80</sup> Thus, migrants looking for work could almost always find it at one of the many industrial companies in the Rotterdam port region. Besides this, a vicious circle can also be recognized in which port-related companies attract high numbers of foreign workers, who in turn convince their friends and family to work for the same company (provided the working conditions and pay were decent).

### *Recruitment*

Mediterranean workers thus migrated to the Rotterdam port region for a diverse number of reasons, but were mainly pulled by the higher wages leading them to an increased social mobility, either in their country of origin or in their new homeland. A dominant motivational factor can thus be recognized. Can the same be said for the ways in which migrants arrived in Rotterdam? Those who arrived first mainly came through bilateral recruitment agreements while others came as spontaneous migrants. Some had worked in other countries, cities or for different companies before eventually settling in Rotterdam, while others were directly recruited by companies in the port, where they stayed until their return or in some cases even their retirement.<sup>81</sup> Nowadays, the importance of the recruitment agreements – images of which at the time led to indignant responses from the Dutch public, comparing the selection of workers to ‘cattle markets’ – is increasingly questioned.<sup>82</sup> A stronger emphasis is being put on the spontaneous migration of migrants, as individuals or in groups. The following section will examine what this was like for migrants in the Rotterdam port region: what did their recruitment look like, what kind of developments can be recognized over time, and what was the dominant trajectory taken to the port?

In the early 1960s, companies in the Rotterdam port region were strongly involved with the recruitment of migrant workers. In Italy, companies handed in requests at the Dutch selection centre of the *Rijksarbeidsbureau* in Milan, which selected and recruited workers and distributed them among Dutch companies. This was not the case in Spain, Turkey and Morocco, where small teams from the companies themselves recruited workers directly. People could enlist with the local emigration centre and would be drafted when companies came looking for workers. The company representatives made their selection, and the migrants

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<sup>80</sup> Jan L. van Zanden, *The Economic History of the Netherlands 1914–1995: A Small Open Economy in the ‘Long’ Twentieth Century* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), 131.

<sup>81</sup> ‘Smid G. Lanzillo werd 65: Italiaanse RDM-er zorgde voor primeur,’ *Nieuws van de R.D.M.* 8, no. 11 (1972): 11.

<sup>82</sup> Annemarie Cottaar and Nadia Bouras, *Marokkanen in Nederland: De Pioniers Vertellen*, 23.

moved to the Netherlands by train or plane.<sup>83</sup> Through this method, *Verolme* had already recruited around 350 Spanish workers in 1961.<sup>84</sup> In the beginning of that year, two chiefs of staff of the company travelled to Valencia, a single trip resulting in the initial recruitment of a 100 skilled shipbuilding workers.<sup>85</sup> Mahir Engin was recruited by *Wilton-Fijenoord* in a similar manner in 1965. He enlisted with the local emigration centre (the ‘Agency for Work and Employee Mediation’), and was consequently called up to be inspected by a *Wilton-Fijenoord* representative in Turkey. He tested Engin’s professional skills after which he was examined medically in Ankara. The medical examination was quite strict – a friend of Engin was not able to pass – but Engin eventually arrived in Schiedam.<sup>86</sup>

As this official recruitment process was quite complicated – the recruitment country’s government had a strong say in the methods used – many people ignored the recruitment agreements, and found work in the Rotterdam port through different methods.<sup>87</sup> For example, some were able to get contracts through friends and family already working at one of the shipyards. In these early days of Mediterranean migration, having a signed contract was enough to receive a permit of residence (which valid for as long as the labour contract was valid). The VDSM shipyard also received offers from Spaniards who travelled to Rotterdam on tourist visas and simply walked up to the shipyard.<sup>88</sup> These offers were gladly taken, as port-related companies were almost always looking for workers. Others arrived through ‘brokers’ or other intermediaries – a third actor in the trajectory taken before arrival, next to migrants’ social networks at the sending end and institutional actors aiming to receive – and were also able to receive the necessary papers.<sup>89</sup> While arriving through formal recruitment did come with some bonuses, such as fixed housing and good employment conditions, the process was often too lengthy and complicated for migrants wanting or needing a change.

Spontaneous migration became the dominant trajectory taken from 1964 onward. This is reflected in a questionnaire taken among 100 Spanish workers in the Rijnmond area in 1967. All workers who arrived in 1961 indicate that they were recruited directly and arrived with a

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<sup>83</sup> Olfers, *Arbeidsmigrant of vluchteling?*, 12.

<sup>84</sup> ‘Buitenlandse arbeiders naar Rotterdam,’ *Trouw*, 08-09-1961, 2, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ABCDDD:010814744:mpeg21:a0106>, accessed on 17-02-2023.

<sup>85</sup> ‘Verolme werft Spaanse arbeiders,’ *Nieuwe Haarlemsche Courant*, 08-02-1961, 2, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMNHA03:179271033:mpeg21:a00026>, accessed on 16-02-2023.

<sup>86</sup> ‘Van Tabakspulker Tot Volksvertegenwoordiger,’ in *40 Yil/Jaar in Schiedam*, 2003, 20–21.

<sup>87</sup> Olfers, *Arbeidsmigrant of vluchteling?*, 12.

<sup>88</sup> ‘José Antonio: Valencia Prima.. Holland Prima Prima! Spaanse kolonie bij Verolme Rozenburg,’ *Het Vrije Volk*, 15-09-1961, 5, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010953610:mpeg21:a0145>, accessed 16-02-2023.

<sup>89</sup> ‘Gastarbeiders over “man in Marokko”: “Je moest betalen om snel weg te komen”,’ *Het Vrije Volk*, 29-06-1971, 4, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010957573:mpeg21:a0115>, accessed on 06-04-2023; Tinnemans, *Een gouden armband*, 66.

contract. By 1964 however, the percentage of spontaneous migrants had increased from 0 to 55%, and among those who arrived in 1967 every single person indicated that they had arrived on their own.<sup>90</sup> To illustrate on a larger scale: between 1964 and 1966 the Dutch recruitment channels only registered 15,000 ‘guest workers’, while the Ministry of Social Affairs gave out 65,000 work permits to foreigners.<sup>91</sup> During that time, only 18,75% of migrant workers in the Netherlands thus arrived through the official recruitment agreements. Recruitment via official channels played an increasingly less important role in the migration of Mediterranean workers. This did not stop when regulation became stricter after 1967. In this period, migrants that arrived through brokers or subcontractors were seen as ‘illegals’ and in some cases were even send back. When this happened to eighteen Portuguese workers at Verolme however, they were quickly returned by the company as they gladly wanted to keep them.<sup>92</sup>



Figure 2: A group of Spanish workers at Verolme's VDSM shipyard, 1971.

This development – in which the first Spanish or Italian migrants arrived through official recruitment agreements resulting in a rise in spontaneous migration afterwards – can be recognized at various port-related companies in the Rotterdam-Rijnmond area. The first foreign workers often arrive in groups (and are documented as such), but later arrivals come on their own or with one or two countrymen.<sup>93</sup> Arrivals are also much more frequent after the

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<sup>90</sup> Geyer, *Buitenlandse arbeidskrachten*, 15.

<sup>91</sup> Tinnemans, *Een gouden armband*, 64.

<sup>92</sup> Lisette Lewin, ‘Werving in Nederland is eigenlijk discriminatie,’ *NRC Handelsblad*, 21-08-1971, 2, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=KBNRC01:000031736:mpeg21:a0021>, accessed on 15-03-2023.

<sup>93</sup> ‘Het Introductiecentrum,’ *Wilton-Fijenoord Nieuws* 25, no. 7 (1962), 7.

first recruitment, with new workers arriving every week or month. This development can in part be explained due to the fact that migrants – after staying at a company for some time and deciding whether the working conditions are decent, for example – often convince their friends and family to work for the same company. M. Aguilera, a Spanish welder working at *P. Smit Jr.*, states that he likes the work and that he has convinced his brother to join him as well: an example of a frequently occurring form of recruitment.<sup>94</sup> According to a social report from the same company, this type of recruitment was especially common with Turkish and Moroccan men.<sup>95</sup>

More often than not, workers who arrived in the Rotterdam port region as spontaneous migrants did not come directly from their home countries, but rather had wandered and worked in various companies in Europe and in the Netherlands. This goes for migrants from Turkey, Morocco, and Spain – only Italians seem to have mostly arrived through direct contacts or agreements. M. Salazar for example, a Spanish welder, had already lived in the Netherlands for nine years before finding a job at *P. Smit Jr.* in 1970.<sup>96</sup> In the early 1960, when the mines in Limburg and Belgium began closing, an influx of migrants moving from the South to Rotterdam can also be recognized. A. I. Türedi, a Turkish worker who later became a translator at the RDM, worked at the mines for three years but found employment at the RDM after they closed. He would go on to stay with the company for 12 years.<sup>97</sup> Similarly, Mehmet Dogan arrived at the RDM after the Belgian coal mine where he was employed closed down.<sup>98</sup>

The recruitment agreements were thus significant for the early migration of Spanish and Italian workers to Rotterdam. The first groups all arrived through these direct recruitments, but soon after this spontaneous migration began playing an important role as well. A similar development can be recognized with Turkish and Moroccan migrants. A first recruitment agreement with Turkey was made in 1964, but by 1965 the total number of Turkish workers in the Netherlands had already reached 9,000. This number was way higher than the amount of people who came through official recruitment channels (6800 foreign workers in total).<sup>99</sup> When looking specifically at companies in the Rotterdam port region, there is little mention of large groups of Turks or Moroccans arriving together (as was the case with Spanish and Italian

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<sup>94</sup> ‘Wat weten wij van onze gastarbeiders?’, *Contact: Bedrijfsblad van de machinefabriek en scheepswerf van P. Smit Jr. B.V.*, no. 2 (1970): 11.

<sup>95</sup> ‘Sociaal jaarverslag 1974’, *Contact: Bedrijfsblad van de machinefabriek en scheepswerf P. Smit Jr.*, extra issue (1975): 26.

<sup>96</sup> ‘Wat weten wij van onze gastarbeiders,’ 10.

<sup>97</sup> ‘Tolk A.I. Türedi: ‘Blij om terug te gaan, maar wel met zekere weemoed’,’ *Nieuws van de R.D.M.* 16, no. 3 (1978), 8.

<sup>98</sup> ‘Nederland is niet zo eenzaam voor Mehmet Dogan,’ *Nieuws van de R.D.M.* 5, no. 1 (1967), 7.

<sup>99</sup> Tinnemans, *Een gouden armband*, 64.

workers) and only occasional mention of companies travelling to Turkey or Morocco to recruit directly. Even after 1970, while recruitment campaigns were becoming less and less frequent and spontaneous migration was being curtailed, the number of Turkish and Moroccan workers in the Netherlands steadily increased.<sup>100</sup> It is evident that while trajectories taken to the port were quite diverse, spontaneous migration was the predominant trajectory taken among migrant workers of all nationalities in the Rotterdam port region.

