Chapter 13
Immigrant Settlement and the Life Course: An Exchange of Research Perspectives and Outlook for the Future

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13.1 Introduction

Patterns of immigrant settlement as well as the process of incorporation of children of immigrants are directly affecting the life courses of immigrants, their families as well as the majority population in the host country. From this perspective a linkage between the sociology of the life course and research on migration and integration of immigrants seems obvious. In the general introduction we started with an overview of the theoretical foundations and basic analytical concepts of the life course approach and pointed to potentially fruitful links with migration and integration research. The 11 contributions in this book empirically demonstrated the analytical potential of linking the life course perspective and research on immigrant settlement. In our conclusion the use and payoff of this connection will be discussed in more detail. Now, while the link between the life course approach and migration and integration research seems to be obvious, existing studies on family dynamics and the life course often focus on majority populations only and hardly take

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those with a migrant origin into account. Little is known on the background and consequences of life course transitions for migrants and their families. Our book is an attempt to overcome this limitation of previous work and to show the relevance of applying a life course approach to the study of immigrant groups. Bridging the gap between research traditions is urgently needed as Europe's current population is already heterogeneous and expected to be even more diverse in the future. In many countries already a fifth of the population is born abroad, or has at least one parent born outside the country of residence. International migrants often experience a rapid social change when moving from their country of origin to another country of settlement. Depending on the move they may not be familiar with the culture in the country of settlement, its institutional regimes, and everyday life practices. This may bring along many uncertainties as was already very well described by Thomas and Znaniecki in their classic work "The Polish Peasant in Europe and America" (1918–1920). As they also show the migration move can have a disruptive effect on the individual migrant and the family.

At the start of this book we argued that a closer link of migration and integration research and the life course approach can be potentially gainful for both research traditions. The life course approach has been applied in empirical research in various sub-disciplines of sociology, demography, and related fields. However, in migration research the life course paradigm up to now mainly was applied to one strand of studies focusing on migration decision-making and internal mobility choices (Massey and Espinosa 1997; Wagner 1989; Kley 2009; Mulder 1993; Mulder and Hooimeijer 1999). The life course approach is much less established in the subfield of research on migrant settlement and integration yet. Despite the fact that some ideas from the life course approach have been included in recent studies, a fuller reflection of this approach in studies on migrant incorporation is still missing. This is rather unfortunate since the event of an international migration move is an ideal-type of a life course transition and, at the same time, it is in many cases also a turning point with profound consequences for the migrants and their families. Furthermore, after arrival in the receiving country outcomes of incorporation processes are closely linked to the various factors which are emphasized in the sociological life course approach through concepts like transitions, path-dependence, timing, sequencing, etc. Also concerning the children of immigrants it is relevant to take a life course approach as their lives evolve in a societal structure which is potentially quite different from that of the context in their parental family. The importance of life course concepts and principles is also of clear significance when studying the second generation. Taking the life course approach could furthermore be a starting point to studying the variety of settlement processes as a set of trajectories of incorporation. Yet, rather than being just another frame for the application of the sociological life course approach, research on international migration and integration and migrant populations can advance and test the ideas put forward in the life course approach. This mutual way ahead can be a fruitful starting point for future studies. In this book an attempt was made to provide a broad overview of potential applications in different domains related to the study of the process of settlement of international migrants and their offspring.

13.2 Life Course Principles and Concepts in Migration and Integration Research

Integration research is mainly driven by theories on the settlement process of international migrants after moving to a new country. Most of these theories have been developed in the North-American context and starting from first generation international migrants. Classical assimilation theory hypothesizes a direct and linear process of adaptation in all domains of life. Although it has been questioned whether this still is an accurate way of describing migrant families in Europe, it remains the core assumption in much of the research on integration of migrants. According to the classical straight line assimilation perspective, developed by researchers from the Chicago School like Park and Burgess in the early twentieth century, an immigrant will automatically adapt to the new societal context after migration (Park 1950). The receiving context remains stable according to this view and the migrant almost automatically becomes part of mainstream society. Despite different adaptations to this theory (Alba and Nee 1997) the overall idea of immigrant adaptation is still often perceived as an automatic one way street of change. Only recently it has been stronger emphasized that it is also important to take both origin and destination context into account when aiming to explain adaptation processes (Van Tubergen 2006). Overall many theories have aimed to explain immigrant adaptation to a new environment by taking a rather static approach. Compared to such integration perspectives, the life course approach takes a more dynamic perspective to migration and migrants' lives after settlement. Migration is an event in time, and being a migrant is a stage in a person's life, following the event. The concept of timing, i.e. that the timing of events in life is relevant can very well be applied to study the effects migration has on the individual life course. The timing of the migration move may matter for experiencing other events and the unfolding of the further life course. In addition, also for the second generation the timing of the migration move of their parents can be relevant. Parents who migrated only at a later age might have been largely socialized in the country of origin and may just as well have experienced many demographic events already before migration. Timing of events also emphasizes the path-dependency of the life course. The life course perspective in this way stresses the importance of interdependency of different events and transitions.

