

Migrant Brokerage: Organising Political Campaigns and Negotiating Rituals in a Transnational Political Field

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The Italian labour migration to Seraing, a small town near Liège in the Belgian Wallonie, regained momentum in 1946, following a bilateral agreement between Italy and Belgium signed on June 20 of the same year¹. The agreement interrelated the Italian migration to Belgium and the search for workers in the Belgian coal industry. In fact, until 1957 most Italian immigrants, even those who arrived as «tourists» and had not been officially recruited in Italy, found their first employment in the Belgian mines (Morelli, 1988, pp. 84-90; Colucci, 2008, pp. 136-44; Martens, 1976, pp. 63-72 and 104-06). In the nineteenth century Seraing had grown thanks to the large-scale industrial coal-mining and the iron and steel industries. Towards the end of the century Italian labourers had begun to reinforce the industrial work force in Seraing. Post WWII migrants, the focus of this study, were therefore not the first Italians in the region of Liège (Leboutte, 1997, pp. 73-80 and 255-299). Demographic and organisational continuities show the tradition of Italian labour migration to Seraing. The town records indicate that, while most of the migrants living in Seraing in the 1960s had come there after 1946, a notable minority had already either worked in the local industry before the Second World War or was born in Belgium as children of pre WWII migrants.

However, the Italian population in Seraing experienced a remarkable growth only after World War II. Soon they accounted for 15% of a town population that amounted to about 40,000 before and 60,000 after the local government reform of 1976; and they maintained this number². Moreover upon their arrival

in 1946 both the new and the returning migrants found local branches of Italian organisations in Seraing created by their predecessors before the Second World War. They still performed social and religious welfare work, organised political, cultural, and leisure time activities, and assisted the migrants in their dealing with employers and with the Italian and Belgian authorities. The leading migrant organisation in Seraing in 1946 was still the *Missione Cattolica Italiana* (MCI). Founded in 1928 it included the so-called *Casa Nostra*, a meeting point for individual people and associations, a church, a kindergarten, and a school. In ideological opposition to the MCI, local activists of the *Partito Comunista Italiano* (PCI) still distributed semi-clandestine political propaganda and offered help to migrants in need. They relied on the organisational structures of the former Italian anti-Fascist resistance in the region of Liège, being coordinated by the (illegal) Belgian branch of the PCI and the *Parti Communiste de Belgique* (PCB)³.

Two features mark the development of the Italian associations and organisations in Seraing after the Second World War. First, the post WWII dependence of the local organisations and associations on supra-local organisations such as national political parties (PCI, *Democrazia Cristiana* [DC]) and the Italian Catholic Church, was challenged several times. Such attempts to gain local independence accompanied important changes in the attitudes of these local branches towards «their» migrants. During the first years of the renewed migration, the Italian Catholic Church and the Communist Party focused on the short-time needs of Italian labourers abroad, because they mainly considered them future return migrants. Most of their initiatives aimed at maintaining the migrant labourers' contacts with Italy and at facilitating the workers' and their families' return to Italy. Catholic and communist attempts to improve the migrants' living conditions in Belgium remained strictly limited to the basic needs in the areas of work and housing. Neither the supra-local organisations, nor their local branches, meant to solve the problems of Italian migrants staying abroad for more than a limited amount of time, that is, a few years at most. Belgian authorities and organisations such as the labour unions likewise intended the migrants to leave the country after a few years and acted accordingly (Rea, 1999/2000, pp. 77-89 and 109-23).

Subsequently, in the 1960s and in the 1970s, the local branches and associations became more flexible in meeting a wider range of migrant needs presumably resulting from the Italians' permanent stay in Seraing. Probably, because the direct influence of their authorities in Italy (PCI, Italian clergy, DC) decreased while their autonomy from these organisations grew, the local associations could start several attempts to deal with the presumed long-time needs of their local clients. Simultaneously or shortly afterwards, the migration policy of the Catholic Church and the Italian parties, above all the PCI,

changed. Several elements of an integration policy were added to the former diaspora policy. Thereby, efforts of local migrant groups to solve the long time problems of Italian workers abroad could be integrated into the general policies of the church and political parties towards Italian migrants (Seghetto, 1983; Monferrini, 1987, pp. 85-110).

Second, the ideologically motivated antagonism between the Italian migrant organisations in Seraing that dominated the post-war period weakened from the 1960s. The structures of the migrant organisations in Seraing in the immediate post-war period reflected the political struggle the Italian migrants were involved in before and during the Second World War. A fundamental conflict between a mostly conservative catholic group on one side and a more or less explicitly communist group on the other side determined the relations of the local Italian associations. During the early years of the new Italian migration to the region, the antagonism between the MCI of Seraing and Italian left-wing migrants was clearly evident from the attitudes they showed toward each other. The founder and first priest of the Mission, Guido Piumatti, returned to Seraing after the Second World War. The left-wing Italians in Seraing accused him of having collaborated with the fascist regime and avoided contact. Piumatti himself might not have been eager to maintain contact with the Italian «communist» milieu. Piumatti, who died in 1953, and his immediate successors thus failed to create ties to the Italian left-wing milieu in Seraing.

Only Gianfranco Monaca, who arrived in Seraing in 1964, initiated this connection (Seghetto, 1990). Since then, the Belgian branch of the PCI, being illegal, had been constantly under Italian and Belgian surveillance for a long time and therefore was unable to run a local association and offer regular activities up to the 1960s. The MCI and the Circolo Associazioni Cristiane dei Lavoratori Italiani (ACLI), in contrast, who maintained a steady presence in the public sphere and enjoyed privileges granted from the Italian as well as the Belgian authorities, monopolised the looking after of the migrants. Only from the 1960s people could choose from a variety of officially recognised catholic and leftist associations for assistance and amusement. Political activities of foreigners on the contrary still constituted a possible reason for expulsion (Pomba, pp. 77).

Well into the 1970s, foreigners remained under police surveillance and were constantly threatened with expulsion as a danger to the national security if suspected of being members of political parties conceived as dangerous (Bekaert, 1940, pp. 234-39; Closset, 1970, pp. 69-84). During the Cold War, the PCI in Belgium was considered to be dangerous (Morelli, 1996, pp. 62f). Consequently, Italian leftist associations were under constant police surveillance and could only survive when they refrained from open political actions and concentrated on merely cultural activities. Belgian lawyers' and law professors' constant criticism of the respective laws during the 1970s paved the way for changes in

the law in 1980 (Rigaux, 1981, pp. 24-25 and Verwilghen, 1970; Morelli, 1996, pp. 51-60; ACLI Belgio, 1996, pp. 70-108; Martiniello, 1988, pp. 151-201).

Following the example of pre-war leftist and anti-fascist migrant activists, Italian workers in post WWII Liège and Seraing had twice attempted to operate more or less openly as a Communist Italian association. The first communist or leftist association in the region was the local branch of Italia Libera that evolved out of the anti-fascist liberation committee in Belgium, which had, in September 1944, «liberated» or «occupied» the consulates of the Repubblica Sociale Italiana in all major Belgian towns. It was dissolved by the Belgian authorities only a couple of months after its founding (Morelli, 1987, pp. 259-62 and Morelli, 2004, pp. 102-109). The second leftist association, the Union Italo-Belge with headquarters in Seraing, operated for a few years but finally collapsed in 1959 because of external pressure such as police surveillance and intervention and financial problems⁴. A third attempt to establish a leftist association in Seraing, resulted in the founding of the Leonardo da Vinci Association culturelle italo-belge (Leonardo) around New Year's 1962/1963, was more successful.

