The puzzle

In the mid-1970s a spectacular process of social change started in Northern Europe. During the 1960s and early 1970s, Northern European countries developed policies to recruit foreign labour from several Southern European and Mediterranean countries. Covenants were signed to bring ‘guest workers’ from Greece, Portugal, and Spain, but also from Morocco and Turkey. In response to the recession that followed the oil crisis in 1973, most governments abruptly decided to stop recruiting. Diverse incentives were offered to encourage guest workers to return to their home countries. However, most guest workers decided to stay and bring along their families, turning what was meant to be a temporary solution for labour shortages into permanent settlement. Family reunification became one of the main channels of migration to Europe.

The rapid arrival of children and spouses of migrant male workers brought about strong and unexpected societal change with profound implications for public policies. Social policies in different areas were affected, as demand not only grew but also became more culturally diverse: target groups changed and new needs emerged. The pressure that the arrival of immigrants’ families put on public services and infrastructure was particularly noticeable in the realm of education. An extraordinary growth in demand led to overcrowding in schools in certain urban areas. Newcomer students were mostly concentrated in schools located in the working-class neighbourhoods of large cities, as a result of immigrants’ housing patterns. Schools were overwhelmed with immigrant children who did not speak the host language and had been socialised in very different school traditions. Unlike previous waves of migrants coming from the colonies of Western European countries, the offspring of Mediterranean guest workers were not familiar with the language of the host country. High schools faced the greatest challenge because the educational goals for the 12-16 age group are more demanding.

Throughout the 1990s, Southern European countries experienced a similar migratory phenomenon with comparable pressure on public policies. In the 1980s, Spain, Italy, Greece and Portugal shifted from being countries of emigration to being destinations for immigration. In the aftermath of dictatorships and political instability, this area experienced a large-scale economic growth spurt. The significant labour shortages that accompanied this process, particularly in the oversized informal economies of these countries, attracted growing economic immigration from Africa,
Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America. Foreign migration arrived at a remarkably fast rate. The growth of the foreign population in Spain was particularly remarkable, increasing between 1997 and 2007 from 1.6% to 11.6% of the total population; and in Italy, which during the same period grew from 2.1% to 5.8% (OECD 2007a). Local administrations in large cities were overwhelmed with new challenges in order to accommodate foreign workers. The impact of family reunification affected this group of countries earlier than their Northern counterparts. Given that many immigrants brought their families along, immigrant children put considerable pressure on schools from the very beginning. The concentration of immigrant students in schools located in inner-city areas promptly became a public and political issue.

In response to these challenges, Northern European countries formulated policies of first reception at schools. France developed its classes d’initiation and classes d’adaptation in the early 1970s to teach French to immigrant children in order to improve their integration in the school system. These remedial classes were in theory open to any child with educational difficulties, but in fact they were primarily present in areas of immigrant concentration – at the initiative of local authorities (Schain 1985). In addition to this, a programme to teach immigrants’ native languages was launched in 1975-1976 in order to encourage their future return (Schain 1985). Back in the 1950s, Germany had already put into place special programmes for teaching language and culture of origin to foreign students (Schmahl 2001 in Subirats et al. 2005). Besides this German federal programme, the approach has varied considerably between different Länder: for instance, in Bavaria, bilingual classes (nationalklasse) are organised by grouping pupils sharing the same native language (Will & Rühl 2002), while in Berlin foreign-born students are immediately included in regular classes alongside German students with support from special assistants (Subirats et al. 2005). The Netherlands launched internationale schakelklassen in large cities; this programme, initiated by schools themselves in the mid-1970s, set out to teach Dutch to guest workers’ children before they joined regular classes (Fase & De Jong 1983). As in the Netherlands, in the UK, newcomer children were initially received in specialist teaching programmes separate from mainstream education (‘EAL programmes,’ later called ESL), though since the mid-1980s newcomers have been directly introduced in ordinary classes, regardless of their English language proficiency, with ESL teachers present in classrooms to offer teaching support (Leung 2002).