## 2.2. In the port: housing and labour

Depending on the time in which they arrived as well as the way of recruitment, foreign workers arriving in the Rotterdam port region were received differently. Those arriving through recruitment agreements had a right to housing which spontaneous migrants did not have. In some cases this led to woeful living conditions: the well-known images of many ‘guest workers’ cramped together in small rooms, forced to share beds with each other through shifts in so-called pension homes.<sup>101</sup> The working conditions they found as well as the type of labour they performed differed too. Some arrived as skilled workers, or were able to train themselves at the company schools. Others performed heavy, unskilled work throughout their entire career. The following section aims to uncover the dominant experience of a Mediterranean migrant worker in the Rotterdam port: what were the general housing and working conditions? The answer to this question aids in uncovering migrants’ social lives later on in this thesis.

### *Housing*

Mediterranean migrants found many different types of housing in Rotterdam. Most commonly, workers were housed in collective homes, boarding houses or private guesthouses, and privately rented apartments. Much like other large industrial companies in the Netherlands, companies in the Rotterdam port played an important role in the housing of their foreign workers.<sup>102</sup> *Wilton-Fijenoord* for example opened a pension home in a former retirement home in Rockanje, where they housed 140 Turkish workers.<sup>103</sup> This would later be expanded to 250. A similar retirement home in Poortugal – ‘house Siloam,’ later changed to ‘House Ankara’ –

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>101</sup> J. Jansen, ‘Bepaalde huisvesting : een geschiedenis van opvang en huisvesting van immigranten in Nederland, 1945-1995’ (Aksant Academic Publishers, 2006), 110–11, <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4358>.

<sup>102</sup> Jansen, ‘Bepaalde huisvesting,’ 102.

<sup>103</sup> ‘Nieuw pension buitenlanders,’ *Het Vrije Volk*, 07-10-1971, 20, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010957661:mpeg21:a0227>, accessed 15-03-2023.

aimed to house up to a hundred Turkish workers.<sup>104</sup> The *Verolme* shipyard additionally housed around a hundred of their Turkish workers in a ‘pension boat’ in the Rotterdam harbour.<sup>105</sup> Other companies, such as *Van der Giessen-de Noord*, enquired for living spaces among their Dutch workers. The notion that housing was provided by the companies was common until the late 1970s, when the port industries – specifically the shipbuilding industry – started declining and foreign workers more often had to find their own housing following family reunification.

Company-owned pension homes generally offered better living conditions compared to privately owned housing, although significant shortcomings were still evident. The *Wilton-Fijenoord* pension home in Poortugal for example included a Turkish cook, recreational spaces, and central heating in every room.<sup>106</sup> But, as it was aimed at housing as many workers as possible, people generally had to share rooms with up to 14 people. Practices such as this were not uncommon, although it was different at smaller companies. The GEM for example had smaller pension homes (in which 3 or 4 people shared a room), which migrant workers themselves described as more comfortable.<sup>107</sup> The biggest downside of the company-owned pension homes was however that they were often located in remote areas. This led to isolation, as workers could not escape their working environment or spend their free time making new social contacts.<sup>108</sup> The *Wilton-Fijenoord* homes were both located far away from the city centre (in Rockanje and Poortugal), for example. Similarly, the *Verolme* ‘pension boat’ had to move away from the city centre as authorities in the harbour feared the consequences of having a pension boat in stagnant water. The decision resulted in criticism from its Turkish residents, with one of them stating ‘we should be able to amuse ourselves after work, otherwise we will just be sitting here thinking about home’.<sup>109</sup>

While the living conditions in company-owned pension homes were not perfect, both the workers and companies were relatively satisfied with having a cheap housing option. A place in such a pension however was not guaranteed except for those arriving on official recruitment agreements. As the majority arrived as spontaneous migrants, most migrants had

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<sup>104</sup> ‘Tweede pension voor onze Turkse werknemers,’ *Wilton-Fijenoord Nieuws* 34, no. 2 (1971): 6; ‘Huize Siloam werd Ankara: Turkse pension kreeg een nieuwe naam,’ *Wilton-Fijenoord nieuws* 34, no. 5 (1971): 17.

<sup>105</sup> ‘Turken voelen zien in Hoogvliet „opgeborgen’ Deze modderpoel is toch geen plaats om te wonen... Woonboot van Verolme werd verdreven van Spangesekeade,’ *Het vrije volk*, 28-02-1964, 4, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010954383:mpeg21:a0212>, accessed 16-02-2023.

<sup>106</sup> ‘Pension voor onze Turkse werknemers in Poortugal,’ *Wilton-Fijenoord Nieuws* 34, no. 1 (1971): 2.

<sup>107</sup> ‘Gastarbeiders vinden sfeer bij G.E.M. goed, Nederlandse keuken niet,’ *De Does* 8, no. 3 (1967): 43.

<sup>108</sup> J. Jansen, ‘Bepaalde huisvesting : een geschiedenis van opvang en huisvesting van immigranten in Nederland, 1945-1995’ (Aksant Academic Publishers, 2006), 103.

<sup>109</sup> ‘Turken voelen zien in Hoogvliet „opgeborgen’,’ 4.

to rely on privately owned pensions, and often found poor living conditions.<sup>110</sup> In 1972, over 55% of the total foreign workers in Rotterdam lived in these privately owned pensions.<sup>111</sup> Many of them had to live in low-quality or badly isolated homes, had to share small rooms, or lived in dirty houses that were rarely cleaned. Such scandals were also prominent in Rotterdam, especially around 1970. Here, the *Aktiekomitee Pro Gastarbeiders* (AKPG) visited pensions and created a ‘black list’ of dirty or cramped pensions with poor living conditions, resulting in large media and political attention.<sup>112</sup> Newspapers of the time contain vivid descriptions of the housing situation for migrant workers in Rotterdam. Upon entering one of the pension homes, a journalist describes ‘sweet fumes’ almost knocking him unconscious, ‘peeling walls’ and rooms that are impossible to heat.<sup>113</sup> Others describe how six or seven people are cramped together in very small rooms, and how 56 men have to share a single shower.<sup>114</sup>

As the black list does not mention which companies housed their workers in these pensions, the extent to which companies in the port were guilty of such practices is unclear. Due to the size of the housing scandal in Rotterdam and the amount of pensions involved however, it can safely be assumed that foreign workers that were employed at companies in the port lived in houses on the AKPG’s black list. Furthermore, the AKPG did send letters to twenty large companies in Rotterdam that employed foreign workers, asking them whether they were aware of the poor conditions in which many were housed. Nine companies did not respond – among those *Verolme*, *Wilton-Fijenoord*, shipyard *Gusto* and *Thomsen’s Havenbedrijf* – however the shipyard *Van der Giessen-de Noord* did. They stated that their workers are free to live where they want and that they are not aware of ‘unacceptable housing conditions’ in one of their three pensions. If this would be the case – as the letter states – the AKPG should contact the metalworkers union.<sup>115</sup> This answer fits a pattern in which companies shift the responsibility to others – including the foreign workers themselves.<sup>116</sup> In any case at least, the pension houses on the black list were not owned directly by the companies in the port.

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<sup>110</sup> Jansen, ‘Bepaalde huisvesting,’ 104.

<sup>111</sup> CAR, Archief van W. Thomassen (1909-2001), burgemeester van Rotterdam, 50-01, inv.nr. 153, ‘Nota inzake de problematiek rond de vestiging van buitenlandse werknemers in Rotterdam,’ 29.

<sup>112</sup> CAR, AKPG, 1452, inv.nr. 37, ‘Lijst van zwarte prijzen.’

<sup>113</sup> “‘Pro-Gastarbeider’”, actie in Maasstad, *Het Vrije Volk*, 18-02-1970, 5,

<https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010957161:mpeg21:a0168>, accessed on 15-03-2023.

<sup>114</sup> ‘Rotterdamse gastarbeiderpensions staan op de zwarte lijst: Stapelbedden op 3,5 vierkante meter...’, *De Waarheid*, 04-12-1971, 4, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010374955:mpeg21:a0061>, 15-03-2023.

<sup>115</sup> CAR, AKPG, inv.nr. 1452-8, ‘Letter from Van der Giessen-de Noord,’ 08-04-1970.

<sup>116</sup> ‘Pensions,’ *De Volkskrant*, 23-04-1970, 9,

<https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ABCDDD:010847872:mpeg21:a0176>, accessed on 15-03-2023.

Of course, not everyone lived in such poor conditions or even in the collective housing offered by companies. Some also looked back on their time in pension homes positively, citing the ‘festive’ atmosphere and the togetherness, something that is reflected in figures 3 and 4.<sup>117</sup> Additionally, many foreign workers found housing with Dutch families or stayed in the pension for a short amount of time before trying to find a place for themselves, either through the companies HR-divisions or on their own. A.I. Türedi for example found a house in the RDM’s own ‘village’, Tuindorp Heijplaat, however this was not very common.<sup>118</sup> Others were able to find homes for themselves and their families, sometimes on their own and sometimes with help from their company’s HR division. For example, Manuel Garcia Lopez, a Spanish worker interviewed in 1966, was lucky in being able to find a home for his family quite easily after living in a pension house for 1,5 years.<sup>119</sup> Similarly, Mahir Engin was able to move out of his pension with the help of his boss.<sup>120</sup> These cases can be seen as exceptions, as in general, most migrant workers had to live under poor conditions for at least a period of their stay in Rotterdam. However, is important to realize that not everyone was cramped together in small homes or simply underwent the poor conditions as voiceless victims: foreign workers showed agency and the ability to either live with and make the best of their situation, or protest and change it.<sup>121</sup>



Figures 3 and 4: Turkish men playing checkers in the Wilton-Fijenoord pension home in Poortugal (left) and Mahir Engin with friends in a pension home in the Botlek (right).

<sup>117</sup> ‘Van Tabaksplukker tot Volksvertegenwoordiger,’ 21.

<sup>118</sup> ‘Tolk A. I. Türedi: ‘Blij om terug te gaan, maar wel met zekere weemoed,’’ *Nieuws van de R.D.M.* 16, no. 3 (1978), 8.

<sup>119</sup> ‘Een Geslaagde Spaanse Werknemer,’ *Werfnieuws: Maandelijks Persorgaan van van Der Giessen-de Noord NV*, no. 4 (December 1966), 27.

<sup>120</sup> ‘Van Tabaksplukker Tot Volksvertegenwoordiger,’ in *40 Yil/Jaar in Schiedam*, 2003, 22.

<sup>121</sup> CAR, AKPG, inv.nr. 1452-8, ‘Letter from Van der Giessen-de Noord,’ 08-04-1970.