One of the main contributions of life course research comes from the dynamic perspective of agency and structure. Agency and structure interact: while micro-level processes have been regarded as being shaped by institutions and structures, individual life courses are also shaping institutions and structures at the same time. This implies a focus on societal context, especially the institutional structure, and its reproduction over time. According to this, it is ever more clear that complexity and dynamics of social life can not be accounted for by studying "isolated" points in time and assuming implicitly that the current states reflect equilibrium. Ignoring the dynamics of social life can impede appropriate conclusions. Despite the focus on dynamics over time still many studies applying a life course approach study

separate transitions only. Less attention has been given to life trajectories, including different stages within a certain period. Traditionally the literature on integration of immigrants has paid attention to different life domains and the links between them. The classical model of assimilation as formulated by Gordon (1964) suggested that integration relates to different domains in life and that assimilation in one domain does not necessarily cause integration in other areas. Having said this also in the sociology of migration many empirical studies still capture just one domain of life or focus on one transition only. Recent studies have paid attention to aspects of the transition to adulthood of immigrant youth for example (Bernhardt et al. 2007; De Valk 2006; Milewski 2008) but much less attention has been given to covering whole life histories and capturing trajectories, including timing and sequencing of separate events. This is unfortunate as transitions often occur in different domains like education, work and the family around the same time. Studying the transitions in each of these domains separately does not recognize the interrelatedness of these spheres in a person's life. Timing of events in one domain is related to those in other domains. Possibilities and choice options later in life are furthermore limited and linked to earlier decisions and conditions.

Different models of immigrant incorporation or acculturation are also core to models developed by socio-psychologists like Berry (1997, 2003). Acculturation strategies may vary for individuals depending on a range of factors and depend on both the societies of origin and settlement, the individual and the interaction between each of these factors in the course of acculturation. The idea of different integration outcomes, as put forward by Portes and Zhou in the mid nineties, also refers to different life paths of international migrants in the host society. The suggested "segmented assimilation" (Portes and Zhou 1993; Zhou 1997) focuses on the different ways in which the lives of second generation migrants evolve. According to their ideas it covers three potential pathways: the traditional straight-line assimilation, upward mobility in ethnic communities or downward assimilation towards the urban underclass of the receiving society. Despite its implicit links to studies of the life course this is not at the core of the work. In recent years the applicability of the segmented assimilation theory has been subject of discussion because it was developed within the US urban context and might not be adequate for the European countries. Once more it points to the importance of taking the societal structure or the wider society setting into account when studying the life courses of immigrants: the contexts which international migrants face when arriving to the US are not similar to the ones faced by immigrants settling in Europe.

The emphasis that the life course approach puts on the importance of societal context is of major interest for studying life courses of migrants and their descendents. Migrants face a radical change in geographical context and the linked historical setting. Migrants move between two different contexts: the society of origin and destination. How this change between contexts influences the individual life course and the consequences it has for migrants, their families and the wider network is still understudied. When aiming to better capture population change among migrants in the host society, the settlement context is of course extremely relevant. However, the importance of the country of origin should not be neglected:

international migrants have lived part of their lives in a different society and take these experiences along when moving. A more direct link between the two different contexts can further our understanding of the effects of migration on integration processes and family change.