Some decades later, Southern European countries also organised first reception measures as diverse as the various approaches developed by
their Northern colleagues. In some places, such as Italy, foreign students are directly included in ordinary classes together with the native-born students, with certain special assistance always provided (EURYDICE 2004). A second strategy commonly followed is to provide temporary, full-time reception courses prior to starting ordinary education. Greece, for instance, has completely separate reception schemes (EURYDICE 2004). There, before attending ordinary schools, newly arrived students are enrolled in two-year special courses in which they are separated full-time from their native-born peers. Finally, other places have launched a mixed approach to reception, like the Spanish regions of Catalonia, Andalusia, Madrid or Murcia. In these regions, newly arrived immigrant students must follow temporary reception courses, in which they are partially separated from their native peers and partially mixed. Students either go to a reception school in the morning and attend ordinary classes in the afternoon, or they receive reception training during a limited number of hours per week.

All of this shows that despite the similarities in the issues faced by schools, responses have differed significantly from one country to another. Differences increase at a sub-national level, as only a few countries manifest a clear choice between separated or integrated reception; normally different cities and regions within the same country adopt different reception models (EURYDICE 2004). Thus, the question raised is: why are the ways of incorporating newcomers in the host educational system so different, if the challenges faced by schools are so alike?

One possible explanatory hypothesis could point to the idiosyncratic immigration/integration regimes of different countries. Although all European countries now have restrictive policies to regulate migration, their integration policies differ considerably in terms of their goals, operational schemes and foundational principles. The assumption here is that national integration regimes determine the form and content of first-reception policies in education. However, the empirical cases described above do not allow direct correlations to be established between certain integration policies and certain models of reception (for example, countries with assimilationist policies do not always offer integrated reception, nor do countries with multiculturalist policies always pursue separated reception). Another problem which arises when explaining specific reception policies by national regimes of integration is that the latter change considerably over time. In spite of changes in national policies, the specific policy instruments used for first reception in schools are not always modified accordingly or at the same pace. In fact, schemes for the educational reception of immigrant
students may not change *at all*, regardless of shifts and turns in national frameworks of integration.

The relevance of national regimes is challenged mostly by the practices of policy implementation. Different national regimes do not correspond directly to cross-national empirical variations of policies-in-practice. Comparative studies at local and practical levels show striking similarities between immediate problems and the concrete policy responses adopted (Penninx & Martiniello 2004, Alexander 2003a); studies done at other levels of analysis point in the same direction (Vermeulen 1997, Entzinger 2000, Rath et al. 2001). A closer look into the implementation of policies reveals inconsistencies between policy and practices in a number of policy sectors.

Schools are not an exception. Teachers and other implementers of first-reception programmes very often adapt, bend, and bypass written rules. The UK, for instance, is an interesting case, as it reflects a clash between its multiculturalist philosophy of integration and the measures actually applied for the reception of newcomer students. The initial response provided for the reception of newly arrived immigrant students – separate reception courses – was criticised, as it was considered a form of exclusion from the mainstream curriculum that ‘amounted to an indirectly discriminatory practice contrary to the Race Relations Act, 1976’ (CRE 1986: 5). In 1986, the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) recommended that foreign students be incorporated into mainstream classes together with English native speakers. Apparently, the CRE report had a far-reaching impact, and since then the policy has been to place newcomers directly in ordinary classes. Reality, however, was very different, as language centres for reception continued to function until at least 1992 and schools continued to use separate classes for new arrivals (Leung 2002).

In my experience at schools in other countries, I also came across many examples of practices that bend the rules and the goals defended by policymakers. The norm often prescribes that only students who comply with certain requisites – in terms of nationality, mother tongue, age or date of arrival – are allowed into reception programmes. Nevertheless, some schools open to newcomer students accept students who do not fall into the policy’s official target. In the Netherlands, undocumented students were recently eliminated from the scope of educational reception programmes, following the hardening of national migration policies for admission. Despite these regulations, schools keep their reception classrooms open for undocumented students.

Reception programmes are now meant to be temporary measures designed to smooth immigrant students’ transition into the general educa-
tion system. This holds even for those countries and cities that have opted for a separate reception course; reception education is not intended to constitute a permanent institutional provision, parallel to the mainstream system. Hence, rules are set to determine a time limit to the transitional course period. However, schools frequently bend official recommendations regarding the expected length of reception trajectories. Newcomer students often remain in schools’ reception programmes longer than regulations prescribe, regardless of the fact that schools stop receiving subsidies after a certain time limit. Schools may also cheat. They can pretend to obey the rule, but instead water it down or neutralise it altogether through additional strategies that contradict its effect. For instance, some mixed reception programmes establish a minimum number of hours for immigrant students to attend ordinary classes. However, some schools cluster pupils in ordinary education so that immigrant students end up separated from their native peers for many more hours than proposed in the policies.