### *Labour and training*

Migrants performed a variety of different jobs at companies in the port. A common job was welder, however others were employed as electricians, (copper)smiths, metalworkers, crane operators, trimmers, (foreman-) scaffolders, or in unskilled positions such as porter/bearers (*sjouwers*). In some cases, foreign workers became full-time translators – such as the Italian Angelo Cantore and the Turkish Türedi – or even made it into a company’s Works Council – as did Mahir Engin at *Wilton-Fijenoord* and Ricardo dos Santos Alvarez at the GEM.<sup>122</sup> Interestingly, many of the Mediterranean workers who started working in the Rotterdam port region arrived as skilled workers, with some form of experience in a similar field. This was especially the case for the early recruitment phases of the large shipyards, who actively selected skilled workers. Spanish workers for example were often electricians, welders or carpenters in their home country and performed similar jobs at the shipyards.<sup>123</sup> Foreign workers were shortly introduced into the company, but in some cases required little further training before they could get to work.<sup>124</sup> Engin for example explains how he was received at the education centre of *Wilton-Fijenoord*, where he was taught to weld. As he and the other Turkish men with whom he arrived already had experience in welding, the *Wilton* representatives reacted surprised and quickly put them to work.<sup>125</sup>



Figure 5: Spanish men are introduced at P. Smit Jr., a translator talks to them about the company.

<sup>122</sup> ‘Van tabakspulker tot volksvertegenwoordiger,’ ‘Candidaten nieuwe O.R.: Tremmers/algemene dienst,’ *De Does: Personeelsblad van de Graan Elevator Maatschappij (GEM)*, extra editie (1975): 28.

<sup>123</sup> Geyer, *Buitenlandse arbeidskrachten*, 21.

<sup>124</sup> ‘De introductie van 17 Spaanse werknemers,’ *Contact: Bedrijfsblad van de machinefabriek en scheepswerf van P. Smit Jr.*, no. 10 (1969): 28.

<sup>125</sup> ‘Van Tabakspulker Tot Volksvertegenwoordiger,’ 21.

While most thus arrived as skilled or semi-skilled workers, this did not mean that they did not receive further training. Of course, many workers still required some form of training before they reached the company's or Dutch official requirements.<sup>126</sup> Up until the mid 80s company newsletters however also include examples of foreign workers completing exams allowing them to earn more money and move up within the company. Seemingly, this was incentivized by the companies who also offered Dutch lessons and allowed translators to be part of their company schools.<sup>127</sup> Some trained in reading shipbuilding drawings, others improved their welding skills or passed the official Dutch metalworking exams.<sup>128</sup> Language barriers of course complicated on the job education, but despite this, many foreign workers did try to improve their position by using their free time to educate and train themselves.

## Conclusion

This chapter has shown that Mediterranean migrants working in the Rotterdam port region were a heterogenous group, however that certain factors dominated in their trajectory to and arrival in the city. First of all, most migrants who arrived in Rotterdam were motivated mainly by economic incentives. For different groups, other incentives could also play a role – among them a longing for adventure or political freedom. While the first groups of migrants arrived through recruitment agreements, over time spontaneous migration became the dominant trajectory, with a significant increase in the percentage of migrants arriving independently. Companies in the port remained receptive to the continuous flow of people arriving in Rotterdam, as they were always looking for labourers.

The dominance of spontaneous migration had consequences for how migrants were housed: the majority of them spent at least some time in a pension home and thus most likely faced poor living conditions. However, not everyone accepted this and most left within a few years, to either return home or move elsewhere within the city. At the companies, migrants performed a variety of different jobs, however most were employed at semi-skilled or skilled positions, most prominently welding. Some were able to move up, either through following education at the company schools or through becoming translators or representatives to their countrymen.

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<sup>126</sup> See for example; 'Omscholing van Turkse arbeiders,' *Wilton-Fijenoord Nieuws* 34, no. 2 (1971): 16.

<sup>127</sup> 'Nederlandse les voor buitenlanders,' *Contact*, no. 1 (1975): 29.

<sup>128</sup> 'Beloonde energie,' *Werfnieuws: Maandelijks persorgaan van Van der Giessen-de Noord NV* (February 1974), 17.

To conclude, the chapter refutes the idea that migrant workers were directly recruited as unskilled workers, incentivized solely by making more money and housed as voiceless victims under poor conditions. The group of Mediterranean migrants should be seen as heterogenous, and the diverse experiences found in individual stories reflect this. The overall inference drawn from these individual stories however is that the majority of migrants engaged in spontaneous migration, resided in pension homes, and occupied (semi-)skilled positions. This observation serves to effectively analyse the social lives of migrants in the following chapter.

## Chapter 3: Living ‘as if quarantined’? Social lives and interactions in and outside of the company

After their arrival, housing and introduction at one of the companies in the port, migrants began the process of emplacing themselves within the existing social structures of Rotterdam while also creating new ones. The pioneers (those arriving in the early 1960s) arrived in a country in which they were seen as welcome and necessary guests, saving and supporting a struggling economy. While many Mediterranean migrants in this early period were focused on earning as much money as possible – working weeks of six days and working days of sixteen hours were common – they did form new connections through leisure activities both in and outside of the company.<sup>129</sup> Mediterranean migrant workers are often portrayed as solitary men, focused on working and barely interacting with their social surroundings, but many of them enjoyed the free political and cultural climate of the Dutch 1960s by going out with both Dutch people and fellow migrants. At the same time, migrants took opportunities to involve themselves into the existing social structures of the port companies – hobby clubs, the football club – or to create new ones.

In secondary literature on migration to the Netherlands, the 1970s are often described as a period of change. From that point onwards migrants’ lives are said to have become more parallel and interactions with the Dutch population are increasingly defined by clashes. Additionally, when looking back on their experiences, migrants themselves often draw a comparison between the first phase, in which they felt very much welcome and appreciated, and the second phase, in which they felt like unwelcome strangers. The following chapter researches whether this is true for Mediterranean migrants in the Rotterdam port region by answering the following sub question: How did the social lives and interactions of Mediterranean migrants in and outside of their companies differ between the 1960s and the 1970s? Special attention is given to the specific role of the companies in the port and the personal experiences of the migrants themselves. The chapter is divided into two sections – the first focussing on the social lives and interactions at the companies while the second section analyses the same topic outside of the companies.

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<sup>129</sup> Cottaar and Bouras, *Marokkanen in Nederland: De Pioniers Vertellen*, 163.

### 3.1. In the company: hobby clubs, parties, workplace relations and more

#### *First phase: 1960-1970*

Most of the port companies that employed migrants can be characterized as strongly social environments: companies that bonded their employees to them by offering leisure activities, vacation homes, collective holidays and social support. In part, this did not change for the first groups of foreign workers. Companies quickly set up introduction centres, offered social support, and spread welcome messages in the language of their new foreign employees.<sup>130</sup> Furthermore, they organized parties meant to make their foreign workers feel welcome and at home.<sup>131</sup> In 1964 for example, Verolme organized a ‘Spanish party evening’, to which all employees were invited. Foreign workers themselves mostly reflect positively on their reception by the companies in this first phase. In interviews taken with Turkish migrants in Amsterdam for example, two out of eight respondents explicitly discuss how welcome they felt by the reception of their company.<sup>132</sup> Looking back on his time at *Verolme* in the early 1960s, a Turkish welder furthermore describes ‘what a good time’ he had there.<sup>133</sup> Similar sentiments can be recognized among newspaper interviews with Spanish workers in the Rotterdam port region at the time, in which they often state their satisfaction with how they were received.<sup>134</sup>

While many migrant workers only worked at the companies for short periods, the first phase did see the development of strong relations between Mediterranean migrants and their companies, and to a lesser extent with Dutch co-workers and bosses. Some men for example were involved at the hobby clubs of their companies and thus spent their social lives interacting across ethnic boundaries.<sup>135</sup> Others formed strong connections simply by working at the companies for extended periods of time. An illustrative example includes G. Lanzillo, a smith at the RDM, who retired at the company while two of his sons were also employed there. After fifteen years of employment, the RDM organized a big farewell party for Lanzillo. According to the company newsletter, ‘the room was almost overflowing’ with colleagues – both Dutch

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<sup>130</sup> Multiple companies spread similar messages, see for example; ‘A nostre laboratore Italiani/A nuestros empleados espanoles,’ *Werfnieuws: Maandelijks persorgaan van van der Giessen-de Noord NV*, no. 3 (1962): 24; ‘A nuestros trabajadores espanoles/Ai nostri lavoratori,’ *Nieuws van de R.D.M.* 1, no. 1 (1963): 16; ‘Bienvenida a nuestros obreros Espanoles,’ *Contact: Bedrijfsblad van de machinefabriek en scheepswerf van P. Smit Jr. B.V.*, no. 5 (1965): 15.

<sup>131</sup> ‘Het Introductiecentrum,’ *Wilton-Fijenoord Nieuws* 25, no. 7 (1962), 7.

<sup>132</sup> Fadimeh Demir, interviews with Ibrahim Serin and Ali Dag, collection of the Amsterdam Museum, 2012.

<sup>133</sup> Stephan W. van der Ven, ‘Succesverhaal van een gastarbeider,’ *De Telegraaf*, 26-11-1981, 15, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:011205173:mpeg21:a0599>, accessed 16-02-2023.

<sup>134</sup> ‘José Antonio: Valencia Prima.. Holland Prima Prima!’ 5, .

<sup>135</sup> ‘In Memoriam: M. Senturk,’ *Wilton-Fijenoord Nieuws* 41, no. 4 (1978), 13.

and Italian – wanting to say goodbye to Lanzillo.<sup>136</sup> These types of interactions, while rare (farewell parties were rare for both Dutch and foreign workers), display a sense of mutual respect as well as the formation of meaningful connections.

In the first phase, workplaces in the port were generally ethnically diverse. As a result, cooperation across ethnic boundaries was necessary. In some cases however, working relations developed into more meaningful connections. Some foreign workers for example showed a strong willingness to interact with their Dutch colleagues. An interview with Mehmet Dogan, a coppersmith at the RDM reads that ‘as long as he [Mehmet] is here, he wants to be Dutch with his Dutch co-workers and his Dutch friends.’<sup>137</sup> Ahmed Tesbihci, a Turkish welder, showed a similar willingness to form meaningful connections. He describes the ‘many [Dutch] friends’ he made, and the ‘beautiful time’ he had with his Dutch friends at (among others) *Verolme*.<sup>138</sup> These positive workplace experiences are reflected in an inquiry taken among Spanish workers in 1967, in which 82% of respondents report good working relations with Dutch co-workers. More interesting however is the fact that 31% indicate that they spent time with Dutch colleagues after work – meeting them at home, in the café, the cinema or at football games. This percentage is higher among the men who have stayed at one company for a longer time.<sup>139</sup>

Of course, meaningful relationships did not always develop as many migrants simply saw their work as a means to an end, intended to stay for a short time, or reported ambiguous relationships with their co-workers – which was partly influenced by the persisting language barriers.<sup>140</sup> Spanish men at *P. Smit Jr.* for example state that cooperation and interaction strongly ‘depends on who you are working with,’ but that relationships with chiefs, bosses and HR representatives have always been very good. This last statement should not be taken for granted, as these men were interviewed for the company’s own newsletter and were thus not necessarily inclined to speak freely or negatively about their superiors.<sup>141</sup> Based on migrants’ own experiences, it can be inferred that during the first phase migrants’ workplace interactions were generally positive. In some cases, these interactions developed further, leading to more meaningful connections.