The societal structure and its institutional setting also largely determine the choices and are providing the setting in which individuals have to model their individual life course (Mayer 2004). In integration studies, the work by Esser points to the fact that integration processes are not universal but are subject to differences in individual choices in a restricted context. Esser's (2008) theoretical approach to the incorporation process of immigrants can thus be connected to some basic principles of life course research. According to his core assumptions, individual action is always related to the expected utility of investment alternatives. Arguing from a rational choice perspective, Esser (2004) pointed out that also the incorporation process depends on outcomes of individual investment choices. The basic argument in Esser's actor-based model is that there is a limited set of individual and contextual characteristics which influence the utility-function of immigrants. Actually, his actor-based model provides a multilevel perspective focussing on choice at the micro-level, which is at the same time guided by a subjective definition of macro-level conditions. In other words, from the actor's point of view, context characteristics govern the expected utility of each alternative. Esser's (2008) arguments draw attention to the social conditions of investment in the host country as, for example, group size, group composition and the emergence, shifting or dissolution of boundaries have an important impact on immigrants' life-courses.

Alba and Nee have pointed in their work in particular to this latter point: the role of "boundaries" for the incorporation of immigrants. If the majority population perceives an immigrant group as a distinct community characterised for example by high poverty risks, high shares of welfare receivers and sub-cultural practices, this majority will probably span ethnic boundaries (Alba and Nee 2003: 59) and may tend to discriminating practices. These, in turn are likely to result in "reactive ethnicity" and "assertive distinctiveness" from the immigrants and thus lead to reinforced ethnic boundaries. For international migrants the context thus refers not only to the host society in general but also to that of their immigrant origin group in the settlement country (Breton 1964). Van Tubergen (2005) has referred to this as "community effects": the own ethnic group can be an important context for individual life courses. Each of these context characteristics (origin, settlement and community) determines which alternatives are available and attractive for choices of individual migrants and their offspring

The life course approach also stresses the importance of relevant others in the life of the individual. According to the idea of linked lives, a person is affected by what happens to others, and when making decisions people consider the consequences there might be for others. Processes of migration of individual persons and families, but also family reunification are all embedded in linked-lives. Especially for migrants, who have moved to another society, the links for example within the family can be expected to be of major importance. The family provides

a “safe haven” in a new context and links with the country of origin. At the same time one may assume that as a result of an international migration move, with its disruptive effects, social relations within the family as well as between partners are subject to change. Kagitcibasi (2005) for example suggests different family models and their changes due to migration. Applying the linked lives principle more directly in migration and integration studies may advance knowledge on models of continuity and change in relationships.

13.3 Empirical Findings on Immigrant Settlement and the Life Course

As outlined before, there are obviously potential links between integration theories and the life course approach. Our book is an attempt to better capture this issue. In the 11 empirical chapters of this volume different principles and concepts of life course research have been touched upon. Some studies simultaneously apply different concepts in their analyses whereas others include distinct parts of the life course approach. The possible tools of life course research in integration studies have also been shown by using very different methodological starting points. As already noted, the life course approach is not one unified theory, but rather a specific set of theoretical guidelines, principles, and concepts through which social reality can be analysed. The most important key concepts have been clarified in the introduction.

In her contribution to this volume, Söhn investigates the link between the migration move and educational outcomes by studying the age-of-immigration effect on educational attainment in the 1.5 generation immigrants to Germany. This timing effect of migration for outcomes in other domains of life has received little attention in research so far. While the group of the *Aussiedler* (repatriates of ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe) is prevented from being excluded from lowest levels of educational attainment compared with non-German immigrants, the age-of-migration effect is comparatively strong. She finds a similar pattern when comparing respondents with higher and lower levels of parental education: high parental education prevents from lower educational levels, but at the same time the age-of-migration effect is much larger. Making an international migration move at the ages of primary or secondary education removes a considerable part of the advantage of 1.5 generation immigrants who have highly educated parents or who have the rather privileged status of being *Aussiedler*. From Söhn’s study we conclude that timing of migration is crucial for the effects the move might have on the individual life course: the transition from the sending to the host country may have particular strong impacts on the later life course when it occurs in a “sensitive” phase of life. In addition, this also points to the importance of taking the past into account as is stressed by the life course approach. In combination with path-dependencies resulting from certificates of general education, the

age-of-migration effect is thus supposed to shape future trajectories. Actually, age at migration has not only an impact on placement in the stratified system of secondary education, but can either open or block opportunities of further investment in later life. This is shown for educational outcomes of immigrants but may just as well apply to other domains of life.