Because their political orientation was undesired by the Italian and the Belgian authorities, all leftist organisations encountered major difficulties. Even the Leonardo succeeded in regularly organising cultural events and social programmes only after 1965. At that time the organisational structures of the association grew more stable and the surveillance was limited to some functionaries instead of the association as a whole. Since this time the Leonardo has kept up its social and cultural programme. The antagonism between the MCI and the Italian left-wing migrants was overrun for the first time in the late 1960s by a local alliance of several formerly ideologically divergent Italian migrant organisations and associations in Seraing. In 1965 a new Italian priest, Gianfranco Monaca, moved to Seraing and soon started to contact the Leonardo functionaries regularly. After a few informal meetings, the so-called Comitato d'intesa degli emigrati italiani (Comitato d'intesa) was founded in 1967 as a formal coalition between several different migrant organisations, such as the Leonardo, the ACLI, and the MCI. This local coalition corresponded to a general policy of openness of parts of the Catholic Church to leftist parties and labour unions at the same time in Italy and in the region of Liège. Nevertheless this coalition partly came as a surprise to the migrant functionaries in Seraing⁵. The new coalition partners in Seraing cooperated in policy and politics, met regularly, and on several occasions published declarations on the situation, expectations, and demands of the Italian migrants of the region. This formal coalition lasted until its initiator, Gianfranco Monaca, left Seraing in 1969.

The concept of the transnational social space is well suited to describe how a migrant population adjusts its strategies, practices, organisations, and even

its historical migrant narratives to their unique in-between situation (Glick Schiller, 1997). One can reconstruct a social space that does not coincide with a national social space either on the level of interpretative patterns or on the level of practices employed in social networks (Martini, 2001, pp. 216-18). To meet the needs of empirical work and integrate the results of additional scholarship the idea of the transnational social space has recently been modified and specified both on the conceptual and the methodological level⁶. One specification concerns the spread of the transnational practices that constitute a transnational social space: migrants can apply transnational practices either in several areas of their lives or in just one, they can do it regularly over a longer period of time or only randomly and infrequently. Inclusion opportunities or actual inclusions in two or more national social spaces are both the condition and the result of the transnational social space. The extent of such double inclusions depends on how likely national social spaces or, more precisely, single national social fields are to allow double inclusions and they also depend on the willingness and ability of migrants to use and combine inclusion opportunities from at least two national social spaces over a longer time period (Guarnizo, 2003, p. 670; Levitt, 2002, pp. 179-81; Levitt, 1998, pp. 930-35; Portes, 2003, pp. 876-77; Waldinger, 2004, pp. 1183-92). Therefore, transnationalism indicates a situation in which migrants adjust their conduct of life to lasting and specific transnational inclusion opportunities resulting, in organisations and social networks, from the migration itself (Bommes, 1999, pp. 191 and Bommes, 2003, p. 102) following Bourdieu (1985; 1987, pp. 171-399). It is now argued that transnational practices above all require the use and the exchange of capitals according to the field where they are to be used. It is most evident in the case of capitals originally controlled and legitimised by national authorities (e.g., cultural capital in form of educational degrees and diplomas) that this exchange has to follow the rules of transnational interaction between organisations and authorities (Bourdieu, 1998, pp. 100-02).

Already in the 1960s with the continuing activities of the MCI and the Leonardo and with the creation of other migrant associations with various ideological affiliations a transnational political field of the Italian migrants in Seraing began to evolve. Transnational social spaces in general and transnational political fields in particular seem to evolve first along already existing and regulated ties of exchange (of persons, goods and information) between states before they start creating their own transnational networks. The influence of the respective nation states is most obvious in transnational political fields because ultimately national politics alone determine the rules of political participation and thereby tolerate or even offer, limit or suppress opportunities for transnational political activities of migrants (Smith, 2003, pp. 725-26; Levitt, 1998, pp. 728-29; Bauböck; 2003, pp. 708-11 and 719)⁷. Migrants can create a transnational political field

if they have the possibility to take part in the politics of their states of origin while, at the same time, in the country of arrival, institutions for their political participation are created or their participation in political organisations such as political parties or trade unions is permitted. Political opportunities in two states are thus preconditions for its existence, but they do not suffice to characterize a transnational political field, (Levitt, 1998, pp. 728-29; Bauböck, 2003, pp. 706). To speak of an actual transnational political field, the effects of the transnational political activities of migrants need to be retracable in both the home and the immigration country. The activities of diasporic communities, for example, engaging exclusively in the politics of their home countries, do not constitute a «transnational political field»⁸.

In the transnational political field of Seraing, with the Comitato d'intesa later being its most obvious sign, the Italian associations shaped the outside contacts of the migrants in Seraing and gained the ability to use these contacts to the advantage of their clients, the local Italian labour migrants. In the period between 1946 and 1965, they became the representatives of the Italian migrants in Seraing. They represented their interests toward supra-local Italian and Belgian organisations and authorities and they managed to find an audience for the specific problems of the Italian population. To solve these problems they entered into alliances with Italian and Belgian partners on the local and the supra-local level. Moreover, they created and spread a particular version of the history of the Italian migration to the region of Liège (among the Italians) in Seraing. At times when this history attracted a larger public, their authority added meaning and importance to the story.

The migrant associations were able to perform these tasks because they could rely on a particularly durable migrant «institution» (Rehberg, 2001, pp. 3-13) in Seraing and the region of Liège, the Italian brokerage. Brokers «stand guard over the critical junctures and synapses of relationships which connect the local system to the larger whole. Their basic function is to relate community-oriented individuals who want to stabilize or improve their life chances, but who lack economic security and political connections, with nation-oriented individuals who operate primarily in terms of complex cultural forms standardized as national institutions, but whose success in these operations depends on the size and strength of their personal following» (Powell, 1977, p. 149). The social position and functioning of the migrant brokers partly followed traditional social roles and were therefore easily invented or established among the Italian migrants after the Second World War. Because, in the migrants' regions of origin, patrons, party leaders, and local bureaucrats held broker positions, most of the migrants had become familiar with social brokerage already before leaving Italy. In organising individual migrations, brokers in Italy and in the host country likewise played a prominent role. Francesco Scalzo, an Italian

citizen of Seraing, describes in a novel how his migration was «organised» by an advocate, who was a friend of the family, and the prefect (*prefetto*) (Scalzo, 1997, pp. 98-103).

This paper, focusing on the example of the association Leonardo, examines the role and function of Italian brokers in the constitution of a political field of Italian migrants in Seraing. Several functionaries and members of the Leonardo functioned as brokers. They built up and maintained public «outside» contacts of the Italian migrant population to particular Italian and Belgian organisations and state authorities. «Moreover, such ties would prove especially functional in situations where the formal institutional structure of society is weak and unable to deliver a sufficiently steady supply of goods and services. Especially to the terminal levels of the social order» (Wolfe, 1977, pp. 175). They also negotiated the (Italian) self-images of the migrants with other participants in the local political field, mainly the MCI in Seraing, Italian and Belgian political parties and labour unions, the municipality, and the official Italian authority in the region, that is, the Italian consulate in Liège. Bringing together on the micro level the concepts of brokerage, transnational social space and transnational political fields gives an inside into the ties of practices that a local migrant population maintains to a larger system (Portes, 2004).

Exploring brokerage in this analytical framework helps to highlight the patterns of interaction inside a local group and between the local group and its outside world. Numerous functions in the processes of administrating, exchanging, and creating economic, social, and cultural capital on the local level and with the outside world can be attributed to the brokers. The first part of the paper therefore links the concept of brokerage to the concepts of the transnational social space and transnational political fields. Then, by emphasising the example of the Leonardo, it examines the role brokers played in the founding of a migrant association as well as in aggregating and representing the interests of the Italian migrants in Seraing (or Belgium). A second part covers the symbolic meaning of transnational cultural practices based on the self-images of the Italians in Seraing. As the analysis of the annual commemoration ritual that the Italians in Seraing and Liège dedicated to the Italians who had died in the region since the First World War shows, brokers were responsible for creating and changing not only transnational practices but also their symbolic meaning.