Schools may also apply the same rule in quite different ways. Despite the intentions of policymakers to deal with all newcomer students in a uniform way, schools may in fact apply different treatment to various categories of students. Such differential treatment may be motivated by the intention to create equality, but it may have discriminatory side-effects. In Catalonia (Spain), for example, because Latin American students are expected to learn Catalan in a shorter time than students speaking non-Latin mother tongues, schools often transfer these students to regular classes earlier, often before they have acquired a minimum understanding of Catalan.

School practices that modify official policy do not seem to be incidental. This is suggested by the stubborn attitude of some schools that overlook official regulations, as in the earlier example of Dutch schools keeping students in special classrooms for a longer period than the duration of the subsidy. The most startling aspect of this behaviour is the financial aspect of this extensive, flexible criterion for enrolment, particularly in times dominated by the discourse of market efficiency. Keeping these students for longer periods in reception schemes is costly for schools, since past the established time limit they no longer receive special subsidies. Could this paradoxical behaviour be the result of teachers and administrators endorsing particular professional or personal values and putting these ahead of specific national regulations?

These examples of inconsistencies between formal models and practices of school integration raise a number of questions. How can we make sense of these inconsistencies? Do school practices have more to do with pragmatic considerations or professional ethics than with philosophical standpoints?
regarding integration? Is there a gap between national policy models and practices of reception in schools?

These are the central questions addressed in this book. I have investigated these puzzling issues by comparing two very different cases of national integration, Spain and the Netherlands, and two local cases within them, Barcelona and Rotterdam. The Dutch case represents a Northern European country with a post-war recruiting policy; currently, its national integration policy pursues goals of cultural assimilation. Interestingly, in this case, a separated form of school reception persisted throughout both the multiculturalist decade of the 1980s and the assimilationist shift in recent policies, without generating apparent contradictions (as in the British case). The Spanish case represents a Southern European country with recent immigration and a prolonged non-policy on integration. Spain was also the Southern European country with the largest immigrant population growth during the 2000s; it is thus reasonable to expect to see strong inconsistencies between its national policies and practices. A cross-national comparison of school practices in these two countries offers valuable insights into all these puzzles and helps us to distinguish between the common and the specific.

Moreover, to gain a better understanding of these issues, the present research contrasts the abstract models of integration with what really happens in practice in schools that deal with newcomer students. This means not only reconstructing the legal-political and ideological constructions which frame the educational reception of immigrant children, but also following the process of implementation of national policies at lower levels. In contrast with the majority of studies in the field of integration policies, which focus on policy documents and regulations, this study dives into daily practices in schools, and introduces the perspective of teachers and other school actors. Given the relevant role that front-line practitioners play in this story, specific attention has been given to their leeway in executing policies.

1.1 Two bodies of literature: National regimes of citizenship and the migration policy gap

In order to assess the determinants of practices, two reasonable scenarios must be considered. If national regimes of integration influence school practices, then the ways of doing things should vary in Dutch and Spanish schools. This would mean that nation-specific integration schemes matter. On the other hand, if abstract policies do not determine practices, we should then find practices which follow principles dissimilar to national ones. In
other words, school practices should show a gap with respect to national models. This would mean that national models of integration do not really matter, and that other elements of a different nature shape school practices. If there is a gap, we should also be able to find similarities in practice across countries, despite the different national integration ideologies.

The pre-existing literature promoting each of these premises presents some flaws that need to be solved. Conventionally, studies on integration policies have been based upon the first premise, understanding both the policy practices and their results as fundamentally shaped by national regimes of citizenship and integration. This approach emphasises the divergence of integration policies in different countries. According to this literature, the national policy regime accounts for the specific ways different countries address issues of migration, integration and citizenship. However, this assumption is challenged by empirical studies at a local level, which reveal more cross-national convergence than expected. Above all, studies on national regimes of integration policies fail to address explicitly the causal link between regimes, practices of implementation and integration outcomes. They typically tend to underemphasise the practical level and the connection between micro- and macro-processes.

Within the field of migration policies, a tradition of studies dealing with the ‘gap hypothesis’ argues that in all liberal democratic states a gap can be perceived between migration policy goals and policy outcomes. The restrictive goals of migration policy, which aim at reducing or curbing migration flows, paradoxically lead to expansionist policy outcomes, as migrants keep arriving in large numbers. The ubiquity of this policy gap in all types of citizenship regimes suggests the generalised inability of states to regulate migration, and highlights the non-rational character of policies. Intended goals of curtailing immigration cannot be achieved either, because the policies are flawed by structural factors beyond their reach, or because of inadequate implementation or enforcement.