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<sup>136</sup> ‘Smid G. Lanzillo werd 65: Italiaanse RDM-er zorgde voor primeur,’ *Nieuws van de R.D.M.* 8, no. 11 (1972), 11.

<sup>137</sup> ‘Nederland is niet zo eenzaam voor Mehmet Dogan,’ *Nieuws van de R.D.M.* 5, no. 1 (1967), 7.

<sup>138</sup> Van der Ven, ‘Succesverhaal van een gastarbeider,’ 15.

<sup>139</sup> Geyer, *Buitenlandse arbeidskrachten*, 38-39.

<sup>140</sup> De Bock, *Parallel Lives Revisited*, 79.

<sup>141</sup> ‘Wat weten van onze gastarbeiders,’ *Contact: Bedrijfsblad van de Machinefabriek en scheepswerf van P. Smit Jr.*, no. 2 (1970): 11.

### *Second phase: 1970-1980*

Interestingly, the sources on migrants' experiences at the companies in the port display a sense of continuity in relations between migrants and their companies. Of course, the companies' stance towards their foreign workers changed as more arrived: new arrivals no longer had to be welcomed and introduced as extensively as their countrymen – by this time often employed as translators or HR representatives at the company – could help with the early settlement. While by the early 1970s most Spanish and Italian migrants had remigrated, many of the large groups of Turkish and Moroccan migrants who began working in the Rotterdam port region remained employed at their respective companies. As a result, meaningful relations between the company and migrants were still formed and deepened. Yuksel E., employed at *Verolme Rozenburg*, for example worked at the company for a total of 32 years and 'loved *Verolme*'.<sup>142</sup> Migrant workers similarly remained valued employees for the companies in the port. In this second phase, many of them were still described as good colleagues, friends, and 'great craftsmen'.<sup>143</sup>

This sense of mutual respect and connectivity is evident in situations where migrant workers were able to express themselves and their own culture within the workplace. In part, this was facilitated by the companies – with *Verolme* for example throwing a 'Turkish party' for its foreign employees – but foreign workers also made their own voices heard and as a result impacted their environment.<sup>144</sup> For example, in 1970 Muslim workers at the RDM approached the company looking for a space to celebrate Ramadan. This resulted in the RDM's former boardroom serving as a Mosque (as reported in the company's newsletter) for the entire month of Ramadan.<sup>145</sup> This case displays a willingness to accommodate on the company's side, as well as a strong sense of agency on the side of both Turkish and Moroccan workers at the RDM.

A sense of accommodation and agency can also be recognized at the RDM, where, during the 1970s, Spanish workers organized themselves in the *Mutualidad de Trabajadores Espanoles RDM*. They were given space at the company to meet and create a Spanish library.<sup>146</sup> A final comparable case is found at *Verolme*, where workers organized a remembrance for the passing of Mustafa Kemal Aytekin – who perished while cleaning a container ship. Company

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<sup>142</sup> Fidan Ekiz, 'Behouden vaart,' *Veerboot Naar Holland*, documentary series, BNN - VARA, June 3, 2013, [https://www.npostart.nl/veerboot-naar-holland/20-05-2013/VARA\\_101324443](https://www.npostart.nl/veerboot-naar-holland/20-05-2013/VARA_101324443), accessed 12-04-2023.

<sup>143</sup> 'In memoriam,' *Verolme Nieuws* 17, no. 1/2 (1973): 10-12; 'In memoriam: I. Türksana,' *Wilton-Fijenoord Nieuws* 44, no. 4 (1981): 14; 'In memoriam: M. M. Okuroglu,' *Wilton-Fijenoord Nieuws* 42, no. 9 (1979): 16.

<sup>144</sup> 'Turkse werknemers vierden feest,' *Verolme Nieuws* 15, no. 11/12 (1971): 84-85.

<sup>145</sup> 'Direktiehal veranderde in moskee,' *Nieuws van de R.D.M.* 7, no. 10 (1970): 10-11.

<sup>146</sup> 'Bibliotheek Spaanse vereniging RDM flink uitgebreid,' *Nieuws van de R.D.M.* 17, no. 5/6/7 (1980): 19.

executives were present while Aytekin's friends read verses from the Quran and everyone paid their respects.<sup>147</sup> These examples are relatively rare cases of cooperation and interaction, but they serve as compelling evidence of the strong interaction and mutual responsiveness between migrants and their companies. Besides this, the cases clearly show how foreign workers impacted their surroundings – in this case their companies – by forming connections and making their voices heard.



Figure 6: The former RDM boardroom serving as a Mosque with Imam Osman Han.

While ties with the companies in some cases thus remained relatively strong, workplace relationships became shallower. A former Turkish employee of *Verolme* describes how, during the '70s, he rarely worked and interacted with Dutch co-workers: 'We worked with Turks, we were surrounded by Turkish colleagues.'<sup>148</sup> In this case, the company clearly caused a form of workplace segregation, as one man illustrates: 'we [Turkish men] were welders,' 'we had to enter the tank, which was dirty and wet'. 'Dutch men could work in the clean places,' and 'we had nothing to say,' if they protested at Human Resources the company threatened to fire them.<sup>149</sup> This also happened at the RDM, as A.I. Türedi states 'Turkish men [...] have to do the dirty and hard work'.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> 'Krans op het water,' *Verolme Nieuws* 16, no. 9/10 (1972): 1-2.

<sup>148</sup> Fidan Ekiz, 'Zwaar weer,' *Veerboot Naar Holland*, documentary series, BNN - VARA, June 3, 2013, 11:30, [https://www.npostart.nl/veerboot-naar-holland/03-06-2013/VARA\\_101324439](https://www.npostart.nl/veerboot-naar-holland/03-06-2013/VARA_101324439), accessed 12-04-2023.

<sup>149</sup> Ekiz, 'Zwaar weer,' 14:00.

<sup>150</sup> 'Tolk A. I. Türedi: 'Blij om terug te gaan, maar wel met zekere weemoed', *Nieuws van de R.D.M.* 16, no. 3 (1978): 7.



Hasip Turan, a metalworker at *Wilton-Fijenoord*, faced discrimination when he did work with Dutch men from the 1970s onward. For example, colleagues began making fun of him using derogatory terms. One co-worker kept calling Turan ‘paardenlul’ (horse cock), when Turan found out what it meant the two men clashed. Additionally, Turan felt disadvantaged by his bosses.<sup>151</sup> This is not to say that good working relations between Dutch and foreign men did not exist in the 1970s: men who were employed for multiple years had developed sincere working relationships with Dutch co-workers, exemplified in for example an image of laughing Dutch and Spanish workers embracing each other at *Wilton Fijenoord*.<sup>152</sup> However, this second phase sees a clear increase in reports of workplace discrimination while such complaints were rare in the first phase in which foreign workers seemed satisfied with their employers and co-workers.<sup>153</sup>

### 3.2. Outside of the company: Staying in, going out, religion and meeting centres

#### *First phase: 1960-1970*

The previous section has demonstrated that foreign workers at companies in the Rotterdam port region were not ‘silent’ workers, but instead actively involved themselves into the social fabric of their companies. Of course, foreign workers spent a lot of time at these companies. As most were focused on earning as much as they could, working overtime and putting in extra shifts was not uncommon. How then did these men spend their time when they were not working? In part, many wanted to distract themselves from thinking about home or spend as little time as possible in their pension homes, but they were also actively looking for adventure and fun things to do. In what ways did they interact with Dutch people and society?

While the migrants that arrived in the first phase were mainly motivated by economic incentives, many of them were also young and curious men wanting to see more of the world. This translated to the ways in which they spent their time outside of the workplace. Newspapers of the time can be seen to discuss the partying of foreign workers, for example in a 1962 interview with Spanish workers at *Verolme*. When discussing the older men, the article reads that ‘practically no-one seems to have Dutch friends or acquaintances’. A lot of young men however exit their Spanish groups, such as the 24 year old welder José Ribes, who often goes

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<sup>151</sup> Taken from an interview with Hasip Turan in; Tinnemans, *Een gouden armband*, 124-125.

<sup>152</sup> See the image on this thesis’ title page.

<sup>153</sup> ‘Er werd te weinig gedaan,’ *Perifeer* 6, no. 4/5 (1979): 16-17.

to dancing clubs with Italian friends.<sup>154</sup> Many more of these examples can be found among migrant port workers in Rotterdam: Spanish and Italian men working for Verolme and living on the *Meeuwenplaat* for example mixed with Dutch people at ‘Flamingo,’ a meeting centre which organised dancing parties, and others indicate that they spent their free time either going to dancing clubs or cafes.<sup>155</sup> Mahir Engin, who arrived in 1967 later and began working at *Wilton Fijenoord*, describes his early years as a fun time of partying with countrymen and Dutch people alike:

‘In the pension home I had a lot of friends of the same age. We were young. We laughed a lot and enjoyed ourselves. During that time we had Dutch girlfriends, who we dated and met at the café. Dutch men came over, we ate out and we went dancing together.’<sup>156</sup>

When reflecting on their first years working in Rotterdam, men who arrived as foreign workers often define their experiences by working hard on the one hand, and partying and having fun on the other. These men enjoyed the freedom and free political climate of the Netherlands. Allal – a Moroccan worker who arrived in 1968 – for example states ‘in those times we often visited dancing clubs, it was a free country. It had democracy, freedom and dancing clubs’.<sup>157</sup> When going out, foreign workers often enjoyed or engaged in flirts with Dutch women at cafés or dancing clubs, which in some cases turned into intercultural marriages.<sup>158</sup> This was not the same for all of course. Many men spent their time working as much as possible, or as Akdeniz – a Turkish worker at *Verolme* – states simply wanted to amuse themselves ‘otherwise we’ll just go thinking about home’.<sup>159</sup> In this first phase, many foreign workers however formed new interactions instead of solely staying within the confines of their home or workplace. In doing so, they most likely formed strong relations with the people they interacted with.

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<sup>154</sup> Joop van Muijen, ‘Taalobstakel zit het contact dwars’, *Het vrije volk : democratisch-socialistisch dagblad*, 13 april 1962, 43, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010953813:mpeg21:a0601>, accessed on 17-02-2023.