The position of the broker in Seraing seems to have been re-invented and re-established after 1946 by (politically) organised Italian migrant labourers and the Belgian and Italian organisations looking after them. As the definition of broker indicates, all members or functionaries of an association did not qualify as brokers; one needed at least membership in several Belgian and Italian organisations and the time to create a clientelistic network. Based on the documentation of three migrant associations in Seraing, the Leonardo, the ACLI and the MCI, I

found 19 persons that can be considered as potential brokers because of their multiple memberships⁹. For 11 of them brokerage is documented. In the long run, some of them came to hold salaried positions in migrant organisations. In the immediate post-war period, only professionals sent as delegates from the respective home institutions had held the full-time and salaried positions in organisations taking care of the Italians abroad. Nevertheless, these «imported» professionals were not actual brokers, even though they partly fulfilled similar functions, such as assistance for bureaucratic paperwork, because they normally belonged to just one organisation and they usually were to leave the immigration country after a couple of years. Subsequently local Italian labour migrant brokers came to occupy such positions – either replacing agents from abroad or holding recently added positions in old or newly created organisations¹⁰. Thus brokerage offered a social advance and resulted in a gain of influence and prestige. In some cases assuming the «office» of the broker proved beneficial even in a more material sense since some office holders received compensations or salaries for their work in migrant associations or at least improved their chances of attaining salaried positions in other organisations¹¹.

Belonging to an organisation made a noticeable difference for the brokers in the public sphere because organisations rendered them less dependent on their personal authority. Moreover because brokerage was institutionalised inside organisations it became more stable and immediate successors were more likely to be found. Creating and reaching these positions inside the migrant organisations, several Italian functionaries guaranteed continuity in the political contacts between their local clients and the outside world as well as in the local distribution of supra-local resources. The brokers' influence however did not only depend on organisational structures but also on biographic features and an expertise in issues concerning migration fostered by first-hand experience (Martiniello, 1988, pp. 151-67). According to several interviewees, collected documents, and the town register a clear pattern can be found in the migration careers of the brokers among the Italian labour migrants in Seraing. Most of the future brokers followed their fathers as children or teenagers to Belgium (or Seraing) and pursued a bi-national school career¹². Only four came as young adults. All however joined the local branches of the PCI or the ACLI, the Fédération Générale du Travail de Belgique (FGTB) or the Confédération des Syndicats Chrétiens (CSC) and very soon assumed office in at least one of the organisations they belonged to. Nine of them became members of a Belgian and/or an Italian public institution dealing with migrants¹³, and nine were members of Belgian and/or an Italian political parties.

The memberships of the brokers transcended national, and some times ideological, borders; they could belong to one or several Italian, Belgian, and genuine migrant organisations. The main activists of the Leonardo, for example,

belonged to the FGTB and illegally to the PCI, less often but also illegally to the PCI's Belgian counterpart and supporter, the PCB. As members they profited from these organisations' educational programmes. They (re-)learned Italian or gained further proficiency, at least two enrolled in «labourer high school» after work and improved their command of the French language. Their professional careers in most cases corresponded to those of «successful» migrants: they usually worked in the same industrial and service sectors as the majority of the Italian migrants but seem to have disposed of more institutionalised cultural capital thus enabling them to advance in their jobs and reach better paid positions in these sectors. Only the two oldest among them, however, began their careers in the coal industry, which was the typical beginning of the professional careers of Italian migrants of their age in Seraing. Two others pursued academic careers, the youngest in the group went to school solely in Belgium, the other was a former «imported» functionary who had decided to stay, entered a local Italian association and got hired by a Belgian trade union. The rest began their careers in typical sectors for migrants and low-skilled workers in general at that time: the only woman as a shop assistant, the men mostly as skilled workers in the steel or the woodworking industries. At least five of them were promoted and attained better paid and more responsible positions during their professional careers.

To their Belgian and Italian contemporaries, functionaries with a labour migration background probably appeared to be best qualified to defend the migrants' interests and to preserve the migrants' self-images and collective history. They were considered «real» migrants because of their presumed first-hand experience with migration practices and considered most capable of dealing with Italian and Belgian organisations because of their presumed and displayed skills. The two following case studies, examining the campaign for the recognition of silicosis as an occupational disease and the commemoration ritual for the casualties of war and work, explore the role and functioning of the brokers.

The campaign for the recognition of silicosis as an occupational disease in the 1960s brought together several functionaries and members of Italian associations in Belgium and gave the future Italian left-wing brokers in Seraing the opportunity to reach a larger public, make themselves heard, and organise themselves on the local level. In 1959, four Italian left-wing migrant associations had founded the Comitato promotore convegno silicosi (Comitato promotore), which launched this campaign and, in the process, brought several more leftist Italian migrant associations in Belgium to cooperate. Alongside the organisations participating in this Comitato, individuals from the left-wing and communist milieu in the Belgian mining regions «went public» to represent the interests of the Italian migrant labourers in the political public sphere. Already

before, these individuals had been spokespersons for the workers' interests at the workplace in Seraing and they had dealt with the local and supra-local authorities to organise cultural events or found associations¹⁴. Gino Ghirardelli, for example, who later was elected first president of the Leonardo and second secretary of the Comitato promotore, had in the 1950s been the representative of the PCI in Seraing and was the delegate of the FGTB at his former workplace. Because of the importance of these persons for the local Italian migrants and the positions they held in various Belgian and Italian organisations they were asked to join the Comitato promotore.

Initially, the Comitato promotore focused on organising a campaign for the recognition of silicosis as an occupational disease. While the traditional non-recognition of this common medical condition among miners already put native workers in a difficult economic position, its consequences for migrant labourers could be even more severe. Once they were unable to continue working in a coalmine (a possible consequence of silicosis) they could not complete their five-year contracts with the mine companies and were thus in danger of losing their living and working permit as well as their previous social security contributions. In addition they were often unable to pay for the necessary medical treatment. Workers suffering from silicosis were only entitled to receive an invalidity pension when they were provably completely unable to work. However they had to have worked a certain number of years in a Belgian coalmine and they had to have been unable to work for at least two years (Martens, 1976). Migrant workers had often not worked long enough in a Belgian coalmine to get any financial compensation in cases of (early) retirement because of invalidity. From 1960 onwards, this could be granted in cases of silicosis, but the time they had worked in their home countries or elsewhere abroad was not taken into account. In this situation migrants could choose between two strategies. They could either stay and ask for a working permit limited to another industrial sector (before the end of their contract they were unlikely to receive an unrestricted working permit) (Gerlache, 1998, p. 160), or they could leave. To cope with the re-migrants suffering from silicosis, the Italian Parliament in 1962 passed a law that guaranteed a pension for total or partial invalidity, after the return to Italy. The bill had been first submitted by the PCI to the Italian Parliament in 1961 within the framework of its migrant policies (D'Ortona, 1998). Furthermore the necessary medical treatment was fully covered by the Italian social security system after the return (Rossini, 1998, pp. 115-16).

These measures did not, however, improve the situation of the Italian labour migrants who suffered from silicosis but intended to stay in Belgium. For their residence permits they needed valid working permits. Because working permits outside the mining sector were hardly granted, except for individuals diagnosed

with an occupational disease, they often continued to work in the coalmines thus risking to aggravate their illness. Moreover, abandoning the well-paid work in the mining industry they would have been even less able to cover the costs for the special medical treatments they needed (Lemaitre, 1998). To change this situation the Italian migrant associations in Belgium had formed the committee for the recognition of silicosis as an occupational disease. The actions of the Committee were addressed to the Belgian and the Italian governments, other politicians and to the public, mostly in Belgium. In 1960 the Committee organised its first public conference. The attendance of the meeting in the congress hall of Liège hardly met the expectations of the organisers. Ghino Ghirardelli remembers how most of the 500 or so persons attending the meeting were Italians, about thirty of them members of the regional coal industry section of the FGIB who had been the primary target group of the organisers. The attendance from other members of the trade unions or from non Italian workers in general, though, was not very large. According to the memorandum adopted at this first general meeting, the question of silicosis concerned immigrant and native workers alike¹⁵. Consequently, the primary goal after this meeting was to mobilize the Belgian public, politicians and representatives of the workers, namely left-wing parties and trade unions. The memorandum was to be made known to a larger public in the region of Liège, and politicians and trade unionists were to be won over as supporters of the campaign. So, beginning in 1961, the memorandum was presented and discussed in various places across the region, each time mobilizing hundreds of workers. The primary goal of the campaign was achieved when representatives of the PCI, PCB, Parti Socialiste Belge (PSB) and FGIB (including its Italian delegates) participated in the public presentations and discussions of the memorandum, and when a Belgian PSB politician, Simon Pâque, assumed official patronage of the entire campaign¹⁶.