The literature on citizenship regimes presupposes too much determinism and compliance between policies and outcomes, while the literature on the gap hypothesis, on the contrary, presumes too much inconsistency. However, they share a pervasive trend towards simplistic views of causality. As a consequence, a great deal of theoretical uncertainty prevails regarding the relationship between state institutions and policies on the one hand, and practices and outcomes on the other.

My study challenges the mechanistic conception of the relationship between integration policies and actors’ practices at a lower level that appears in prevailing scholarship. This research agenda hopes to redress an
over-emphasis on the nation-state, seeing it as ‘one among several potential structuring variables’ (Favell 2001). In the quest for other answers we need to focus attention on the practices of actors involved in the process of implementation. Recent contributions to the gap debate point in this direction. Conveying a more sophisticated view on policy outcomes, new studies conceive the gap as the product of struggles between actors in different fields, trade-offs made by elected leaders, and existing structures for implementation (Lahav & Guiraudon 2006). Despite its valuable contribution, this line of research also presents shortcomings. Although the role of specific policy actors is interrogated in this approach, most of the attention is directed to an analysis of the actors involved in the formulation of migration policy, while actors at the level of policy implementation and in the field of integration are ignored.

Institutional actors in charge of implementing integration policies are the crucial link in the chain, but the nature of such a link needs to be critically examined, as it is related to the thorny sociological dilemma of structure and agency. On the one hand, policy practitioners are the practical enforcers of formal rules and institutional principles; it is through their practices that the principles of national integration regimes are enacted and reproduced. On the other hand, practitioners’ actions go beyond the neutral application of rules. It is crucial, particularly in welfare states confronted with growing migration, to draw a line between members and non-members, between recipients and non-recipients of welfare benefits. The responsibility for drawing this line is increasingly being shifted down to policy implementers in direct contact with immigrants (Guiraudon & Lahav 2000, Van der Leun 2003). As ‘gatekeepers’ of the welfare state they must make discreional decisions about the distribution of resources with determinant consequences for the integration of their immigrant clients. Therefore, when investigating practices of implementation, two urgent questions prevail: to what extent do practitioners function as mere carriers of institutional orientations? To what extent do they interpret, selectively apply, or even contradict institutional norms? My research intends to address these essential questions.

1.2 Research strategy and case selection

In order to study the influence of the institutional context on practices, I have compared practices of educational reception embedded in very different policy contexts. My assumption is that if national regimes of integration influence school practices, then the way schools receive immigrant children in practice should vary in different countries. Hence, to fulfil my research
objectives I have applied a cross-national comparison juxtaposing the Netherlands and Spain, two cases which are very different in terms of their national policies of integration. During the period of study (2004-2006), the Netherlands presented a culturally homogeneous or assimilationist policy while Spain initially had a non-policy of integration, which was substituted in 2006 by an equal opportunities policy. Although Spain modified its policy during the period covered in this research, it still differs very much from the Dutch case. The comparison between the Dutch policy and the integration policy applied in the Spanish region of Catalonia also fulfils requisites of difference. As we will see, Spain is a federal state in which regional governments are responsible for integration policy. In the case of Catalonia, both the second (2001-2004) and the third Catalonian plans of integration (2005-2008) can be classified as equal opportunity policies.

The need to compare practices of educational reception within very different policy contexts is also a consequence of the second possible theoretical scenario analysed in this study. It is possible that a gap between school practices and national policies of integration may exist. And, if policies are not determinant of practices, such a policy-practice gap might be present in both countries in spite of their differences. Hence, from this second assumption it is also necessary to make a cross-national comparison in which the countries are selected in accordance with variations in the (possible) elements influencing the policy-practice gap, particularly the discretionary capacity of front-level workers. Comparative studies on implementation styles suggest that the conditions are more favourable for discretion in the Southern European countries than in Northern European ones, as the former would apply more lenient styles of policy implementation and the latter more rigid ones (Jordan et al. 2003a). The cases of Spain and the Netherlands fit adequately with these general categories. Spain, in particular, presents an exceptionally intense growth of foreign population within a relatively short time span, increasing from 2% to 12.17% between 2000 and 2010 (Ministerio del Interior 2006, INE 2010). The consequent growth of demand and overcrowding of social services would seem to make Spain especially susceptible to discretionary practices (Moreno Fuentes & Bruquetas-Callejo 2011). Other considerations regarding the potential differences in discretionary leeway between Southern and Northern European countries have to do with the fact that the process of migration in the former is relatively recent, while the latter has a longer tradition of integration policies. Again, countries with a longer tradition of policymaking in this field would in principle have had more time to develop adequate measures and resources and sufficient means of assessment, while countries with
a young tradition in this area would presumably be less organised and resourced and thus continue to be in an improvisation and trial-and-error phase. A longer tradition may then reduce the chances of discretion, while more recent engagement might, by contrast, increase the chances.