Following up on this perspective, Aybek draws a picture of the important transition after leaving the lower level secondary school system. His quantitative analyses focus on transition patterns of young people with low educational certificates into vocational education and training (VET) in Germany. Although in terms of their educational background this group might be assumed to be homogenous, Aybek's analyses demonstrate that having a migratory background has a negative impact on the chances of making a successful transition into VET. In addition to that, his results indicate that during the transition processes into VET age norms exist, as young people who leave school at a later age experience greater barriers. From a perspective of the sociological life course approach also interesting are his results with respect to the temporal order of opportunity structures on the VET market. He points out that shorter time periods exist that are institutionally induced and in which the transition rates into VET are higher. These are succeeded by longer periods when the overall number of realized transitions is low. The effect of having a migratory background – being itself a time-invariant characteristic – also varies over time as young people of migratory background fail to make a successful transition especially during time periods generally characterised by high chances of entering VET.

In their comparison of Jewish immigrants in Germany and Israel with ethnic German *Aussiedler*, Kogan et al. show that Jewish FSU (Former Soviet Union) immigrants in Germany have higher unemployment risks than the *Aussiedler* and the FSU Jewish immigrants in Israel, but at the same time have higher rates of employment in high qualified professional, managerial and technical jobs. An innovative aspect of their study is the analysis of two very similar groups in different receiving contexts, which allows to better single out the effects of the receiving context. FSU immigrants in Germany have much higher reservation wages than is the case for their compatriots in Israel. This can potentially be due to two specific characteristics of the receiving contexts: first, there is an extensive ethnic economy of Russian Jewish immigrants in Israel making the access to the ethnic labour market rather easy and the expected returns of investment in the ethnic community comparatively high. Secondly, while the welfare state in Israel is rather rudimentary, Germany still has a protective welfare system and a much higher level of de-commodification. Hence, institutional characteristics in both countries encourage different investment strategies and result in very different transitions patterns between employment and unemployment. Certainly, an extension of the period of observation may reveal large differences of their trajectories in the long run. Nevertheless the study is a clear example of the importance of institutional regimes for outcomes in one domain of life.

Whereas the previous contributions focused on those who migrated themselves, the work by Schittenhelm studies second generation immigrants. Schittenhelm

applies a qualitative approach to analyse barriers of entry into skilled labour force and different coping strategies. This approach can be directly related to the idea of cumulative disadvantages from life course studies (Di Prete and Eirich 2006). Her results give insight into the transition to higher education and the subsequent transition into the labour force. She focuses on highly educated second generation young adults and shows in an intriguing way how being a minority or even the only student with migration background at the *Gymnasium* (higher track of secondary education) can lead to an outsider position and requires intensive coping. However, once having passed the access to the Gymnasium, which is in Germany a highly important transition not only for employment-trajectories, feelings of "ethnic retention" become unlikely even in such a marginal social position. Interestingly, studying at the university in a more cosmopolitan context can be a relief from the burden on incomplete social integration in school. From a life course perspective it would be interesting to see whether the improved social integration into the university context leads to positive attitudes towards tertiary education in general, motivates further investment and opens trajectories into high status positions. Schittenhelm points also to another important path, namely the second chance career. Here, vocational training is used to maintain independence from parental incomes. Participating in tertiary education – while working in the trained occupation at the same time – should be considered as an enormous investment of time and effort. In most cases, the subjective perception of peer relations played a crucial role in the formation of cultural capital. The study highlights thus the importance of the subjective perception of social ties and important others as an incentive to invest in higher education and to experience these transitions. The qualitative approach provides the opportunity to analyse the impact of individual coping strategies in subjectively defined situations and thus to investigate also subjective construction of reality – which is a reality that may trigger or impede investment in specific incorporation trajectories.

Latcheva and Herzog-Punzenberger apply a multi-method approach of quantitative optimal-matching analysis and qualitative interviews. The scope of their study are first generation immigrants in Austria and their labour market experiences. They find five types of immigrant employment trajectories of which about 70% of their sample had a rather successful trajectory even if the majority had some problems right after arrival. From these clusters the authors sampled their respondents for the qualitative part. By subdividing the incorporation trajectories into different phases related to the life course and migration, being "Guestworker", settlement and retirement, they elaborate on four dimensions which structured the subjective evaluation of the migration project. In this way a more in-depth insight can be gained from what migration means for the individual and the life course. Similar to Schittenhelm's contribution, their work gives a better idea of what is perceived relevance for the migrant life course, as well as into the subjective evaluation and definition of situations after experiencing the migration move.