A delegation led by Gino Ghirardelli then brought the paper to Rome. The PCI had invited him and other members of the Comitato promotore. The PCI Senator Umberto Terracini in Rome took charge of the delegation. His guests also met the Italian labour unionist Fernando Santi and the two MPS of the PCI, Bitossi and Barbareschi, who are given credit for the law that provided financial aid to the Belgian-Italian victims of silicosis after their return to Italy. The guests from Belgium were able to hand out the memorandum to representatives of the different Italian parties and were officially received by the presidents of the Parliament and the Senate and by the Minister for Foreign affairs. This enabled them to explain the hardships of the Italian miners in Belgium in general and the problems caused by the refusal to recognise silicosis as an occupational disease in particular (Ghirardelli, 1998).

Subsequently, the campaign for the recognition of silicosis continued in Belgium. The Comitato promotore became increasingly able to mobilise Ital-

ian labourers and to gain support from Italian and Belgian organisations and authorities. Simultaneously, the demands were expanded to include not only the labour situation but also other areas of life. By 1963 the Italian left-wing alliance had worked its way up to the Comitato di coordinamento delle associazioni italiane in Belgio (Comitato di coordinamento) or, depending on the addressee, Comité de Coordination des Associations belgo-italiennes which summoned a second meeting in Liège.

In March 1963 the Comitato di coordinamento¹⁷ convened the second assembly in Liège under the presidency of Italian and Belgian labour unionists and representatives of leftist political parties. As in 1961, the assembly included several delegates of the Belgian Parliament, while national representatives of the Centrale des mineurs, the FGFB section for the coal industry attended for the first time (Ghirardelli, 1998, pp. 130-132). About 1,500 migrant and native and foreign labourers from across Belgium (mostly from the Province of Liège) attended this conference that again focused on the recognition of silicosis as an occupational disease. Instead of appealing directly to the national assembly the committee just involved the regional delegates to the Belgian Parliament in its former campaign and addressed to the organisations and authorities sending representatives to a commission that, in 1960, had been instituted to draw up a bill for the recognition of silicosis.

Following the passing of this bill on December 24 1962, 1963 silicosis was recognised as an occupational disease in Belgium (Lemaitre, 1998, pp. 140-41). The Belgian social security now had to pay the medical treatment and provide for invalidity pensions according to the grade of disablement. Immigrant workers diagnosed with silicosis were entitled to withdraw from their contracts with the mining companies and receive working permits for other industrial sectors. Already during the second congress in Liège the political demands of the Comitato di coordinamento had centred on other issues, too. It now called for regular Italian courses in Belgian schools and for programmes to assist pupils from migrant families. They demanded more rights for Italian labour migrants to participate politically in Belgium and Italy, larger financial aid to families of retired or invalid Italian miners living in Italy again, a gratuity for a free return to Italy, and the right to establish and maintain more migrant associations¹⁸.

However, the campaign for the recognition of silicosis had not only boosted the political commitment of some participating associations and led to the expansion of their political programmes. It also prompted the emergence of new associations: between the first and the second congress in Liège the foundation of the association Leonardo had taken place. During the campaign, left-wing activists in Seraing and the wider region of Liège used contacts to Belgian and Italian political parties and Belgian labour unions to gather information, exert political pressure, and probably secure financial support. Thereby they

were also able to secure support from the PCI and the PCB in the founding of the Leonardo. A lawyer of the PCB, for example, wrote the association's statutes¹⁹. The officially apolitical association was meant to be a meeting point for PCI members and all rather leftist Italian migrants who stayed away from the MCI. From the very beginning the association's activities focused on the interests of labour migrants such as continuing payment in case of retirement or invalidity and cooperation with Belgian labour unions. The Leonardo also offered (Italian) cultural events, educational programmes (from Italian instruction for children to classes for adults), and possibilities for political participation²⁰. This programme paralleled the offers of the MCI in Seraing at that time, but also resembled the declarations of the Comitato di coordinamento, published and distributed widely in March 1963²¹.

The founding and early development of the Leonardo is thus doubly related to the campaign for the recognition of silicosis. First, it was during this campaign that the Leonardo became an official association. At the beginning of the campaign the letters from the Comitato promotore were addressed to Esterino Lorenzon, who at that time represented a so-called Circolo Italiano Liegi but later became a functionary of the Leonardo. Moreover the PCI representative for the region of Liège, Gino Ghirardelli, became the first chairman of the Leonardo and the secretary of the Comitato promotore (di coordinamento, respectively) in the same year. Secondly, the conceptual work done during the campaign led to an agenda suitable for a left-wing migrant organisation such as the Leonardo. The founding of the Italian Communist association for the Liège region, the Leonardo in Seraing, demonstrates a typical «successful» pattern of founding a migrant association. The campaign for recognition of silicosis mapped out the path self-organised Italian migrant workers took. A supra-local alliance for action, virtually party-affiliated and operating Belgium-wide, focused on one issue in the beginning, which proved to be the lowest common denominator among the participating organisations. It was the issue most likely to attract supra-local supporters such as the FGTB, PSB, PCB, and PCI. Also, in the 1950s and 1960s, this campaign took on an issue that was common among the (left-wing) migrant associations because most of their clients and potential members had worked as migrant labourers in Belgian mines. Later the alliance expanded politically and within two years presented a catalogue of demands for the Italian migrant workers (in Belgium). This political expansion seems to have laid the ground for a new legal left-wing cultural association. In this manner PCI members founded Italian cultural migrant associations all over Belgium, in order to create a legal basis for their political, social and cultural activities (Lemaitre, 1998, pp. 136-37).

The fact that the two congresses and the entire campaign took place and the way they were organized both document that, in the 1960s, in Seraing, the

Province of Liège, and other Belgian mining regions, groups worked together that claimed to represent the interests of the Italian labourers of the region (Martiniello, 1988, pp. 203-18). Likewise the founding of an Italian migrant association in Seraing appears as the beginning of the migrants' political struggle for their own interests in Belgium. The focus of the new or renewed migrant organisations shifted in the 1960s. Initially, they had attempted to uphold and support the migrants' opportunities to return to Italy, but now they defended the interests of the Italian labour migrants during their stay in Belgium. They focused on social security and occupational diseases, the childrens' school problems, and the migrants' need for specific cultural activities. The brokers from the leftist migrant milieu and the «imported» functionaries of the MCI were now located together in a transnational political field, in which their positions were institutionalised and legitimised by the association Leonardo and the MCI through their ties to local and supra-local structures.

The historical traditions, in which organisations were seen and from which they drew their legitimacy, played an important role in successful brokerage. The second part of this paper therefore examines culturally specific ways of interpreting one's own collective history. It discusses the narratives of Seraing's migration history as part of a mainly Belgian-Italian transnational social space. Before 1946 labour migration to Belgium and to the region of Liège had often been politically motivated. Mainly anti-fascist communists came from Italy to Seraing and the nearby cities after 1922 to escape persecution and discrimination on the labour market (as well-known communists they were not hired). Others had arrived there earlier and, after 1922 or 1926 at the latest, preferred not to return to Italy. On November 6, 1926 the fascist regime banned all supposedly anti-fascist parties and organisations and at the same time restricted legal emigration. However, Italian political and labour migration during the whole period after 1922 cannot be clearly distinguished (Sassen, 2000, p. 108). From the 1940s to the 1990s the histories of mainly politically motivated and labour migration were inter-related and finally brought together in the region of Liège. Examining the history of two commemoration processions gives an insight into this process. The first one commemorated Italian workers who had been victims of occupational accidents and diseases as well as Italian soldiers killed in action, and was mainly organised by the Italian consulate. The second was dedicated to Italian anti-fascism in general and resistance in the region of Liège in particular and was initialised by the Leonardo.