<sup>155</sup> ‘In de flamingo wordt vergaderd, gekerkt, gedanst,’ *Het Vrije Volk*, 31-08-1962, 13, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010953924:mpeg21:a0287>, accessed on 16-02-2023.

<sup>156</sup> ‘Van Tabakspulker tot Volksvertegenwoordiger,’ 25.

<sup>157</sup> Btissam Abaâziz, ‘‘Ze waren onwetend’ Een onderzoek naar de religieuze beleving van de eerste en tweede ‘generatie’ Marokkaanse Nederlanders’ (PhD diss., Erasmus University Rotterdam, 2021), 89.

<sup>158</sup> Examples can be found of men working in the Rotterdam port region who married Dutch women. When this happened it was often published in one of the companies’ newsletters. Additionally, it is often talked about subject in secondary source material. See for example; Leo & Jan Lucassen, *Vijf eeuwen migratie: Een verhaal van winnaars en verliezers* (Amsterdam: Atlas Contact, 2018), 156; ‘Nederlands-Spaans huwelijk,’ *Werfnieuws: Maandelijks persorgaan van van der Giessen-de Noord NV*, no. 37 (1966): 20-21.

<sup>159</sup> ‘Turken voelen zien in Hoogvliet „opgeborgen”,’ 4.

The social lives of foreign workers did not take place solely inside pension homes or dancing clubs. In the years of early settlement, little spaces existed for migrants to meet each other. This was soon solved by the *Stichting Hulp aan Buitenlandse Werknemers* who – in cooperation with foreign workers – opened a *Circolo Italiano* (Italian centre) and a *Circolo Español* (Spanish centre) in 1960 and 1961 respectively. Spanish and Italian men eagerly took advantage of the centres, which were opened on weekends and later – as requested by Italian men – also opened their doors on Wednesdays.<sup>160</sup> The centres were especially important in the period of early settlement, as migrants felt the need to establish relations with countrymen who had stayed in Rotterdam for some time and might be able to help them. As foreign workers became accustomed to the city however, the centres quickly disappeared and were replaced by meeting centres established by foreign workers themselves. Their short-lived nature can also explain why men at companies in the Rotterdam port region rarely mention making use of these facilities.

Seemingly more important to this groups' social lives were religious as well as unofficial meeting places. José Antonio, a Spanish worker at *Verolme*, and Alexis Novratidis, a Greek welder at the RDM, for example both indicate that they met their countrymen at the Catholic meeting centre of the Spanish church in Rotterdam.<sup>161</sup> As there was no Mosque in Rotterdam, Muslims on the other hand had to travel to The Hague – where the first Mosque was established in 1955 – something which many men working in the Rotterdam port did. Especially during fasting and *Kurban Bayrami* (the feast of sacrifice) men, such as Mehmet Dogan, visited the mosque to 'be with Turkish friends'.<sup>162</sup> Unofficial meeting places, such as restaurants were also important as men felt the need to seek each other out – once again in part to combat loneliness but also to simply have fun.<sup>163</sup> Especially in this first period migrants met at cafés and restaurants not specifically owned by ethnic entrepreneurs. Turkish workers at the RDM for example often ended their day at *Café Rijnhaven*, and those working at *Verolme Rozenburg* met at *Bar Pico* in Rozenburg.<sup>164</sup> In part, this resulted in an increase of contacts across ethnic boundaries.

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<sup>160</sup> CAR, Archief van de Spaanse Kerk Rotterdam, inv.nr. 987-401, 'Jaarverslag van de Stichting Hulp aan Buitenlandse werknemers 1962,' 8.

<sup>161</sup> 'José Antonio: Valencia Prima.. Holland Prima Prima!' 5; 'Alexis Novratidis,' *Nieuws van de R.D.M.* 3, no. 5 (1965): 11-13.

<sup>162</sup> 'Gastarbeiders vinden sfeer bij G.E.M. goed, de Nederlandse keuken niet,' *De Does* 8, no. 3 (1967): 43; 'Nederland is niet zo eenzaam voor Mehmet Dogan,' *Nieuws van de R.D.M.* 5, no. 1 (1967), 7..

<sup>163</sup> Valk, *Harde werkers*, 49.

<sup>164</sup> 'Ali Özkal, in exhibition 'Havenkinderen,' *Verhalenhuis Belvédère*, visited 02-03-2023; Fidan Ekiz, 'Zwaar weer.'

### *Second phase: 1970-1980*

The 1970s signal a clear shift in the social lives and interactions of foreign workers in the Rotterdam port. The combination of partying and having fun while on the other hand working hard is seemingly replaced by a focus on work and family. This follows logically from the family reunification set in motion during the 1970s and the decreasing numbers of young men arriving in the city. While trying to support their children, often together with their wives who also worked full jobs, men had less time to interact with their social surroundings besides the workplace and their immediate neighbourhood. Thus, a relative turn inward can be recognized in this second phase. Sabri Aksoy, during the 1970s employed as a welder at *Verolme*, illustrates this efficiently by stating:

‘We [his wife and himself] had little time to make connections in Rotterdam. During the day we were working, and in the evening, we had to cook. In the weekend, we cleaned the house and visited family.’<sup>165</sup>

During this period, the public and political focus began to shift more towards the problems that migrants faced, and as a result, an emphasis was placed on migrants’ victimhood. In 1971 for example, the *Stichting Hulp* described ‘the foreigner’ as living ‘as if quarantined, without interacting with the world around him’.<sup>166</sup> This assumed lack of interaction led – as in the beginning of the first period – to the opening of support centres meant to help migrants integrate through retaining strong contacts that could help them in Dutch society.<sup>167</sup> Newly found migrant support organizations, such as the AKPG, were not as focused on organizing fun gatherings or helping migrants organize themselves but instead aimed to help foreign workers ‘integrate’. They did so through for example providing Dutch language lessons and helping foreign workers with individual problems.<sup>168</sup> There are no clear examples of migrant port workers making use of these facilities however. During this second phase, migrant support organizations in Rotterdam were mostly focused on helping individual migrants and had little impact on the social lives and interactions of migrant workers.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Froukje Santing and Peter Schumacher, ‘De geslaagde minderheid,’ *NRC Handelsblad*, 24-01-1981, 23, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=KBNRC01:000027393:mpeg21:a0228>, accessed on 15-03-2023.

<sup>166</sup> ‘Necati Genç: Buitenlander leeft als in quarantaine,’ *Het Vrije Volk*, 08-09-1971, 13, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010957637:mpeg21:a0207>, accessed on 06-04-2023.

<sup>167</sup> ‘Wethouder geef startsein bouw wijkcentrum in Middellandwijk: Centrum voor Spaanse arbeiders geopend,’ *Het Vrije Volk*, 16-04-1970, 17, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010957209:mpeg21:a0266>, accessed on 30-03-2023.

<sup>168</sup> CAR, AKPG, inv.nr. 1452-37, André Rhebergen, ‘Vooronderzoek project Aktie Komitee Pro Gastarbeiders,’.

<sup>169</sup> Ellen Krijnen, ‘De Stichting Hulp,’ 262.

At the same time, migrants faced increasing discrimination and were thus less able to express themselves and freely interact with their social surroundings.<sup>170</sup> Consequently, many migrants turned inward, focusing on their close surroundings and ethnic groups. Despite these challenges, there are still examples of foreign workers actively interacting with their social surroundings. They continued to frequent cafés, join local football teams, or even establish their own football associations, such as the Greek football club *Olympic*.<sup>171</sup> The case of A. Poveda – a Spanish welder at one of the larger shipyards in Rotterdam – effectively illustrates the development of social lives and interactions from the period of family reunification onwards. Poveda arrived in the 1960s, and worked for five years before reuniting with his wife and kids in Rotterdam around 1970. While this did not lead to the development of a ‘parallel’ or ‘quarantined’ life, his life in the second phase differs from his early days. At the time of his interview, in 1972, Poveda spends his free time as chairman of the Spanish workers football team C.C.O.A.<sup>172</sup> This demonstrates a turn inwards, but not a full isolation as was argued at the time.

Furthermore, foreign workers continued meeting each other as well as Dutch people at a wide range of (unofficial) meeting places, however their interactions leaned more towards their own ethnic groups. As discussed, each nationality had its own (often multiple) meeting centres, which were – in contrast to the meeting centres discussed in the previous section – often set up by ethnic entrepreneurs in cooperation with foreign workers. The centres in this second phase were more akin to bars or restaurants and were often not solely open to foreign workers of a specific nationality. Bar *Casa Maria* for example, a café for Spanish workers, was always visited by Dutch as well as Spanish men.<sup>173</sup> However, the extent of interaction between Dutch and foreign groups remains uncertain.

Despite the increasing focus on work and family and the decreasing influx of young men looking for adventure, foreign workers thus continued to actively engage with their social surroundings. People still went out, spent their social lives at football clubs or at one of the many meeting centres, cafés and bars set up in this period. The difference is that their

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<sup>170</sup> J. M. Theunis, *Gastarbeiders-lastarbeiders: ongewenste vreemdelingen?, discriminatie?, gemiste kansen?* (Hilversum: Brand, 1968).

<sup>171</sup> ‘VOORZITTER VAN OLYMPIC: ‚Grieken gediscrimineerd op de voetbalvelden’, *Het Vrije Volk*, 10-02-1970, 23, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010957351:mpeg21:a0441>, accessed on 06-04-2023.

<sup>172</sup> ‘Portret van een gastarbeidersgezin,’ *Het Vrije Volk*, 29-08-1974, 14, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010958550:mpeg21:a0246>, accessed on 06-04-2023.

<sup>173</sup> Jan Reiff, ‘Geen herrie in café’s voor gastarbeiders,’ *Het Vrije Volk*, 30-06-1972, 7, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ddd:010957875:mpeg21:a0228>, accessed on 30-03-2023.

interactions tended to occur more frequently within their own ethnic group, while interactions with Dutch society appeared to decrease.

## Conclusion

This chapter analysed and compared the social lives and interactions of foreign port workers in the first and second phase of Mediterranean migration. It made use of a diverse range of case studies which display the diverse ways in which they interacted with their social surroundings. From these case studies it can be inferred that – while migrants never lived a ‘quarantined life’ – the social lives’ of migrant port workers differed significantly between the first and second phase.

Companies in the first phase were very much involved with welcoming their foreign workers, and while this became less in the second phase, the emphasis placed on ties between worker and company persisted. Cases of cooperation in both the first and second phase – such as the example of the RDM boardroom which served as a Mosque – effectively illustrate this. On the other hand, workplace interactions between foreign and Dutch co-workers began as predominantly positive but developed into more negative experiences in the second phase. While the first phase saw foreign men working in multi-ethnic workplaces in which interethnic contacts were necessary and common, the second phase saw increasing segregation as larger groups of foreign workers arrived. The case of Turkish employees at *Verolme* has shown that the companies themselves were partly to blame here as they actively segregated their workforce.