Analysing the impact of different receiving-country institutions requires a comparative design as applied in the study of Tucci. Her special focus on North African immigrants in France and Turkish immigrants in Germany yields interesting

insights into institutional processes of social distancing affecting status attainment during different stages of immigrants' life courses. Hence, she sheds light on how institutional structures can influence individual life courses. Foremost, social distancing in Germany is mediated by the stratified system of secondary education. The relative risk of Turkish immigrants (compared with natives) of leaving school without a higher secondary diploma is much higher compared with North Africans in France. Only in Germany the access into higher education is still restricted for Turks, even when controlling for the level of father's occupation. However, if Turkish students reach the Abitur, their propensity of pursuing a university degree is even higher than for the native German group. Accordingly, the process of social stratification already begins at a very young age, what Tucci calls social distancing through relegation. In France, however, other things being equal, immigrants from North Africa have higher risks of unemployment than Turkish immigrants in Germany. Regardless of their comparatively high levels of education, trajectories of status attainment are decelerated, flattened or even blocked during the transition into the labour market. With regard to immigrant incorporation over the life course, we observe fundamentally different situations in France and Germany: the process of status attainment of many Turkish immigrants in Germany is hampered early in life resulting in limited opportunities to acquire high levels of education. In France, by contrast, institutionalized processes of distancing are mainly obvious when making the transition to the labour market. Contrary to the German situation these can hardly be obscured since discriminating practices on labour markets are obvious when investment behaviour and educational degrees of immigrants and native are similar. In the two studied countries different moments in the life course of young adults of immigrant origin are thus important for their further opportunities. This could affect individuals' aspiration levels and plans for their future life already at a very young age with all kinds of implications for the individual and the family. Implicitly, Tucci's study addresses also the effects of institutional differentiation on life-courses for social integration at large.

The linkage between different transitions in the life course is studied in De Valk's research on the second generation in the Netherlands. Taking a more holistic perspective on the life course both timing and sequencing of major events in the transition to adulthood are studied among a sample of second generation Turks and Moroccans and majority group young adults. Paths into adulthood are constructed based on the timing of leaving education, leaving the parental home, starting union formation and having a first child. Findings show that diversity in states is similar for Turkish, Moroccan and Dutch young adults; leaving home to live on ones own and unmarried cohabitation are also experienced by many of the second generation. Contrary to the theoretical idea of de-standardization of the life course De Valk does not find greater heterogeneity in paths for the Dutch than for the second generation. Using optimal-matching techniques followed by cluster analyses demonstrates that a limited number of predominant paths can be found. Education is one of the major determinants in sequencing and timing of events among all studied groups. De Valk shows the importance of the institutional setting for the structuring of the life course. The order of transitions is largely the same, but timing of events differs between the

second generation and the majority group. Although paths of the second generation also partially differ from that of the majority group, adaptation to the predominant pattern of the majority group is apparent. The structuring of the life course for the second generation thus seems to be influenced both by the country of origin (of the parents) but also by the host country.

Leaving the parental home is one of the first and key transitions in many young adults' lives in Europe nowadays. Studying the process of leaving home, Windzio shows that the degree of normative bonding to the family is much higher in the Turkish population. Here, moving out from the parental home is more closely linked to the event of marriage than in the German group. This has been described as "linked-live events": especially for Turkish women the events of moving out and marrying occur more or less simultaneously, while pursing occupational training or higher education is more important in the German group. Moreover, the historical process of de-structuring and de-linking of life events which are observed in the German group cannot be found for Turkish immigrants. Even though data do not allow for cohort differentiation in the life courses of second generation Turkish immigrants, findings indicate a steady decline in move-out rates for marriage reasons in the German, but not in the Turkish group. While the standard sequence pattern (70%) in the German sample is moving out first and then marriage or child-birth, 63% of Turkish adolescents marry first and move out at the same time or afterwards. This hints at the high relevance of normative bonding to the family and to the norms of the community. Further analyses should investigate how these specific transition patterns, which indicate a propensity to invest into the ethnic community, lead to specific trajectories in the further life course.