The Italian population in Seraing and the region of Liège commemorated annually their dead on November 1, probably at least since the 1920s. They simultaneously honoured Italians who died in Belgian coalmines and Italian soldiers who died in the First World War, giving special regard to Italian soldiers sent to defend Liège and the Ardennes in 1917/18, and Italian pows brought

to Liège by the German occupying forces (Morelli, 2004, pp. 19-24). Shortly after 1945 this commemoration ritual has been re-established, including now if rather implicitly the (Italian) soldiers killed in action in the Second World War²². The tradition of honouring Italian soldiers killed in action near Liège during the First World War had been inaugurated by liberal and conservative Italian groups in Liège soon after the war and was further used for their own purposes by Italian Fascists in the region. Commemorating Italian soldiers and POWs killed in or near Liège the Fascists meant to highlight the Italian contribution to the defence of Liège and Belgium and to renew the WWII alliance between the two countries (Caruso, 2001, pp. 106-07).

Representatives of the MCI in Seraing and Liège and the local section of the military veterans' federation Associazione nazionale combattenti e reduci (ANCRI) formed the head of the procession²³. The course of the procession was (re-)settled and institutionalised shortly after 1945. Because the procession honoured primarily the Italian soldiers of the First World War it started at the Robermont cemetery in Liège and then usually continued to the Monument Interallié in Cointe (Liège)²⁴. This first part of the course was meant to recall the Italians and Belgians as allies during the war and the presence of Italian soldiers and POWs in Liège. At the cemeteries of Seraing and Ougrée the ceremonies concentrated largely on honouring the dead Italian migrant workers killed in mining accidents or by occupational diseases²⁵. This commemoration ritual dedicated to the Italian soldiers and victims of occupational accidents was initialised and organised by the Italian consulate of Liège in the immediate post-war period. Two interviewees recalled that for over 30 years representatives of all Italian associations in Liège and Seraing followed the invitation of the Italian consul in Liège to pay homage to the Italian victims of World War I (and II) and to the victims of occupational accidents. From the beginning, Italian left-wing activists from Seraing were present. Thus they accepted the fusion of the commemoration of Italian soldiers and victims of occupational accidents, tolerated the implicit commemoration of Italian soldiers of World War II, and even followed a liberal and conservative, if not a Fascist tradition.

Whereas, in the general soldier/labourer commemoration on November 1, left-wing activists merely followed the consulate's lead, they took the initiative when it came to the Italian victims of Fascism and Nazism. From 1965 onwards, the Leonardo organised their commemoration at various monuments in Liège, Ougrée and Seraing. Following up on the tradition of commemorating the Italian Resistenza, the association repeatedly arranged for the remembrance of Belgian and Italian anti-fascist victims in Europe and in the region of Liège especially. In 1965, when this commemoration practice was first settled in public, Belgians representing political parties, the former resistance, and the military, participated in the memorial services. On the Italian side the PCI and

the partisans' association Associazione Nazionale dei Partigiani d'Italia (ANPI) but also the ANCRI and the Italian consulate took part in this exceptional celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the Italian liberation²⁶. To «justify» its participation, the ANCRI emphasised first, that a large group of Belgian and Italian organisations, even officials, supported the Leonardo in organising the commemoration and second that many former Resistenza fighters were organised in the ANCRI²⁷. The chairman of the Liège ANCRI and a representative of the Italian consulate in Liège made a speech, so did a representative of the Belgian Résistance, the «ex capo di stato maggiore partigiano». André Dans, now «consigliere provinciale di Liegi», was also among the speakers. The two keynote speeches, however, were given by the Italian PCI delegate Giovanni Serbandini (called by his Resistenza-name: «Bini») and the Belgian socialist politician Simon Pâque.

An Italian newspaper article from June 1, 1965 focuses attention on the Belgian-Italian character of the event. This ceremony was thus of significance for the introduction of the idea of a Belgian-Italian and even a European resistance to fascism²⁸. Furthermore it laid the ground for a kind of local revisionism²⁹. Instead of organising their own ceremony to celebrate the national holiday on April 25, the rather conservative representatives of the Italian consulate as well as the initially right-wing association ANCRI, participated in the commemoration of Italian anti-Fascism organised by the well-known communists from the Leonardo. At least partly in return some Leonardo functionaries participated in the annual commemoration ritual on November 1. The periodical of the Leonardo da Vinci indicates that the yearly ceremony to remember the Italian liberation on April 25 took place at least from 1975 to 1979 and from 1984 to 1988.

In Anne Morelli's 1983 book on the participation of Italian migrants in the Belgian resistance against the German occupation the fate of Giuseppe Mattioli was described. Born in Jemeppe-sur-Meuse (now part of Seraing) he was the leader of the Italian communist resistance in the region of Liège and was tortured and killed at the Citadelle of Liège by the Germans. Morelli was a guest speaker during the Leonardo's Resistenza memorial service on April 28, 1984. That it were Italian migrants to the region of Liège who laid a wreath at the Citadelle was now even more plausible. During the Second World War the German occupying forces had used this place to lock up, torture, and kill local members of the resistance. Therefore the inhabitants of Liège had commemorated the victims of the German occupation and especially the (Belgian) fighters of the Résistance at the Citadelle. In addition, the Italian migrants commemorated the Italian Resistenza at this site several times. In 1983, however, this place gained a particular importance for the Italians. Now the Italian migrants, and perhaps to a lesser degree, the Liège public, honoured the Citadelle as the place where Giuseppe Mattioli was killed (Morelli, 1983, pp. 110-11). So, laying the wreath

was not only motivated by the commemoration of the Belgian Résistance and the Italian Resistenza in general, but also by the commemoration of the person of Mattioli, the embodiment of the Italian Communist resistance in the region of Liège in particular. The participation of Italian anti-fascists in the resistance in the region of Liège, may, at least by the left-wing Italian migrants, not have been forgotten after the Second World War. However the rediscovering of the Italian fighters of the Belgian resistance by historians and the possibility of naming one who had been killed at the Citadelle in Liège supported the idea of a Belgian-Italian anti-fascism related to migration and created the opportunity to connect the commemoration of Italian anti-fascists to other commemoration rituals³⁰. Thus, from 1992, Giuseppe Mattioli has been commemorated twice a year. His commemoration was now also included in the official memorial ceremony for the Italian victims in Belgium organised by the Italian consulate. So, since 1992, the usual annually procession on November 1 has proceeded to the Citadelle and to the grave of Giuseppe Mattioli, too.

Thus the commemoration ritual in November has grown to include not only soldiers and Italian labourers, who died in Belgium, but also Italian anti-fascists. Changing the ritual to include Giuseppe Mattioli and the other Italian anti-fascists in 1992, the Italian consulate had intended to begin and control the commemoration of «all» Italians buried in the region. In fact however, this change was neither mainly the result of this attempt nor a late effect of the inner Italian revisionism. As the former commemoration compromise already showed, the local brokers, who, in the 1960s, created a collective history, had found a solution on the local level that their outside-partners, such as the PCI or the Italian foreign office, would probably have rejected at the national level. Adapting the commemoration ritual on November 1 to the local Italian migration history, the Italian officials in the consulate did finally follow a previously reached local compromise between left-wing and right-wing Italian migrants. This created a situation that not only ran counter to the consulate's presumed original intentions. It also provided the commemoration with two further central meanings.

Under these circumstances the ritual was not simply an Italian export as it did not contribute to the mainstream national history of Italy. So, first, the bringing together of victims of occupational accidents, war and anti-fascist resistance corresponded to a particularity of the Italian labour migration to the region of Liège before and after 1945 and thus became a basic element of its own history³¹. The mutual participation of conservatives and communists in the commemoration processions organised by the respective political counterpart over decades facilitated the bringing together of the different commemoration traditions. But furthermore, the commemoration practices referred to a general history of Italian presence in the region of Liège, deemed to be much wider than just the history of Italian labour migration to the region.