Outside of the companies, the observations made in this chapter indicate a nuanced shift in migrants’ social lives and interactions from the 1960s into the 1970s. This shift is characterised by both an increased inward focus but also by ongoing interaction with the social surroundings. The first phase was dominated by a continuous arrival of large and diverse groups of young men, aiming to earn money while at the same time having fun and discovering the city. In doing so, they interacted with others outside of and within their ethnic boundaries. The group of foreign workers in this first phase must of course not be overgeneralized as their experiences remained diverse: some did indeed live a more secluded life, or went out simply to distract themselves from thinking about home – as Akdeniz’s case has shown. This changed in the second phase: men were often older, had stayed in Rotterdam or at their companies for a while, and in many cases flew in their families to reunite. Their social lives and interactions

changed accordingly, turning more into their close surroundings or their own ethnic groups, but this did not always lead to seclusion.

To conclude, the notion that migrants' lives became more secluded or parallel in the 1970s is partly true. Interactions with Dutch society decreased, and cases at the port companies have shown that some interactions could be defined as clashes. Former 'guest workers' own perceived difference between a first phase in which they felt like welcome guests, and a second phase in which they felt like unwelcome strangers also seems substantiated. The question that remains is of course what exactly caused this development, which is answered in the following and final chapter of this thesis.

## Chapter 4: Migrants' experiences in broader perspective

The following and final chapter analyses the developments described in the previous chapter by connecting the personal stories and experiences to larger developments within the Dutch (and in some cases global) society. Based on the previous chapter's comparison between the first and second phase of Mediterranean labour migration, two main developments can be recognized. At the companies, workplace relationships across ethnic boundaries soured, became more shallow and were defined more strongly by discrimination. Outside of the companies, foreign workers partly turned inward towards their own ethnic group. Between the first phase (1960-1970) and the second phase (1970-1980) a lot changed in Dutch society. In the 1960s, Dutch society – while still somewhat 'pillarized' (segregated) into separate factions based on religion or ideological convictions – could be characterized as open. This open character was enhanced by a booming and growing (industrial) economy. From the 1970s onward, the socioeconomic structure of Dutch society changed significantly, which had a strong impact on migration as a whole, as well as foreign workers' social lives. At the same time, companies in the Rotterdam port region – especially shipyards – faced a turbulent period, something which most likely had an impact on the souring of workplace relations.

This chapter will delve deeper into the causes of both the relative turn inward and the souring of workplace relations that migrants faced by answering the following sub question: Which factors influenced the development of Mediterranean migrants' social lives and interactions from 1960 until 1980? The chapter firstly analyses broader developments in Dutch society that impacted the lives of foreign workers: socioeconomic developments (such as the 'migration stop' and the rising family reunification), the changing policy and political stance towards foreign workers, and the rising discrimination in Dutch society. What caused these developments and what effects did they have? The second section of the chapter analyses the impact of these developments on port industries, but also looks at factors specific to companies in the port such as the decline of port industries resulting from international competition. What effects did this have on the workplace and on relations between foreign and Dutch workers?

### 4.1. A changing Dutch society

#### *Recession and a changing migrant population*

Already from the 1970s onward, employment opportunities in Dutch industries were diminishing. The overstretched labour market which characterized the 1960s had mostly disappeared, but while unemployment in the country was rising, little workers in the country



wanted to perform the low-wage jobs necessary to keep the industrial sector competing with low wage countries. As a result, not only were foreign workers able to retain their jobs in the early 1970s, but increasing numbers of them were recruited into the country.<sup>174</sup> Coupled with a looming economic crisis, this was not viable in the long run.

The economic crisis came to a high in 1973, when the Arabic Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) – who controlled most of the world’s oil – increased oil prices by 70% and decreased oil production in response to the Western support of Israel during the Yom Kippur War.<sup>175</sup> The resulting economic crisis made the Dutch government realize that they no longer needed foreign labour forces. In 1973 – after a few years in which large numbers of migrants arrived into the country – Prime Minister Den Uyl (Labour Party), introduced legislation that made it more difficult for migrant workers to enter the country. A few years later, In 1975, the recruitment of foreign workers was officially terminated.<sup>176</sup>

Instead of bringing a halt to the migration into the Netherlands however, these measures, together with the economic crisis, significantly increased migration flows into the country. The largest groups of new arrivals were not ‘guest workers’ however. Instead, foreign men already in the country decided to fly in their families – something which was made possible by confessional parties in the early 1960s.<sup>177</sup> In 1969 already, around 6,000 foreign workers reunited with their families in the Netherlands, and following the recruitment stop, more would follow. While the majority of the Mediterranean migrant workers did return in this period, significant numbers made their stay permanent. This is especially true for Moroccan and Turkish migrants. They had two main reasons. Firstly, they feared that if they left the country, they would no longer be able to return due to the stricter legislation. This meant that they could no longer see their families. Secondly, they were wary of returning to a country where recession hit even harder than it did in the Netherlands.<sup>178</sup>

These incentives were not there – or to a lesser extent – for other groups of foreign workers. The large majority of Spanish and Italian men – the other two large groups of foreign workers in Rotterdam – remigrated during the 1970s. For Spanish men, this was caused by the death of Francisco Franco in 1975 – indicating that for many of them, their stay was politically motivated. Italian men were actually free to roam Europe following Italy’s membership of the

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<sup>174</sup> Tinnemans, *Een gouden armband*, 106-108.

<sup>175</sup> Leo Lucassen and Jan Lucassen, *Vijf eeuwen migratie: een verhaal van winnaars en verliezers* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Atlas Contact, 2018), 153.

<sup>176</sup> Pieter Lakeman, *Binnen zonder kloppen: Nederlandse immigratiepolitiek en de economische gevolgen*, (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1999), 96.

<sup>177</sup> Lucassen & Lucassen, *Vijf eeuwen migratie*, 144-145.

<sup>178</sup> Lucassen & Lucassen, *Vijf eeuwen migratie*, 153.

European Economic Community (EEC). Most thus moved along with the demand for labour: when the Dutch economy fell into crisis, they felt more comfortable returning home, where the job opportunities now were not necessarily worse than in the Netherlands.<sup>179</sup>

These developments brought about a significant shift in the migrant population. It was now dominated by Turkish and Moroccan men – attracted in large numbers during the early 1970s to keep the industrial sector competing with low-wage countries – who, following the recruitment stop, reunited with their families in large numbers. The migrants that arrived were no longer young, adventurous men from a multitude of different groups and backgrounds but rather, still diverse but to a lesser extent, groups of Turkish and Moroccan men, women and children. The economic crisis and the stop on recruitment also play an important part here, as instead of arriving to support a booming economy, migrants who arrived in the 1970s entered a country with rising unemployment rates.

This had a significant impact on the social lives of migrants. Family reunification – thus caused by counteractive government policy – led to an increasing focus on work and family. Instead of living in pension homes dispersed around the city, many migrants now lived in houses in old city neighbourhoods. In Rotterdam, migrant families had little choice in deciding where to live due to discriminatory housing policies.<sup>180</sup> The spaces where they ended up were more segregated and thus diminished opportunities for social contact across ethnic boundaries.<sup>181</sup> Previously, foreign workers in the Rotterdam port region went out partly to escape the pension home or to no longer think about their home and family. This was no longer necessary. Additionally, men now had to provide directly for their family which in some cases led to an increase in working hours.<sup>182</sup>

### *Changing policy and political position*

It took some time however before the idea that migrant workers were not temporary guests was broadly carried within the Dutch political debate. For a long time, the established political parties continued emphasizing the temporal character of migrants' stay. In the now famous *nota Buitenlandse Werknemers* ('note on foreign workers') introduced in 1970 by minister of social affairs Bouke Roolvink, the Dutch government clearly laid out their view on the 'foreign worker'. In short, the note emphasized the importance of foreign workers as 'offering an

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<sup>179</sup> Lucassen & Lucassen, *Vijf eeuwen migratie*, 167.

<sup>180</sup> Jansen, *Bepaalde huisvesting*, 58.

<sup>181</sup> Lakeman, *Binnen zonder kloppen*, 101-102.

<sup>182</sup> Van der Ven, 'Succesverhaal van een gastarbeider,' 15.

essential contribution to the lessening of tensions in the national labour market', but also stated that their stay should not be made permanent: 'our country has a need for a new workforce and not for the settlement of new foreign families'. Roolvink was very much convinced that the Netherlands was not a country of immigrants, but felt that foreign workers did serve the interests of the Dutch economy. As such, to neutralize the negative societal aspects of labour migration, he envisioned regulation which allowed foreign workers to only stay for two to three years.<sup>183</sup>

Roolvink received significant criticism for his note. Starting in the late 1960s, a political movement called the 'New Left' was giving increasing attention to the social problems of foreign workers in Dutch society.<sup>184</sup> They critiqued Roolvink and the government for 'dehumanizing' foreign workers, and for ignoring the social issues that resulted from 'guest worker' migration. Dutch people for a long time saw offering work to foreign workers as a favour, an act of kindness, but people began seeing that this was not the case. Instead, foreign workers were used to push the unwanted and low paying jobs away from Dutch people. Some at the time even described migrant workers as victims of 'disguised slavery'.<sup>185</sup> At the same time, the idea that migrant workers were 'temporary guests' was losing ground. In 1971, one of the first research reports on the stay of migrant workers showed that a lot of them were already longer in the country than thought, and relatively little envisioned returning in the foreseeable future.<sup>186</sup>

From this point onwards, a shift in political opinion (especially on the left) can be recognized which aims to help migrant workers 'integrate'. People began realizing that migrants' stay in many cases was not temporary, and at the same time, were seeing the negative effects that labour migration had on them. The result was a new set of policies aimed at helping migrants integrate: through new support groups, such as the AKPG in Rotterdam, and through emphasizing self-organization as a means to integrate.<sup>187</sup> As illustrated, this rise in support for migrants came with a strong emphasis on the victimhood of migrant workers and an emphasis on the necessity of Dutch support groups to help them. In Rotterdam, the AKPG strongly emphasized the bad position of the 'poor foreigners', who were victims of a capitalist system and needed saving. Of course, migrant workers in many cases needed help as they could be

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<sup>183</sup> Tinnemans, *Een gouden armband*, 103.

<sup>184</sup> Tinnemans, *Een gouden armband*, 93.

<sup>185</sup> Theunis, *Gastarbeiders-lastarbeiders*, 28-29.

<sup>186</sup> 'De buitenlandse arbeider in Nederland: Onderzoek ingesteld in opdracht van het Ministerie van Cultuur, Recreatie, en Maatschappelijk werk en het Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Volksgezondheid', *Nederlandse Stichting voor Statistiek (NSS)*, The Hague, 1971.

