

non-market institutions. Hovering behind this book's exposé of the shortcomings of market economies is a usually implicit counterfactual claim that such a society, which he observes only in Medieval Europe as a brief interlude between feudal and market dominance, was a viable alternative, offering greater economic achievement, greater equity, and more justice, and that it should not be rejected as a malign environment of rent-seeking distributional coalitions, predatory power centers, and corporatist controls. It is usually unfair to complain that an author did not write a different book, but I believe Van Bavel's critique of market economies can be persuasive only after we have a volume that substantially strengthens this great counterfactual claim.

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Noten

1 A brief introduction to this literature would include: Douglass North and Robert Paul Thomas, *The Rise of the Western World. A New Economic History* (Cambridge 1973); Douglass North and Barry Weingast, 'Constitutions and Commitment: The Evolution of Institutional Governing Public Choice in Seventeenth-Century England', *Journal of Economic History* 49 (1989), 803-32; Douglass North, Barry Weingast and John Wallis, *Violence and Social Orders: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History* (Cambridge 2009).

2 In pre-industrial societies many of these cyclical theories are based on Malthusian demographic forces. See: Jack Goldstone, *Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World* (Berkeley, 1991) and David Hackett Fischer, *The Great Wave: Price Revolutions and the Rhythm of History* (Oxford 1996). Others offer a political economy of over-ripeness, emphasizing elite overreach, such as Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (New York 1987), and Peter Turchin and Sergey Nefedov, *Secular Cycles* (Princeton 2009; the proliferation of distributional coalitions, Mancur Olson, *The Rise and Decline of Nations* (New Haven 1982); and exogenous, violent catastrophes, Walter Scheidel, *The Great Leveler: Violence and the History of Inequality from the Stone Age to the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton 2017).

Olivier de Maret, *Of Migrants and Meanings. Italians and Their Food Business in Brussels, 1876-1914*. [European Food Issues, vol. 8.] (Brussel: Peter Lang, 2016) 292 p. ISBN 9782875743565.

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Of Migrants and Meanings is a highly relevant book for several reasons. It offers an analysis of food businesses in Brussels around 1900, in which the food businesses appear as a lens to understand nineteenth-century European migration, nineteenth-century globalisation of industrial food, and the nineteenth-century creation of national identities.

The major sources of this study are population files, police reports, commercial directories and press sources from the City of Brussels and the neighbouring commune Saint Josse ten Noode. Brussels being a conurbation of several communes, most Italians residing in Brussels around 1900 lived either in the city centre or in Saint Josse ten Noode. Unfortunately, de Maret found very few visual sources and no personal testimonies, which explains why the attempt of the book to describe the Italian food businesses in Brussels as a 'foodscape' is not completely successful. Apart from the available demographic data, images and maps are in fact a necessary requirement to fully understand how food shapes a space and vice versa. Further, the author decided to include Italian newspapers, which were only available for a few years, and to not to include Belgian newspapers. Indeed, an extensive research of representations of Italian food businesses in Belgian newspapers was probably not realistic within the scope of this study. One way to limit the scope and yet to include the Belgian press would be to focus on one central newspaper in the months of the World Exhibitions of Brussels (1888, 1897 and 1910), since these World Exhibitions appeared of utmost importance for the boom of Italian food businesses in Brussels.

Notwithstanding these minor limits of the source material, the in-depth quantitative and qualitative analysis of the sources is impressive. First of all, this book identifies the major migration patterns of Italians to Brussels in 1876-1914 and the migration and business strategies of the Italian food entrepreneurs in particular. Cooks and waiters were a highly mobile, skilled, mainly male professional group migrating between Brussels, Paris and other European cities in search for opportunities. Food retailers had urban Italian backgrounds and came mostly from Central and Southern Italy, which were profitable for the import of Italian food products. The Italian ice cream peddlers in Brussels were no doubt the most tight community, since they came overwhelmingly from the neighbouring Italian provinces of Isernia (Molise) and Frosinone (Lazio) and settled in Brussels according to their region of origin. The author supposes a link between this group and post 1945 Italian migration to Belgium and I can confirm this from my own research. There are indeed links between these ice cream peddlers in Brussels and the guest worker migration from the Frosinone province (the Valcomino) to Belgium in the 1940s.

Next to this detailed, quantitative investigation of the agency of Italians in the foodscape of Brussels, de Maret uses the same sources for a close reading in order to understand how these Italians presented themselves and the food they sold. He focuses on the names given to eating places and food shops and on the labelling of food. From the extensive theoretical overview on meaning and identity in this book, the concept of Sydney Mintz, who stresses 'outside meanings' (structural power) and 'inside meanings' (creation of meaning by users), appears to be the most helpful to come to sharp conclusions on meanings given to food. The close reading of the different types of names of Italian eating places allows the author

to conclude that Italians acted as discrete newcomers in the Brussels foodscape, who hesitantly used Italian references in the names of their businesses and tried to imitate the labels of French gastronomy. The comparison with the less discrete German and English eating places in Brussels is relevant here, as well as the comparison with London, New York and Paris. This does not necessarily mean, however, that Italians were the 'first' food entrepreneurs from a non-neighbouring country in Brussels: we should take into account, for instance, the Swiss as well as Italian coffeehouse entrepreneurs in the eighteenth century. Thanks to a comparison of advertisements of Italian food shops and statistics of the types of Italian food imported in Belgium 1880 – 1910, de Maret deciphers convincingly how food was framed as 'Italian' at the end of the nineteenth century. Nationalism, industrialisation and transport revolutions helped to turn old food into new 'Italian' commodities for the international market. As such, not tomatoes, but 'canned tomatoes' were sold as truly Italian.

Hence, *Of Migrants and Meanings* is relevant to a wide range of researchers and students of migration history, national identity as well as history of food trade. The nuanced description of methods and sources in this book is a true stimulus for further research in these fields.

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Ton H.M. van Schaik & Karin Strengers-Olde Kalter, *Het arme roomse leven. Geschiedenis van de katholieke caritas in de stad Utrecht*. (Hilversum: Verloren, 2016). 276 p. ISBN 9789087045784.

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De stad Utrecht kent, vanwege haar lange geschiedenis als belangrijkste en grootste Noord-Nederlandse stad in de middeleeuwen en de zestiende eeuw, een rijke en afwisselende geschiedenis van sociale zorg. Al vroeg ontstonden daar tal van instellingen die de zorg voor de minderbedeelde en hulpbehoevende medemens op zich namen: bijvoorbeeld maar liefst 22 gasthuizen en ruim 40 verschillende godskamers, de Utrechtse variant van het hofje voor ouderen. Die liefdadige erfenis van de middeleeuwen en de zestiende eeuw is tot op heden medebepalend voor het sociale gezicht van Utrecht: instellingen als het Zoudenbalch Huis, het Bartholomeusgasthuis en het Eloyengasthuis zijn na eeuwen nog altijd actief. Hun ontstaansgeschiedenis is onder andere vastgelegd in het proefschrift van Llewellyn Bogaers, *Aards, betrokken en zelfbewust. De verwevenheid van cultuur en religie in katholiek Utrecht, 1300-1600* (Utrecht 2008).