In this view, the Italian labour migration is more than only an element of the long history of Italians in the region of Liège reaching from medieval Italian merchants in the region to the Belgian-Italian queen Paola (Gentile, 1986). It reflects the long history of Italian migration to the region of Liège and also its connection with the local history. This idea of the Italian «contributions» to the history of Liège is mostly to be found among conservatives. Nevertheless, left-wing Italians of the Liège region, especially the Leonardo, have written themselves into a history of the Belgian Résistance and viewed the local Résistance as part of the resistance to Fascism and Nazism that was thought to be a European movement. This historical interpretation was further strengthened through the integration of places such as the Citadelle, where German occupying forces had detained Italians twice: Italian POWs as forced labourers during the First World War and anti-fascists during the Second World War. Identifying the Germans' Second and Third Reich as a common enemy of Italians and Belgians and commemorating simultaneously Italian soldiers of World War I and Italian anti-Fascists of World War II the alliance between Italy and Belgium became an important part of a local Belgian-Italian history.

Second, the commemoration ritual helped to create a new general (Italian) history: a history of migrants as victims of Italian politics. The way Italian victims were brought together in the rituals pointed to the ongoing controversy, animated not only in Seraing and Liège but probably in other Italian migrant communities as well, regarding the responsibility of the Italian state for the Italian victims abroad and especially in Belgium. Above all, the persecuted anti-fascists before 1945 and the postwar casualties at work prompted such debates. The key question was, whether the Italian migrants were «victims» of the Italian authorities. The integrative commemoration ritual at Seraing represented a particular answer to this question. Initially, it might have been motivated by the desire to identify nearly all Italian victims abroad as victims of migration. Ultimately, it helped to transform the whole history of migration into a history of continuing sacrifices or, more precisely, of Italian victims abroad for which the Italian state was to be blamed. From this new historical perspective, migration itself resulted from poor economic policy, and the miserable circumstances of Italian migration (especially to Belgium) arose from the Italian government's lack of diplomatic skills and missing interest in the migrants' fate. The idea of «having been sold» by the Italian state is concentrated in the expression «per un sacco di carbone», which even became the title of a history of Italian migration to Belgium, edited by the ACLI Belgio (ACLI Belgio, 1997; Dumoulin, 1985, pp. 33-34).

The Italian commemoration of migration in Seraing thus built on but also differed from regional and national memories. The *Sole d'Italia*, an Italian migrant newspaper, among others, described the victims of a mine disaster in

January 1953 with words generally used for casualties of war³². This national and transnational symbol of Italian victims in Belgian coalmines had a local equivalent in the mine disaster at Many in Seraing. The Italians of Seraing remembered merely this local incident and especially its Italian victims³³. The narratives of Italian soldiers stationed in the region of Liège and of Italian anti-fascists supporting the Belgian Résistance during the Second World War could therefore easily be related to a more general but locally restricted narrative of the Italian victims in Belgian coalmines.

Furthermore the idea of equating deceased miners, soldiers, and fighters of the anti-fascist resistance is strongly related to the representation of Italian victims as victims of both Italy and Belgium. Italian migrant newspapers often employed war terminology to describe the Italian anti-fascist victims in Italy and abroad during the fascist epoch (Caruso, 2001, pp. 110-17). So, after World War II, terms such as «caduti sul lavoro» facilitated the symbolic paralleling of soldiers, anti-fascist activists, and miners and the coupling of their commemoration. All these groups now were referred to as victims of the Italian authorities or at least, as was the case for Italian soldiers and pows in the First World War, sacrifices for the good of the nation.

As the case of the ritual for the commemoration of the Italians killed in the region of Liège shows, the brokers and their organisations played an important role in the invention of the history of Italian migration to Seraing (Hobsbawm, 1983 pp. 12-14). The brokers had to modify cultural habits and social behaviour to create, maintain, or transport shared self-images and values from supra-local contexts to the local level and vice versa. Their organisations provided them with the information and the financial and social resources needed to transfer parts of national and European historical interpretations to the local level and, partly, vice versa. If they were to gain a symbolic and legitimising function and not merely to be sentimental memories, the supra-local narratives on Italian migration had to be changed according to local needs. To perform these functions brokers needed the support of the local group of migrants, as their acceptance on the local level legitimised their position as brokers towards the supra-local authorities (Wolfe, 1977, pp. 174-75).

In return the ability to create local history added stability to their position and helped to legitimise the existence of «their» respective association, their being as a broker, and the alliances they formed. The brokers' status legitimised by the local history of Italian migration became more stable over the years as the brokers themselves entered into this history. The successes attributed to them not only contemporarily but also in retrospective legitimised their brokerage. In Seraing, predominately left-wing Italians (but also Belgians) give Gino Ghirardelli and the Leonardo credit for the success of the campaign for the recognition of silicosis as an occupational disease. Some attribute the

success almost exclusively to his very person and the association, whereas others view his efforts as only one, if important, contribution. In interviews and articles, he himself repeatedly described how he organised two conferences on silicosis in Liège (1960 and 1963). Further he recalled the delegation that was officially received by the Presidents of the Italian Parliament and Senate and the minister of foreign affairs, to assign and explain a memorandum of Italian migrant associations in Belgium concerning the recognition of silicosis as a work disease (Ghirardelli, 1998). In several journal articles he is remembered as first chairman of the Leonardo and leader of the Italian campaign for the recognition of silicosis³⁴.

Thus, the practices of commemoration in general corresponded to the repeated practice of supra-local and local political coalitions manifest in the committee for the recognition of silicosis and the Comitato d'intesa. In 1967 the Comitato d'intesa or Comité d'entente was founded. It was the first successful merger of Italian groups from Seraing, Liège, and the surrounding area to overcome the traditional political and ideological gap between the catholic-conservative camp, supported by the Italian and Belgian authorities, and the communist camp, operating partially underground (Monaca, 2001, pp. 65-6). It was mainly the brokers with their organisational ties who were in the position to dominate the interpretation of public social and cultural practices. They were able to influence, if not to determine the symbolic meaning of several practices crucial for the self-images of Italians in Seraing (Rehberg, 2001, pp. 13-6). Irrespective of their different positions, they were able to reach compromises on and about symbols. Nevertheless, the brokers and «their» organisations found themselves in a situation of competition typical to a political field (Bourdieu, 1985, pp. 30-42). They had to compete for the interpretation of events and practices, such as the attribution of successes or the recognition of silicosis as a work-induced disease. The alliance policy of the successful Leonardo shows, however, that they had also to collaborate with their competitors on the local level if they wanted to be more than only the handymen of their supra-local partners³⁵.

Notes

- ¹ The present text draws on ideas presented at the Conference «Paths of Integration» organised by the IMIS (Institut für Migrationsforschung und Interkulturelle Studien/ Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies) at the University of Osnabrück in June 2003.
- ² The number of Italians living in Seraing according to the census of 1947 was 3,035. 2,103 were men and 932 women. 2,384 were born in Italy and about 600 in Seraing. 1,910 of them had arrived after 1945, and 1,125 claimed to have arrived in Seraing

for the first time before that date. The document does not indicate the distribution of age according to nationality (Volkstelling 1947, Gem.62076-62095, VT1947, depot 13.396, n. 80, Archives Générales du Royaume, Bruxelles). By 1965, the Italian population of Seraing had grown to 6,205 with 2,231 being not older than 20 (*La population étrangère dans la province de Liège*, Recensement au 31 décembre 1965, Étude réalisée par le Service Provincial d'Immigration et d'Accueil avec la collaboration de Joseph Pollain, Liège 1966, p. 138-40). According to the census, in 1970, 6,574 Italians lived in Seraing, 3,063 women and 3,511 men. 1,935 of them were not older than 14, 4,353 were between 15 and 64 years old, and 286 were 65 or older. Between 1970 and 1976, because of a local government reform the population of Seraing increased from 40,276 to 66,713 habitants (Suzy Pasleau, *La gestion d'une commune en proie aux mutations économiques et sociales*, Seraing 1836-1993, Bruxelles 1998, p. 156, see also p. 185-190). The new parts of Seraing, the former towns of Ougrée, Jemeppe and Bonnelles, were also highly industrialised and hosted large groups of Italian immigrants. According to the census of 1981, the Italian population of the now larger town of Seraing had grown to 11,876. Of these 2,907 Italians were under 14 years old, 8,070 between 15 and 64, and only 899 were 65 and older. (SPIA: La contribution des immigrés à la démographie de la Belgique. Recensement general de la population du Royaume au 1^{er} mars 1981. Population selon la nationalité et l'âge – Ménages proves – Royaume, Régions, Province de Liège, arrondissements et principales communes de la Province le Liège. Liège, January 1984 [=Document n.15]). The distribution of age can be ascribed to both the immigration peak of the late 1940s and the 1950s and, to a lesser extent, to the significant remigration of older and retired Italians in the 1960s and the 1970s.