<sup>187</sup> Tinnemans, *Een gouden armband*, 93.

unfamiliar with Dutch law or policies, however the emphasis on victimhood and an almost paternalistic relation between support groups and migrant workers could also have had negative side effects.<sup>188</sup>

Besides trying to help individual migrants, the 1970s saw the government trying to support migrants in forming their own organizations. Policies aimed at promoting self-organization had their basis in the fear that migrants would not be able to profit from the offered opportunities in Dutch society. Supporting their own organizations and involving them in policymaking was thus seen as important. Furthermore, the organizations were intended to fight the societal ‘backlog’ that migrants faced, while belonging to a group would prevent seclusion and help migrants retain their own identity.<sup>189</sup> These new policies furthered migrants’ turn inwards. People that arrived in the 1970s already entered into established ethnic communities of fellow countrymen and women that had lived in the city, and the policies emphasizing self-organization as a means to integrate made migrants rely even stronger on these social structures. In Rotterdam the organizations that did exist barely advanced the emancipation and integration of migrants.<sup>190</sup>

### *Rising discrimination*

As the socioeconomic and political climate changed, so did the receptiveness and openness of Dutch society as a whole. This was largely caused by the aforementioned economic changes: migrants no longer were necessary and welcome guests supporting a booming economy. At first they performed jobs in sectors lacking workers, which made them complementary to Dutch workers in the national labour market. Consequently, Dutch society was relatively open and receptive. This was enhanced by the climate of the 1960s, a decade characterised by activism, protest and societal progress, in which the previously ‘pillarized’ society quickly changed into a more open society.<sup>191</sup> Migrant workers – when looking back on this period – often talk about how they were ‘welcomed with open arms’, praising the open attitude of the

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<sup>188</sup> De Bock’s case study on Mediterranean migrants in Ghent has shown how such a paternalistic attitude can lead to an unequal relation (based on superiority and inferiority) and the eventual disinterest of the migrants themselves; De Bock, *Parallel Lives*, 133.

<sup>189</sup> Penninx and Schrover, ‘Bastion of Bindmiddel?’ 44; Krijnen, *De Stichting Hulp*, 262.

<sup>190</sup> Krijnen, *De Stichting Hulp*, 263.

<sup>191</sup> Lucassen & Lucassen, *Vijf eeuwen migratie*, 152-153.

Dutch population.<sup>192</sup> In this period, little dividing factors existed. For example, the Islam would only start playing an important role for migrant workers later on.<sup>193</sup>

Contrary to the 1960s, the 1970s to some migrant workers felt like ‘some kind of revolt’.<sup>194</sup> The tone changed in the late 1960s, when autochthones, now more explicitly xenophobic, turned against Turkish and Moroccan migrants. A first outbreak took place in 1969, as a group of nearly two hundred Dutch men attacked a pension home of Moroccan workers in The Hague. In 1972, the well-known clashes between Turkish and Dutch inhabitants of the Afrikaanderwijk in Rotterdam took place. The neighbourhood would be the scene of days long protests and riots, with attacks from both Turkish and Dutch men going back and forth.<sup>195</sup> Most of the Dutch men in the neighbourhood were port workers, and most likely worked together with foreign workers. The effect of the riots on social relations of migrants working in the port should thus not be understated. According to Mahir Engin, the rising incidents – coupled with the economic downturn – affected the mood and the relations: ‘The attitude of some Dutch people towards us became less benevolent.’<sup>196</sup>

Clashes can still be seen as incidents, however the attitude of the general Dutch population changed as well. Newspaper articles on ‘guest workers’ in the 1960s, while they often had a paternalistic undertone, were mostly interested in the foreign workers themselves: where they came from, why they came, and how they liked the Netherlands. In the second phase, newspapers increasingly began focusing on the problems foreign workers caused which affected Dutch people. A prominent theme in newspapers of the 1970s was for example the competition caused by foreign workers in both the housing and labour markets.<sup>197</sup> Once again, the economic downturn plays an important role here, however other factors – such as the emphasis on self-organization – also led to an accentuation of cultural differences and the introduction of more xenophobic sentiments. Moreover, some Dutch people might have also felt more culturally removed from Turkish and Moroccan migrants – now the dominant group.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Fadimeh Demir, interview with Ibrahim Serin, collection of the Amsterdam Museum, 2012.

<sup>193</sup> Van der Ven, ‘Succesverhaal van een gastarbeider,’ 15.

<sup>194</sup> Abaâziz, ‘Ze waren onwetend,’ 100; Lucassen & Lucassen, *Vijf eeuwen migratie*, 153-154.

<sup>195</sup> Fadimeh Demir, interview with Ibrahim Serin, collection of the Amsterdam Museum, 2012.

<sup>196</sup> Lucassen & Lucassen, *Vijf eeuwen migratie*, 153-154.

<sup>197</sup> ‘Van tabaksplukker tot volksvertegenwoordiger,’ 24.

<sup>198</sup> Theunis, *Gastarbeider lastarbeider*, 17-18.

<sup>199</sup> Abaâziz, ‘Ze waren onwetend,’ 100.

## 4.2. A different workplace

Most likely, the rising discriminatory sentiments in Dutch society had its effects on migrant workers' interactions in the workplace. The Hasip Turan case – who worked at *Wilton-Fijenoord* and clashed with his Dutch co-workers and bosses – can be seen as an example of this. The structures of companies in the Rotterdam port region also changed significantly from the 1960s into the 1970s, a tumultuous period in which the industry went through a struggle for its survival. The following section discusses this development and how it affected migrant workers and their interactions at the workplace.

### *The decline of the Rotterdam port industry*

While the Dutch post-industrial transition started in the early 1970s, port industries – and especially the shipbuilding industry – already faced problems in the 1960s. During this period, competing shipyards abroad began gaining ground with cheap labour supplies and greater production capabilities. Additionally, the early 1960s saw a contraction in the shipbuilding market and the number of workers employed in the Dutch shipbuilding industry kept decreasing as a result of the overstretched national labour market. The result was that increasing numbers of migrant workers were hired: between 1964 and 1965, more migrant workers were hired compared to Dutch workers in the shipbuilding industry.<sup>199</sup> Partly due to the labour forces of migrant workers and significant restructuring – all large shipbuilding companies had merged into groups by 1968 – the Rotterdam shipbuilding industry was able to survive the 1960s. Recruitment of foreign workers continued, and was most intense between 1967 and 1974.<sup>200</sup> The increase in oil prices in 1973 however hit the shipbuilding industry especially hard, as it led to a collapse of the oil tanker market. During the 1970s, many companies constantly operated at a loss, and introduced reactive employment policies. By the second half of the 1970s, many companies scaled down their production capacity – partly due to poor decision making – which was particularly detrimental for jobs in the secondary sector, dominated by migrant workers.<sup>201</sup>

Compared to the 1960s, the 1970s can thus be characterized as a much more insecure time at companies in the Rotterdam port region. Migrant workers were no longer hired because of economic growth, increasing production and a general shortage of workers. Instead, they

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<sup>199</sup> Paul Klaassen, 'Changing Tides: Migrant Workers in the Dutch Shipbuilding Industry, 1960-Present' (MA Thesis, Rotterdam: Erasmus Universiteit, 2021), 34–36.

<sup>200</sup> Krijnen, *De Stichting Hulp*, 241.

<sup>201</sup> Lucassen & Lucassen, *Vijf eeuwen*, 161; Klaassen 'Changing Tides,' 42-43.

were hired to remain competitive with low wage countries. The large numbers that arrived in the late 1960s and 1970s had much lower job security compared to their counterparts in the early 1960s. With the economic crisis and the decline in port industries, many migrants lost their jobs. Consequently, their strongest connection to Dutch society was taken away, making migrants either return home or rely on their ethnic communities. Furthermore, the general decline of the port industries most likely had an impact on the workplace relations. At shipyards in Amsterdam for example, Dutch workers did not understand why migrant workers were hired while unemployment among Dutch workers was rising.<sup>202</sup> This led to animosity between the two groups. It is important to realize however that migrant workers that were able to stay with their companies gladly did so, and many of them remained with the same company throughout the tumultuous 1970s and into the 1980s. While in general, the decline in port industries led to a worsening of workplace relations and a turn inward socially, some migrants retained strong connections to their companies – mostly due to extended periods of employment.<sup>203</sup>

### *Changes to the workforce*

Not only did the general decline most likely have an impact on the workplace relations – with migrant workers fearing for their jobs – the reactive recruitment policies of the shipyards also led to significant changes to the workforce: the increasing recruitment meant that migrant workers began making up a larger share of the total workforces which made interaction unnecessary and more difficult. Migrant workers' share of the total workforce already increased in 1964 but changed most significantly from the late 1960s into the early 1970s. To illustrate, in 1968 the workforce of *Van der Giessen-de Noord* consisted for around 12% of migrant workers, but this had increased to 18% in 1971 already.<sup>204</sup> Additionally, the national background of the migrant workforce began to change. In Rotterdam, Turkish and to a lesser extent Moroccan workers began to dominate workplaces. By the end of the 1970s for example, the foreign workforce of *Wilton-Fijenoord* consisted for 72% of Turkish workers. Furthermore, in 1978, the foreign workforce at the RDM consisted for more than 50% of Turkish men. P.

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<sup>202</sup> As told by a Turkish former migrant worker at 'Baklava in Amsterdam Havenstad,' a meeting for Turkish families whose father/grandfather/etc. worked in port industries in Amsterdam at the *National Maritime Museum*, attended by the author on 04-06-2023.

<sup>203</sup> Ekiz, 'Behouden vaart;' Van der Ven, 'Succesverhaal van een gastarbeider,' 15; For the extended periods of employment, see for example archival material on foreign workers at *Verolme* in 1987, most of them had been with the company for over 15 years: CAR, AKPG, inv.nr. 1452-39. 'Ingezonden brief,' 25-09-1987.

<sup>204</sup> Klaassen, 'Changing Tides,' 38.

*Smit Jr.*, a smaller company, employed 33 Turkish men compared to only 10 Spanish and 18 Moroccan workers in the late 1970s.<sup>205</sup>

These changes meant that larger groups of foreign workers of the same nationality worked at a single company. In the first phase, migrant workers often arrived in diverse groups and were placed within the companies, often together with Dutch workers. As we have seen with the case of Mahir Engin, this incentivized workers to learn the Dutch language and form connections with their co-workers. Some companies also offered Dutch courses for their migrant workers.<sup>206</sup> Forming such connections and bridging these dividing factors were necessary to work effectively in a multi-ethnic workplace. This changed as more workers of the same nationality arrived. Cases at both *Verolme* and the RDM have shown how Turkish men became segregated and performed different jobs at the Rozenburg shipyard.<sup>207</sup> It is likely that similar cases occurred at other companies as well. Interaction with Dutch co-workers was no longer necessary and there were little incentives to learn the language. Upon arrival at one of the companies, migrant workers could connect with men of the same nationality: an understandable development from their perspective as this was of course less complicated compared to trying to ‘mix’ with the increasingly closed off Dutch workforce. The companies also enabled this development. By the second phase, most of them had hired translators per nationality who spoke for their national groups. This was cheaper compared to offering language courses to all of the foreign employees, and as foreign workers arrived in large groups it was convenient to assign them together on a single project. Learning the language was no longer necessary, however the result was an emphasis on internal division and a decrease in interethnic workplace interactions.