The comparability of these national cases is justified by several features that make them sufficiently homologous to constitute meaningful comparison. Spain and the Netherlands have large percentages of population of migrant origin (in 2010, the figure for Spain was 12.17% and for the Netherlands 20.3%, of which 11.2% came from non-Western countries) (INE 2010, CBS 2010). Both nation-states are liberal democracies with a constitution, separation of powers, and multiple political parties that compete for power. The Netherlands and Spain are also countries with high degrees of economic development and relatively strong welfare states that redistribute wealth through a number of social policies. Both are members of the European Union, and are therefore influenced by the same supranational institutional structures and regulations, and share a heritage of Western cultural values.

Moreover, to grasp real practices of educational reception in schools, the comparison needs to zoom in on the lower levels of the city and the school in each case. To this end, I have selected one local case in each country (Barcelona and Rotterdam) and within each of these contexts, two schools offering reception training. Barcelona and Rotterdam share a great deal in terms of status (both are ‘second’ cities within their respective countries), migration tradition (both are harbour metropolises with long histories of internal and external migrant workers), economic structure (both have economies traditionally based on the industrial sector), and political colour (both are working-class cities with historically strong left-wing political parties). But most of all, in choosing cities within the selected countries, I tried to pick cases of early policy initiatives in order to have cases with the longest possible tradition in educational reception policies. A policy with a relatively long tradition would ensure the availability of material for study. This was particularly important in the Spanish case, inasmuch as Spain has only recently become a destination for immigration, and its history of policymaking with regard to integration is relatively short. The criterion of ensuring critical mass for the study also guided the decision to focus on

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To refer to this non-autochthonous population, the Dutch Central Bureau for Statistics (CBS) uses the concept *allochtoon* in its migration figures, which includes the first and second generation of migrants. According to the definition, an *allochtoon* is a person residing in the Netherlands who was born abroad or at least one of his/her parents was born abroad. The Dutch figure refers to non-Western *allochtonen*, originally from Africa, Latin-America or Asia, including Turkey, Suriname and the Dutch Antilles, but excluding Indonesia and Japan.
major cities in each country, where migrant and ethnic minority students tend to be spatially concentrated and the problems of school reception appear to be more acute. Given this criterion, Barcelona emerged as the ideal candidate for the study, given its long experience in first reception of immigrant students relative to other large cities in Spain, such as Madrid. Madrid only launched the aulas de enlace in 2002, while Barcelona had already started its TAE programme in 1996. The experience of Barcelona is much longer; during the 1980s it had already implemented measures for the reception of internal immigrants coming from other Spanish regions.

The city of Rotterdam can also be generally identified as a trendsetter in policymaking, and it was one of the first Dutch cities where schools provided reception courses for newcomer students (mid-1970s). This implies that Barcelona and Rotterdam stand out as extreme cases in their national contexts in terms of avant garde policy initiatives, especially in the field of immigrants’ integration. In addition, these local cases have greater concentrations of immigrants. Rotterdam is the Dutch city with the highest percentage of population of immigrant origin (36.9% non-Western allochtonen in 2010, CBS 2010) and with the highest immigrant student population (more than half of the population younger than fifteen years old is allochtoon, CBS 2010). Barcelona also has one of the highest concentrations of immigrants in Spain (12.8% in 2004) and of immigrant students (8.15% in 2003-2004), besides bilingualism as an additional challenge. For these reasons, these cases are not strictly representative of other cities in their national contexts; instead, they must be taken as ‘most likely’ cases (Eckstein 1975); that is, if a potential explanation does not work in them, it will not work in any other case.