- 3 Although foreigners were not allowed to manifest political attitudes openly, it was the dreaded activists of the PCI in particular, who were under police control.
- 4 In their reports the employees of the Italian consulates constantly informed the foreign ministry about «communist» Italian migrants. Several reports from the Italian ambassador in Bruxelles and the Italian consul to the Italian foreign ministry in December 1950 and January 1951 covered the Italia Libera and its dissolution. See *Telepresso* N. 1589/846, N. 602 *Segr. Pol.*, N.1167, N. 300/410, 24301/c, N.490/90, Archives of the Université Catholique de Louvain-la-Neuve, SEPIB, Série C, Dossier N VI, Copies A.E.I. Roma: the documents of the Ministero degli affari esteri (1944-1953). For the dissolution of the Union Italo-Belge see Letter from the chairman of the association to the employee in the café of the Union Italo-Belge, October 22, 1959; University of Trier, archives of the SFB, A6, Documents collected by Mario Pusceddu, part one: Présentation, 22. The archives of the SFB, A6 can be consulted at the University of Trier and soon also in Seraing, at the Institut d'Histoire ouvrière, économique et sociale.
- 5 Italians currently living in Seraing whom I interviewed state this. Between 2002 and 2007 I interviewed 48 persons, of whom 24 at least were involved with Italian associations in Seraing, in 41 interviews, mostly in Seraing, but partly in Italy (with remigrants from Seraing). One of the interviewees especially remembers how the opportunities for the foundation of the Comitato were good only at a given time and how the continuation of the Comitato's work depended on the presence of certain persons. «Les souvenirs du Comité italien d'entente [...] c'était une époque

- difficile et incertaine, il y a avait des difficultés idéologiques [...] l'entente était bonne à l'époque entre les communistes – le parti communiste à l'époque en Italie était assez fort – et les tendances, tendances chrétiennes. Ça dut certainement beaucoup, eh, c'était une mérite de Gianfranco Monaca, qui était un peu l'animateur de tous cela, mais il y avait aussi de l'autre côté, du côté du parti communiste, il y avait des militants eh de base, tel que Ghirardelli, tel que Rotella, tel que Coletta. Donc, c'était avec ces gens là qu'il y avait, qu'on avait facile de se rencontrer. [...] Et puis, bon en fait, Gianfranco est resté cinq ans ici. Après cinq ans, il est rentré, eeh, donc, le temps de lancer, le temps de voire un peu les choses, avant que la structure soit bien, bien acquise, il est rentré, puis, Rotella est partie, est rentré en Italie, Coletta est décédé, puis la nouvelle, la nouvelle generation du PCI est venue, et, c'était pas la meme chose, c'était plus la meme chose, c'étaient des théoriciens» Interview with M. G. and his familiy, Seraing 30.01.2005, 1:03:33 – 1:04:46 and 1:06:03 – 1:08:23. University of Trier, archives of the SFB, A6, Interviews Caruso.
- 6 An overview on older and recent social science research on this matter is offered by several authors (Glick Schiller, 2003; Portes, 2003; Morawska, 2001). Perhaps a more careful and restricted application of similar concepts and a critique on transnationalism as an approach can be found in several historiographical and sociological works (Gabaccia, 2000, pp. 81-128; Foner, 1997; Bommes, 2003).
 - 7 Sending states and receiving countries may take an interest in granting political participation to migrants within the scope of their foreign policies or – in the case of the mobilizing of voters abroad – as a part of the sending states internal policies (Morawska and Joppke, 2003, pp. 3-8; Smith, 2003, p. 728 and Bauböck, 2003, pp. 708-11 and 719).
 - 8 Most authors nevertheless concentrate on the political activities of migrants towards their home countries, see for example Itzigsohn, 2000: 1128-130, Levitt: 1998: 928. Only Rainer Bauböck and Eva Østergaard-Nielsen insist on the migrants engagement in both the receiving and the sending states (Bauböck, 2003, pp. 700-02; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2003).
 - 9 In the following part, the main results of the part of my PhD thesis covering the professional and social careers of the brokers are summarised.
 - 10 By the late 1960s several Italians from Seraing had become functionaries in the ACLI, the MCI (with its association Casa Nostra) and the Leonardo.
 - 11 Six of them assumed salaried positions in Belgian trade unions or Italian organisations or received grants for particular projects. One managed to collect public aid for his association which was classified as fostering the integration of migrants.
 - 12 Generally, they did at least a part of the elementary school in Italy and then continued or restarted their school carreer in a Belgian school.
 - 13 By public institutions dealing with migrations, I mean several organisations for the representation of Italians abroad, linked with the Italian consulate at Liège and the advisory board for foreigners of the town of Seraing, the CPIS.
 - 14 The collected documents of the association indicate that Esterino Lorenzon had organised a ball on the occasion of the anniversary of the Italian republic on June 2 and intitiated a local section of the ANCRI. See: «Associazione Nazionale Combattenti e Reduci Italiani, Federazione del Belgio, Bruxelles, 11 agosto 1959. Delega. Con la presente i Commilitoni: Pusceddu, Bruno; Centola, Marcello; Lorenzon,

Esterino sono incaricati da questa Presidenza per la costituzione della Sezione ANCRI di Seraing». University of Trier, archives of the SFB, A6, Documents collected by Mario Pusceddu, part one: Présentation, 18.

- ¹⁵ «Pour jeter les bases de l'action, notre comité animé principalement par les mineurs italiens immigrés, réussit à organiser un premier colloque, au Palais des Congrès à Liège, en janvier 1960. Cela se passait juste après les grandes grèves de l'hiver, contre la loi unique. Cinq cents personnes répondirent à l'appel, parmi elles une trentaine de délégués syndicaux de base de la Centrale des mineurs FGTB, principalement des Italiens évidemment. C'était un début, parce qu'au départ la Centrale était réticente. Les objectifs du colloque étaient naturellement politiques; il s'agissait en étudiant le problème de préparer l'action ultérieure en vue de la reconnaissance et pour cela prendre des décisions préparatoires à cette action. D'abord, le colloque décide la rédaction d'un mémorandum, en collaboration avec des spécialistes médicaux. Ce mémorandum reprendra la revendication concernant les maladies professionnelles. Mais les mineurs italiens obtiendront en plus que d'autres revendications plus spécifiques et qui les concernent, soient aussi évoquées: l'organisation de cours de langue par exemple» (Ghirardelli, 1998, pp. 129-30).
- ¹⁶ «D'autres soutiens de poids ont conforté notre action. Pendant tout l'été 1961, chaque dimanche matin, dans toute la région liégeoise, des assemblées réunissaient des centaines d'ouvriers; je me souviens notamment des assemblées actives à Grâce-Berleur, Fléron, Beyne-Heusay, Herstal, Seraing. On y discute du mémorandum. En quelques mois, en prolongement du colloque, nous avons reçu le soutien de nombreux leaders politiques liégeois, au PSB le sénateur Hubert Rassart et André Cools, au PC le député Théo Dejace. Du côté de la FGTB, Jacques Yerna, alors directeur du périodique *La Gauche*, fut tout de suite avec nous, suivi par les délégués de base de la FGTB ainsi qu'un responsable italien, Cantarelli» (Ghirardelli, 1998, pp. 129-30). See also: René Begon: «Témoignage: Gino Ghirardelli (2/2). 1964: Une victoire après deux colloques», in *La Wallonie*, 5/ 6 October 1996, p. 38.
- ¹⁷ The participating associations (ASBL) in 1963 were: Associazione Famiglie Italiane di Waterschei-Winterslag. Associazione Leonardo da Vinci di Liegi, Associazione Assistenza Italiana in Belgio, di Trazegnies, con le sezioni di: La Croyère, La Louvière, Saint-Vast, Charpelles, Carnières, Anderlues, Piéton, Associazione Amicizia Italo-Belga di Eisden, Associazione Culturale e Ricreativa di Flenu.
- ¹⁸ See «Résolution des travaux du deuxième colloque des associations italiennes de Belgique. Liège, le 24 mars 1963». University of Trier, archives of the SFB, A6, Documents Gino Ghirardelli.
- ¹⁹ Jacques Moins.
- ²⁰ The activities of the Leonardo are well documented. See: Pusceddu and Valdo, 2007. For a copy of the larger (private) documentation this book is based on, see: University of Trier, archives of the SFB, A6, Documents collected by Mario Pusceddu.
- ²¹ The first statutes from December 1962 are, in contrast, emphatically unpolitical: «Article 3: L'association a pour objet: le développement de la vie culturelle parmi les travailleurs italiens et leurs familles en Belgique, notamment par l'organisation de manifestations culturelles, de réunions récréatives, projections de films, conférences, constitution de bibliothèques, l'organisation pour les travailleurs italiens de séjours de vacances dans leur pays d'origine, l'organisation systématique d'un enseigne-