The impact of immigrant-native intermarriage on socioeconomic attainment is analysed in Muttarak's study. By controlling the process of selection into a specific type of marriage by using a bivariate probit specification, she shows that the "social" dimension of the incorporation process can indeed facilitate "structural" assimilation. According to her line of reasoning, from the immigrants' point of view, getting into marriage with a native can already be considered as an investment into receiving country social capital. Even more important are the long-term effects of such an investment. Inter-marriage opens up the access to receiving country networks providing information also on better paid jobs. It can thus be considered as a decisive transition during the incorporation process, which does not only link origin and destination states, but which can be a real turning point, can "redirect paths" (Elder 1985: 35) and give trajectories a new direction.

An important aspect which has received more attention in Europe only recently are spatial segregation and assimilation. Research starting from the social-capital paradigm highlighted the importance of social bonds and chain-migration which govern decisions on migration and residential choice. In combination with unequal participation and discrimination in housing markets, chain-migration results in spatial segregation of immigrants and natives. Farwick shows that spatial segregation and availability of ties at small-scale spatial units has a significant impact on friendship assimilation. Since ties to natives open access to weak-tie networks and to "fresh information" on job opportunities, educational institutions and social

services, these structural barriers to assimilation impede the assimilation process in general. Moreover, chain-migration and spatial segregation strongly correspond with ethnic enclaves, and investment into ethnic capital becomes thus more likely, which might lead to incomplete assimilation trajectories in the long run.

Schunck's study on transnational activities and structural integration addresses the balancing of the different contexts of which immigrants are part. Integration theories primarily focus on the host society and pay little attention to the relevance of the origin country. Classical authors suggested that links with the native place of the community of origin will fade over time and become less important for individuals. Nevertheless life courses of the second generation might, however, still be influenced by the links they have with their parents' country of origin as well as with those of the same origin in other countries of settlement. Instead of being limitations to the choices over the life course these transnational links could just as well stimulate new forms of organizing life courses. This is also the topic of Schunck's contribution. One might argue that transnational activities mainly indicate strong bonds to the country of origin and therefore impede the assimilation process. Schunck, however, nuances this suggestion and, by differentiating between several dimensions of assimilation, reveals a rather complex picture: transnational activities, measured here as visits to the country of origin, are facilitated by financial resources. A certain minimum degree of structural assimilation is thus a precondition of these activities. In this way countries of origin and settlement are directly connected: the position one takes in one society will be relevant for the opportunities one has in the other. Yet, the effect of financial resources on transnational activities varies according to the time lived in the host country. Immigrants who already stay many years in the receiving country show a high level of transnational activities when financial resources are rather low. Although there is no direct empirical evidence from this study on the degree of assimilation of long-staying immigrants whose financial resources are comparatively low, following this model one would argue that their economic failure corresponds with investment into the ethnic community and into country-of-origin cultural capital. When economic success is an incentive to take the mainstream assimilation path, low income-levels of long-staying immigrants could facilitate the subjective perception of ethnic boundaries and increase the need to rely on the social capital of the ethnic community. Due to path-dependency of these decisions they will reflect in different trajectories of assimilation in the long run.

13.4 An Outlook to the Future

This volume is an attempt to closer link two lines of research: the sociological life course approach and the study of immigrant incorporation. Immigrant settlement and processes of incorporation will remain of crucial importance for societies not only in Europe but also in other countries. An international migration move constitutes a transition in the life courses of the migrating individuals and their families.

Immigrants make certain transitions both before and after the migration move. This leads to questions of why specific transitions are made or not, why transitions turn out to be turning points, to what degree a current outcome depends on past states, and to what degree path-dependencies cumulate into distinct trajectories. Immigrant incorporation can thus make use of theoretical and methodological benefits provided by the life course paradigm. Migration and incorporation of immigrants are ideal types of social processes depending on historical time and place. The sociological life course principle of linked-lives can be of even more importance for immigrants from more family-oriented collectivistic societies.