Following the same logic, I selected schools with high percentages of students of immigrant origin. This meant that to ensure a critical mass for my study, in Barcelona I selected only publicly-funded, publicly-run schools. In Spain, segregation by class and ethnicity happens along the private/public axes: second and 1.5-generation students are almost fully concentrated in the public sector (only 2% of immigrant students in Barcelona attended private or semi-private schools during the 2004-2005 academic year). In Rotterdam, choosing reception schools with high percentages of immigrant students goes without saying, as all four reception schools present comparable percentages: allochtonen make up over 70% of all students.

The selection of the specific school cases followed a realistic strategy, with flexibility in order to adapt the sample to the characteristics of each local case. Consequently, this process of selection was based upon a systematic mapping of the universe of reception schools in each city, and the advice
of local experts. In Rotterdam the choice was relatively simple, partly due to its small universe (four schools) and its internal homogeneity. In the Netherlands, class stratification and segregation dynamics between schools do not happen along private/public school lines. Though in the early phases of reception policy, public schools enrolled most of the immigrant students (Fase 1983: 23), nowadays schools of different denominations have ethnic minority population and reception units. Therefore, choosing two public schools delivering reception *per se* would not have made a difference in terms of critical mass. The early tracking or streaming in the Dutch system, on the other hand, is one of the most important axes of educational stratification, and this was the main criterion contributing to the selection. Of the four schools delivering reception programmes for newcomers, one offers training to highly skilled students who are expected to continue their education in higher tracks of secondary education, and the other three offer reception to students who will transfer to lower tracks. Choosing one school for higher tracks (Rembrandt school) and one for lower tracks (Vermeer school) allowed me to compare school practices concerning these two categories of students.

The choice between the three possible schools for lower educational tracks was made again following criteria of probability, that is, selecting the school with the longest tradition of reception (more than 25 years), as well as the one which stood out for its bad reputation in the past (low achievement, violent incidents). Coincidentally, the other school selected, the only one providing reception to high-achievers in the city, was a ‘black school’ doing well and with a good reputation, and with a comparable long tradition of newcomers.

The selection in Barcelona was more complicated. The sampling was based on the characteristics of the TAE programme in force at that moment. As the TAE programme had two types of reception classrooms with very different dynamics (area-based vs. school-based), I decided to pick one of each for my sample. Advised by several local experts, I decided to choose the Antoni Tapies school, not only because it has by far the largest concentration of immigrant students in the whole city (85% in 2004-2005), but also because it is the prototype of a school-based unit. Besides this ‘blackest’ and most well-known school in Barcelona, located in the neighbourhood of El Raval, I chose a regular area-based reception classroom which draws pupils from different secondary schools (the Salvador Dalí school) in the Drassanas district. The Drassanas district, with the second highest proportion of immigrants in the city, has many more Latin American residents than El Raval, which has the highest percentage of immigrants in the city and is home to considerably more residents from Africa and Asia (particularly Moroccans and Pakistanis): a fundamental difference in their immigrant population
profile that may influence school reception practices. The cases represent two of the earliest reception classrooms, created in 1996.

During my fieldwork, reception policy changed in Catalonia, and the TAE programme was replaced with the LIC programme. One of the reception units in my sample disappeared, while the second one was kept under the new framework. I was therefore forced to choose another school within the LIC programme in order to complete my fieldwork. As a consequence, my study in Barcelona includes three school cases instead of two: two reception units belonging to the TAE programme (the Tapies and Dalí schools), and two within the LIC programme (the Tapies and Gaudí schools). Since one of my TAE units was converted into a LIC unit (the Tapies school), I simply kept it.

1.3 Collection of data

For the collection of data I applied three sets of research techniques: discursive, organisational, and ethnographic. My research required that I assess the legal-political and ideological structures that frame the school integration of immigrant children in each location, and to that end I scrutinised policy documents concerning institutional arrangements for integration, education and reception, and I conducted in-depth interviews with policymakers. In order to reconstruct the organisational structure that channels the practices of schools, the analysis of the relevant documentation was also complemented by in-depth interviews with key informants. Here, I have used the strategy of ‘backward mapping’ (Elmore 1979) in order to reconstruct the effective network of informants and schools in the field of educational reception. Finally, I used systematic observation and in-depth interviews to follow the process by which national policies are implemented at lower levels, in an effort to understand the perspective of practitioners, teachers and other school actors. I carried out in-depth interviews with three different categories of informants: national and local policymakers, school bureaucrats and other stakeholders. The total number of interviews comes to 26 in Barcelona and 23 in Rotterdam. In addition to these, I also spoke with some local experts. I used identical questionnaires in each city, although the sets of questions were different for each category of informants. In Barcelona interviews were conducted in Spanish and in the Netherlands interviews were conducted in Dutch, and a few in English. I tape-recorded all interviews and personally did a literal transcription of them.