- ment en langue italienne». Association culturelle, récréative et sportive. Italo-Belge. Leonardo da Vinci. ASBL. Statut publié sous le n. 5079 Annexe Moniteur December 20, 1962. University of Trier, archives of the SFB, A6, Documents Leonardo da Vinci. The activities of the Leonardo afterward underscore both the flexibility of this organisation and the relative persistence of the Italians' life in Seraing. As well as the purely cultural and leisure time programme, quite frequently, more «serious» activities were organised such as political events or educational evenings on subjects such as «school problems of foreign children» or «double taxation on pensions with non-local guests from Belgium or Italy».
- 22 The reports on the commemoration that the Italian Consulate in Liège sent to Rome did not explicitly mention WWII-soldiers. Instead they put the commemoration into the context of the Italian war casualties in general. Report by the Vice-Consul of Liège, November 3, 1951, «Oggetto: Onoranze ai defunti nella ricorrenza del 1° novembre», Archives of the Université Catholique de Louvain-la-Neuve, SEPIB, Série C, Dossier N. VI, Copies A.E.I. Roma: documents du Ministero degli Affari Esteri (1944-1953).
- 23 At that time there was a section of the ANCRI in Liège, the Seraing section was founded later, see note 10. The MCI priest of Seraing, Don Domenico Forte, was the last national director for the MCIS in Belgium, who had his office in the MCI of Seraing. See: «Missioni Cattoliche Italiane. Direzione. Circolare n° 156, Seraing, 12 gennaio 1966», University of Trier, archives of the SFB, A6, Documents of the Missione Cattolica Italiana di Seraing.
- 24 In 1928 in Liège, in the district Cointe, a monument to the Allied soldiers of World War I was erected to which the Italian contribution was a statue of a soldier (Gentile, 1986, pp. 128-129).
- 25 Report by the Vice-Consul of Liège, November 3, 1951, «Oggetto: Onoranze ai defunti nella ricorrenza del 1° novembre», Archives of the Université Catholique de Louvain-la-Neuve, SEPIB, Série C, Dossier N° VI, Copies A.E.I. Roma: documents du Ministero degli affari esteri (1944-1953).
- 26 University of Trier, archives of the SFB, A6, Documents collected by Mario Pusceddu, part one: Présentation, p. 48 and p. 50.
- 27 Circular letter from May 18, 1965, written by the chairman of ANCRI in Belgium, Orazio Serra, University of Trier, archives of the SFB, A6, Documents collected by Mario Pusceddu, part one: Présentation, p. 5.
- 28 «L'iniziativa, presa dall'Associazione italo-belga Leonardo da Vinci, ha avuto pieno successo, contribuendo al prestigio dei lavoratori italiani in terra belga e sottolineando il significato storico e attuale della comune partecipazione alla resistenza europea contro il nazifascismo». No source, newspaper article, June 1, 1965, University of Trier, archives of the SFB, A6, Documents collected by Mario Pusceddu, part one: Présentation, p. 51.
- 29 In 1959 a local branch of the ANCRI was established in Seraing by a later co-founder of the Leonardo who was at the same time active in the Union Italo-Belge, see note 10.
- 30 Mattioli was not the only Italian anti-Fascist member of the Belgian resistance in the region of Liège. In Seraing, Anne Morelli also identifies Francesco Monteleone,

Eugenio Pizzignach and Emilio Traversin as Italian leftist fighters of the Belgian resistance (Morelli, 1983, pp. 38-41 and 110).

³¹ I do not assume that this development was limited to Liège.

³² For example «Ancora un grande contributo di sangue italiano alle miniere del Belgio», *Sole d'Italia*, 17 January 1953, 1.

³³ To remember the mine disaster at the Many in December 1953, the MCI organised a commemoration day in 1983. In 2003 the Comité permanent des immigrés de Seraing (CPIS) organised an exposition and a commemoration act in a church near the mine took place. Gianni Canova, vice chairman at the time, produced a documentary on the mine-disaster distributed on DVD, shown in a regional TV channel and presented in Seraing during the 5th festival of «Tarantella Qui», organised by the Italian associations of the area. On the occasion the film is introduced as follows: «*Du Many e d'ailleurs... Mines et mineurs de Wallonie*. Un téléfilm de Gianni Canova qui partant de la catastrophe du 24 octobre 1953 raconte en 50 minutes 1000 ans d'extraction charbonnière en Wallonie. [...] Partant de la date anniversaire du coup de grisou du 24 octobre 1953 (survenu à 5 semaines jour pour jour de la fermeture définitive) c'est en fait 1000 ans d'exploitation charbonnière wallonne qui sont évoqués à travers des témoignages de survivants, des documents photographiques ou filmés, des journaux et hebdomadaires de l'époque ainsi que quatre chansons filmées qui mieux que des longs discours racontent et illustrent l'aventure du charbon et des mineurs qu'ils soient du Many ou d'ailleurs... Les jours de la catastrophe sont aussi abordés avec un hommage aux 26 morts et à la vingtaine de blessés du coup de feu dans le puits de la mine, d'Ougrée Marihaye. En ce troisième millénaire où va plus que certainement se révéler l'importance primordiale qu'a eue le charbon, dans le développement du processus industriel belge, rappeler la Catastrophe du Many c'est aussi monter la vallée de la Meuse (dont le paysage avec l'arrêt des lignes à chaud, est à la veille de grandes transformations...) et mettre finalement sous les feux de la rampe la dernière grande catastrophe non médiatisée qu'a connue la Belgique d'avant la télévision.» University of Trier, archives of the SFB, A6, Documents of the Comité permanent des immigrés de Seraing (CPIS). Despite these repeated commemoration efforts, the narrative about the 1956 accident in the coalmine of Marcinelle where 262 miners died, 136 of them Italians, continued to dominate the history of Italian labour migration to post-war Belgium (Dassetto, 1987).

³⁴ For example «L'Amérique de Gino passait par Seraing», in *Le Soir*, June 21, 1996, University of Trier, archives of the SFB, A6, Documents Gino Ghirardelli, Journal articles.

³⁵ The idea of independence from the PCI (and the PCB) is a significant topos in contemporary self-descriptions of the Leonardo despite the fact that the association was founded with some support from the PCI and PCB: «Le fait d'avoir noué – dès l'époque, et souvent clandestinement – des rapports préférentiels avec le Parti Communiste Belge et le Parti Communiste Italien, malgré les difficultés et les persécutions, n'a pas empêché l'Association Leonardo da Vinci de bien distinguer action politique, action syndicale et luttes des travailleurs, action sociale, culturelle, récréative et sportive en cherchant en permanence l'ouverture aux autres, à la solidarité, aux batailles et luttes unitaires avec toutes les forces politiques et syndicales démocratiques et antifascistes. Nous ne voulons pas laisser circuler l'idée que les camarades créèrent

l'Association pour cacher leur action de militants communistes italiens» (Pusceddu and Valdo, 2007, p. 8).

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