In addition, the growing second generation who are descendents of immigrants also call for different views on incorporation than have been developed for immigrants. More and more European societies include substantial shares of second generation migrants – a situation which has been common in North America because of the longstanding history of immigration to this region. This situation is still rather new for many European societies where a large share of the second generation just recently reached adulthood and more full insights in their life courses are still lacking. In addition, for this group many life course choices will still evolve over the next decades. The life course approach is particular suitable for these descendents of immigrants who have not an international migration experience but are the offspring of international migrants. In the life course approach different conceptions of time are used (transition, sequence and trajectory). In conjunction with the paradigm of actors making decisions given certain contextual and situational factors these conceptions of time can be perceived as the main elements of immigrant incorporation over the life course. This view also allows to study second generation migrants compared to those who migrated (first generation) and the majority populations in the settlement country. It any case points to the importance of studying the incorporation process from a longitudinal perspective. By dynamically relating decision-making at the micro-level to social structures and institutions at the meso- or macro-level this approach avoids individualistic as well as ecological reductionism.

Despite the fact that immigrants are sometimes suggested to be one similar group, in reality a lot of diversity is captured. Most theories on immigrant incorporation have been developed in the US. When applying these theories to the European situation one has to realize that the origins of immigrants in Europe as well as their migration background are quite different from those in the US. From a sociological life course approach with a focus on both the origin and settlement structure this may imply that processes of settlement and incorporation will be quite diverse. Furthermore the life course approach not only allows for taking this immigrant diversity into account but also makes comparisons to majority populations relevant: it is not so much the ethnic origin but the individual life course that is subject of study in this view. In this way we can overcome the potential problem of qualifying differences between individuals as having a migrant specific origin and show that life courses (in which migration is one event) may evolve similar or different.

Overall, also the empirical contributions in this volume have demonstrated that trajectories of incorporation are a result of decisions at the individual level

immigrants made within specific opportunity structures. Outcomes of these decisions can lead to path-dependencies and turning points. This was shown by using different methods of analysis. The common principles of the life course approach can allow for a shared terminology and facilitate mutual exchange between different research traditions. The qualitative studies in this book have shown that the subjective perception of contexts and the framing of the situation are highly relevant for individual life course decisions. Studying migration biographies means to strongly focus on individual life paths and to aim at an in-depth understanding of individual experiences and decision making. The more quantitative approaches as applied in different contributions of this book also aim for understanding these same processes. When striving for a true mixed-method approach a common framework as provided by the life course approach is extremely valuable to advance our knowledge. This may in particular be the case for understanding the life courses of immigrants and their descendants.

Thomas and Znaniecki's work on the Polish migrants to the US already showed the importance of understanding the migration experience from linking different generations. This remains valuable also for the development of studies in the future. Intergenerational family ties are supposed to be strong and important for migrants coming from non-western origins (Nauck 2002). In the non-western countries of origin the family is central for the individual over the life course. Families provide the necessary support, and resources are exchanged between the generations because a wider government safety net is lacking. Immigrants from non-western countries are supposed to originate from and be part of family systems that have strong interdependent ties and obligations compared to natives in the host society (Bolzman et al. 2004; Burr and Mutchler 1999). Theories on "family systems" suggest that family relations and the related expectations reflect the importance attached to kinship in a society. Several authors have argued that in more collectivistic societies, kinship ties take centre stage (Todd 1985; Kagitcibasi 1996; Nauck 2007; Reher 1998). How and to what extent the migration experience affects perceptions and behaviour regarding filial obligation remains unexplored. Getting more advanced insights into the determinants of filial obligations (perceptions and behaviour) of immigrants and their offspring is also of societal relevance now that a substantial share and growing numbers of migrants are ageing in Europe. In addition, life courses of particularly the second generation are shaped by the host country structures and institutions and can be different from those of their parents. The life trajectories of these young adults can have important consequences for the intergenerational ties and support. Little is known on how young adults navigate these different or even contradictory expectations and what consequences this will have for intergenerational support (De Valk 2010). Difficulties in balancing conflicting roles may result in tensions within the family that put the intergenerational ties under stress.

The sociological life course approach could be an important impetus to get ahead with linking different life stages and generations. Getting more advanced insights into intergenerational relations and family dynamics would be extremely valuable to further understand migration and the life course. In this perspective it is crucial

to take the wider social (family) networks in countries of origin and destination into account. Even after almost a century our research thus can still be informed by Thomas and Znaniecki's classic study on "The Polish Peasant in Europe and America." Going beyond their work by better covering individual life courses from diverse angles is the challenge that is ahead of us.

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