I used ethnographic observation of school bureaucrats’ routines related to organising and providing specific instruction for newcomer children.
In particular, I used a ‘shadowing’ technique, following a main informant (coordinator of reception) in her or his daily activities. The coordinator of reception was chosen as the main informant in order to obtain an overview of the organisational tasks involved in reception. Choosing a reception teacher/mentor would have given greater insight into the teaching tasks and daily dilemmas in the classroom, but could also have relegated to the background the organisational decisions regarding the clustering of students in groups, and so forth. I also participated in as many activities as possible in each school setting: lessons with different teachers, internal meetings of the department or school, meetings with other actors, activities with the students, activities with the parents, and so forth. In this way, I observed a wide range of activities involved in reception and accessed the views of actors in diverse positions in the process. In my observation of educators’ practices I have used four criteria of selection (Woods 1981): validity, typicality, relevance and clarity.

The majority of my fieldwork took place in the period between 2004 and 2006. In 2004 and 2005 I conducted most of the interviews, in Barcelona (January, April, October, and November 2004) and in Rotterdam (October 2004, June-November 2005). Between August and December 2005 I did full-time observation for approximately the equivalent of one working week (40 hours) in each of the sites, although extended over time. In addition, I remained in contact with each school and its professionals for a much longer period, such that the effective observation-time – including interviews, participation in activities, casual visits, and so forth – was much longer. Meanwhile, I analysed the relevant policy documents and followed the changes in policies and legislation in the period between 2004 and 2006. In 2006-2008 I did some follow-up interviews with key informants in Barcelona (May 2007, May 2008) and in Rotterdam (June-August 2006, March 2007) to check for new policy developments.

In 2007 I conducted a telephone survey of reception schools in Barcelona, to identify distinct ways of interpreting the LIC policy among the 41 schools involved and check the representativeness of the schools of my sample. The subject of the survey was the reception mentor or the school’s director of studies. The questionnaire included questions about the year the reception classroom had started, the number of reception students in their school, the pattern of organising reception, subjects taught in the reception training, the number of teachers teaching in the reception classroom, and the number of hours per week that newcomer students were taught Catalan. In addition, I did five in-depth interviews with some of the participants in the survey.
1.4 Outline of the book

This book is not concerned with the study of policies on immigrant integration or educational integration in a broad sense. Nor does it set out to explain outcomes (vis-à-vis the analysis of implementation practices). While an in-depth analysis of actors’ practices may provide important insights for explaining dissonant outcomes, my efforts concentrate on the explanation of the practices themselves, remaining at the level of the process of policymaking. My main interest is thus the implementation of educational reception policy and particularly the working practices carried out by teachers and schools. The goal of this study is two-fold. On the one hand, the study sets out to assess comparatively the extent to which institutional mechanisms shape educational reception practices. On the other hand, the study strives to discover the extent to which practices are inconsistent with institutional arrangements, and to explain this incongruence. In other words, the aim is to compare practices embedded in different national contexts regarding their degree of compliance/discretion with respect to policies.

This book deals with this enterprise in the following way. Chapter two elaborates the theoretical tools to be used in the analysis of the empirical material. The research questions and theoretical framework structuring this study are also presented in that chapter. Chapter three reconstructs the institutional context of the two case studies. It sets the scene for the discussion of findings by outlining the most prominent features of national integration regimes, educational systems and reception programmes. Chapters four and five communicate the empirical evidence drawn from the cases of Rotterdam and Barcelona, respectively. Each of these chapters offers a school-to-school description of the most prominent procedures of reception for newly arrived immigrant children. Chapter six compares the two city cases and highlights the main findings of the research. Finally, the discussion of the findings and conclusions of the research are presented in chapter seven. In that final chapter, the answers to the research questions proposed in chapter two are elaborated.

In line with Lahav & Guiraudon (2006) I consider that the gap in outcomes is a product of several processes through which policy is shaped, elaborated and implemented. Assessing the hypothetical gap between policies and implementation practices would contribute to explaining the dissonance between policies and final outcomes.