## Conclusion

This chapter has connected the personal experiences of Mediterranean migrant workers in the Rotterdam port region to broader developments that occurred in the Dutch society between the first phase (1960-1970) and the second phase (1970-1980) of Mediterranean labour migration. In doing so, it has identified three interconnected factors that caused the Mediterranean migrant workers’ social lives to turn inward. Firstly, the family reunification – caused by counteractive

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<sup>205</sup> ‘Sociaal verslag 1979,’ *Dok- en werfmaatschappij Wilton-Fijenoord*, 1980, 4; ‘Sociaal jaarverslag RDM 1979,’ *Nieuws van de R.D.M.* 18, no. 1 (1980): 7; ‘Sociaal jaarverslag 1978,’ *Contact: Bedrijfsblad van de machinefabriek en scheepswerf van P. Smit Jr. B.V.*, no. 1 (1979): 19.

<sup>206</sup> ‘Talencursus Nederlands voor Spanjaarden en Italianen,’ *Contact: Bedrijfsblad van de machinefabriek en scheepswerf van P. Smit Jr. B.V.*, no. 6 (1970): 24-25.

<sup>207</sup> See the discussion on p. 39 of this thesis.



government policy aimed at halting migration following the worldwide economic recession – made migrant workers more focused on their work and family. While many migrant workers of course still lived in pension homes, this began to change. Men moved with their families to neighbourhoods in the city, resulting in a decreasing need for distraction and direct interaction with the city centre. Secondly, the emphasis on self-organization in new policies pushed migrants towards their own ethnic groups – during a time when ethnic communities were growing in size. Thirdly and finally, the economic recession caused frictions between migrant workers and a Dutch society in which unemployment was rising. Differences between the group of migrants – which was also becoming less diverse and more and more dominated by Turkish and Moroccan men, women and children – came to the fore more strongly. As discrimination and societal tensions rose, migrants often found themselves facing exclusion and marginalization in various aspects of Dutch life. The turn inward can in part be seen as a protective response to these developments.

These factors affected workplace relations, as the rising discrimination could be felt by migrant workers in the Rotterdam port region. The crises in port industries further impacted migrants' social lives: layoffs were constantly around the corner, and migrant workers often were the first to be let go. Additionally, the reactive policies to save the industry – mainly the significant increase in the recruitment of migrant workers in the early 1970s – led to segregation in the workplace as migrant groups (more often of a single ethnicity) began to make up increasing shares of the total workforce. Consequently, migrants of a single ethnicity were placed on the same jobs (often dirtier and more difficult work) and companies no longer tried involving migrant workers with their social structures as explicitly as before. Of course, this development in which larger groups of a single nationality began to change the multi-ethnic workplaces cannot be recognized at all examined companies in the Rotterdam port region. Some companies were simply too small, and within these companies interethnic contacts were likely easier. Further nuance comes from the examples of former 'guest workers' looking back fondly on their time working at companies in the Rotterdam port region.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to analyse in depth the impact that the different ethnic backgrounds of migrants had in the first and second phase. As such, and also to avoid attributing the issues migrants faced in the second phase to presumed or overgeneralized ethnic characteristics, the chapter does not include the changing ethnic background of migrant workers as one of the factors influencing social lives and interactions. The sources do not suggest that the ethnic differences between groups of migrants impacted their social lives significantly. Spanish, Turkish, and Greek men lived relatively similar lives in the first phase

and were all able to form meaningful connections with Dutch people. Instead of ethnic differences, the fact that a single group (Turkish people) began to dominate, as opposed to more diverse groups (especially in the workplace) is seen as a more important factor for the changing social lives and interactions. Furthermore, the economic and political developments have had a more significant influence on the rising discrimination compared to the background of the migrants. In later debates, the danger of Islam and the presumed large differences between 'Muslims' and 'Dutch people' would be strongly emphasized: however this fear of the Other more strongly stems from socioeconomic developments which made migrants and the host country population competitors in a society feeling the effects of economic recession.

To conclude, the lived experiences of Mediterranean migrants were shaped strongly by broader developments in Dutch society: a changing socioeconomic landscape, evolving policies and politics, rising discrimination, and challenges in the Rotterdam port industry. Together, these factors led to a general souring of workplace relations and a relative turn inwards from the 1960s into the 1970s.

## Chapter 5: Final discussion

In recent years the topic of Mediterranean migration to the Netherlands has received significant scholarly and popular attention. Many local museums – very recently the *Stedelijk Museum Schiedam* and the *Scheepvaartmuseum* in Amsterdam – are becoming concerned with displaying the stories and experiences of Mediterranean migrants in their city or surroundings. Similarly, the academic sector sees the continuous publication of interesting works on the ‘guest workers’ – many of whom now form an important part of Dutch society. In the specific context of Rotterdam however, little scholarly work exists which puts the experiences and interactions of migrant workers at its centre. This thesis has partly filled this gap. It has analysed a well-researched topic – the increasing troubles migrants had integrating into Dutch society – from the perspective of the migrants themselves. My goal has been to analyse and explain the development of the social lives and interactions from Mediterranean migrants working in the Rotterdam port region.

To answer my main question, I firstly focused on giving context and background to the diverse group of Mediterranean migrants that arrived in Rotterdam. Through making use of case studies displaying migrants’ own experiences, I inferred that most migrants who worked in the Rotterdam port region arrived as spontaneous migrants, resided in pension homes, and performed (semi-)skilled jobs. While they were driven by economic incentives, migrants also moved to see more of the world or to escape authoritarian regimes. The diversity in migrants’ personal experiences nuances these general conclusions, and challenges traditional images of migrants as voiceless victims of inhuman housing and working conditions.

In the remaining two chapters, I focused on analysing the development of Mediterranean migrants’ social lives, as well as the factors that influenced this development. I have shown that in the first phase, companies were welcoming to their foreign workers. They in turn seemed to enjoy working in the port and were able to work well alongside Dutch workers. Outside of the companies, migrant workers – many of whom were young and adventurous men – spent their social lives in the pension homes, going out in the city centre or meeting each other at religious or national meeting centres. While migrants mostly turned to people of the same ethnicity some still developed sincere relationships across ethnic boundaries. Even if they did not, many did interact and leave a clear mark on their surroundings.

In line with what is argued in earlier works on Mediterranean migrants in the Netherlands, a shift took place going into the 1970s. Lives became more parallel, as migrants

turned more towards their own ethnic groups. Even though relations between migrants and their companies remained steady, this development is reflected in the workplace. Larger groups of migrants arrived and relied on each other, while interactions with Dutch co-workers sometimes turned into clashes. Of course, cases of continuity – in which foreign and Dutch workers get along well – can still be found, however the rise of clashes and segregation in this period shines through. Outside of the companies, migrants' social lives underwent similar changes, however the shift was more nuanced. During the 1970s, many migrant workers reunited with their families and no longer had time to spend partying with their (Dutch or foreign) friends. The focus on working and going out was replaced by a focus on work and family. While this did not lead to a full turn inwards, migrants' social lives did take place more within their own ethnic groups.

In my final chapter I have identified the factors that caused this shift, among which family reunification, failing integration policy and the rising discrimination towards migrant groups all played an important role. These factors are connected to global economic crisis, which caused a migration stop – counteractively leading to family reunification – and led to an increase in discrimination as migrant workers were becoming competitors instead of part of a complementary labour force. Prior to the economic crisis, companies in the Rotterdam port had recruited large numbers of migrant workers to survive the crises they faced. The result was that increasing numbers of migrants from the same nationality began working at single companies. This emphasised their position as second-rate workers, led to segregation and resulted in a decrease in interethnic interaction. When the global crisis hit, these companies became insecure working places. Lay-offs meant that migrant workers could lose the strongest connection they had to Dutch society, and could also have led to clashes between Dutch and foreign men, who blamed each other for the misfortune of the industry.

The problems that followed – clashes between migrants and the host country population, failing integration, troubles on the labour and housing market – were all attributed to perceived cultural differences. Dutch society thus viewed migrants and their assimilation through an ethnic lens: the issues which were caused by labour migration were seen as the result of cultural differences and not of other factors. My thesis has shown that this was not the case. Furthermore, I have challenged the notion of Parallel Lives, more specifically the ideas behind it that separation between host country and migrant populations are caused by an unwillingness to integrate on the migrants' side. Generally, migrants in Rotterdam were open to explore and interact with Dutch society, something that only began to change as soon as they were no longer seen as welcome guests but as unwelcome strangers.

Thus, my thesis has contributed to the historiography on Mediterranean migrants and their integration by putting migrants' own experiences at the centre. Analysing the first-hand experiences as opposed to a more top-down approach has not necessarily led me to different conclusions than those laid out in works on Mediterranean migrants in the Netherlands. The general takeaways are the same: migrants' suffered from the socioeconomic changes that took place from the 1970s onward and their lives became more parallel to the Dutch population. However, the bottom-up approach offers more nuance. It displays cases of continuity in which migrant workers showed a strong willingness to interact, or in which they formed strong connections with Dutch people. In a top-down perspective these cases would be overlooked. Furthermore, this approach has added a 'human perspective' and has made the story less abstract. Future researchers on migration would do well to keep this in mind, especially when researching contemporary migration – a topic about which the migrants themselves have something to say as well.

Researching this broad and expansive topic has led to the discovery of many interesting stories yet to be told. Of course, my thesis focuses solely on the experiences of migrant men who were employed at the companies, but their wives and children also interacted with their surroundings and developed meaningful relations. Fidan Ekiz already researched these relationships in her documentary series *Veerboot naar Holland*, however the topic proves interesting for further academic research. Furthermore, it has been beyond the scope of my thesis to analyse the social lives of all labour migrants. Groups not researched by this thesis include Yugoslavians and of course (post)colonial migrants. Other topics of relevance for further academic research include but are not limited to: the influence of dictatorial regimes on Greek, Moroccan and Spanish workers and the effects of the stricter regulation of migration on 'illegal' migrants.

My thesis presents a nuanced and multifaceted understanding of Mediterranean migrants' social lives and how these developed in a period of societal change. While general conclusions are still drawn, I managed to refute simplistic narratives and emphasize the complexity of migrants' experiences. The resulting image of migrants and their experiences reflects the image presented in recent works that aim to change how we view 'guest workers': They were not unwilling to integrate, but instead were a diverse group of men who interacted with Dutch society and the companies they worked at in many different ways.

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