



Language and Territoriality: The Pacification of the Belgian Language Conflict

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Abstract. Since the creation of Belgium in 1830, language conflicts are a common thread through the history of the state and one of the main driving forces that shaped the country as it is today. After a period of language tensions with shifting language borders and altering language statuses of the municipalities around the capital and the linguistic border, a territorial approach was applied as a pacification tool for the Belgian language relations. The political system evolved towards a form of confederalism based on the principle of territorialism combined with a functional form of cultural autonomy in language contact areas. After a short historical introduction, this contribution focuses on the current contact situations and the challenges for an increasing multilingual future.

Keywords: territoriality, political bilingualism, Brussels, pacification.

From the ‘Freedom of Language Use’ to Territoriality

The Belgian language conflict cannot just be explained by its location on the Romance-Germanic language border or within a minority versus majority context. Article 23 of the Belgian Constitution of 1831 stipulated that the use of languages spoken in Belgium is free and that language use can only be regulated by law when referring to actions of public authorities and in court cases. In reality, French, the language of the elite, became the only official language although spoken by only 10% to 15% of the Belgians (Zolberg 1976). Where Dutch was introduced as an official language before 1830, when the current Belgian territory was part of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, it was not the language spoken by the people north of the language border since they spoke Flemish dialects rather than a

standardized language, just as south of the language border people spoke Walloon dialects but not French. Both north and south of the language border, French was the language of the political, economic, cultural and religious elite; it was the only language spoken in parliament and in court. The freedom of language use did not guarantee the use of Dutch in the administration. Although since 1845 thousands of working class immigrants moved from the north to the south of the linguistic border as labourers in the agricultural, mining or steel industry (Goddeeris & Hermans 2011), their poor social status did not give rise to the use of Dutch in the administration. In reality, the north was bilingual with Dutch as the language of the region and French as the language of the elite, whereas in the south only French was used as an official language. This bilingualism in the north was not the result of a language conflict as such but rather an indication of the social divide. Dutch was seen as the language of Holland, the language of the Protestants, while French was the unifying language of the Belgians, the language of the Enlightenment and a prerequisite for upward social mobility. Since the majority of the population did not have political power, there was no language conflict in the sense that the élite were not interested in the Frenchification of the Flemish-speaking rural areas but in economic and political power. The authorities provided translations in the local (Dutch) language, but its speakers were, although the demographic majority, considered as a sociological minority linked to economic underdevelopment and poverty (see Witte & Van Veldhoven 2011).

Witte and Van Veldhoven (2011) refer to the important evolutions that led to the birth of the Flemish movement: the standardization of the Dutch language, a growing Dutch-speaking middleclass and the strife of this middle class for bilingualism with an equal status for both Dutch and French in Flanders. Where the struggle for linguistic rights supported bilingualism north of the language frontier, it threatened the position of the state organization in the south where civil servants did not master Dutch and rejected bilingualism. In 1870, the concept of Flanders as the region where Dutch was spoken by the majority of the inhabitants began to gain ground (Dirkx 2013). This laid the foundation of the territorial approach to the language problems with two regions: Flanders as the part of Belgium north of the language border and Wallonia as the southern part. The language tensions and the sequential language laws and stages in the process of state reform focused more and more on the demarcation of the territory and evolved towards a monolingual Flanders and a monolingual Wallonia. The decennial language censuses played a crucial role in this demarcation process of the language border. The different methodological approaches and the ambiguous process of data gathering of these censuses were disputed and the results rejected by the Flemish or the Francophone political world, depending on the outcome. The Administrative Language Act of 1932 linked the outcome of the census to the language status of the municipalities. When 30% of the inhabitants spoke another

official language than the official language of the municipality, the administration became bilingual. In reality, this law enabled the municipalities around Brussels to switch from an officially monolingual municipality towards a bilingual one, the so-called 'oil stain'. The highly contested census of 1947 and the resulting political tensions led to the abolition of the censuses and the fixation of the language border. From 1960 onwards, the language status of all municipalities was stipulated in the Constitution. The general rationale behind the language regulations was the romantic ideal of monolingual regions. There were two exceptions to this monolingual rationale: Brussels and the municipalities with language facilities.

The Current Situation: Federalism 'sui Generis'

The fixation of the language border paved the way towards federalism. The so-called 'first state reform' of 1970 is a milestone in Belgian politics. The new constitution reconciled the pursuit of cultural autonomy of the Flemish political élite and the demand for more socioeconomic power by their Walloon counterparts. As such, it combines the principles of cultural autonomy and regionalization. It was the start of a continuous process of state reforms. A consociationalist conflict preventing design (Lijphart 1984) results in a multilevel political organization with a high degree of flexibility and asymmetry. The following paragraphs present a brief overview of the state structure and its impact on the language issue.

Article 4 of the Constitution states that there are four language areas in Belgium: the Dutch language area, the bilingual Brussels-Capital area, the French language area and the German language area. Apart from the Brussels area, where both Dutch and French are official languages, these areas are officially monolingual. So, Belgium is a country with three official languages although none of these languages is an official language on state level. The language areas do not have autonomous powers: there are no governments or parliaments related to them. They can be seen as divisions of the territory or as delineations in the Belgian state. These delineations are crucial because the territorial jurisdiction is based on these linguistic areas (Vuye 2010).

By combining cultural and territorial aspirations, Belgium is a federal state with three communities and three regions. The formats of the communities and regions do not fall together. The federal state, the communities and the regions have important powers and work autonomously, but they do coincide. Because of this, we can state that the power in Belgium is divided and shared. The federal level concerns all Belgians and is thence valid for the whole Belgian territory. The responsibilities at this level are: justice, defence, foreign affairs, finance, social security and an important part of public health and internal affairs. The legislative power is executed by the Federal Parliament. This parliament consists of the Chamber of

Deputies and the Senate. The three regions of Belgium are: the Flemish Region, the Brussels-Capital Region and the Walloon Region. The regions manage their authorities with regard to economy, employment, housing, public works, energy, transport, environment and international affairs within their authority domains. The Flemish Region territory coincides with the Dutch language area, the Walloon Region territory covers the French and German language areas and the Brussels-Capital Region is authorized in the bilingual Brussels-Capital area. Every region has its own parliament and government but in Flanders; the region and community authorities are merged into one government and one parliament. The Constitution describes the territorial jurisdiction of the regions with reference to the provinces. The third policy level, that of the communities, is made up of political entities based on language. The communities are enrolled in domains as education, culture, language, healthcare and the audiovisual sector. The communities are authorized within the language areas: the Flemish Community is authorized for the Dutch-language area and for the bilingual Brussels-Capital area; the French Community is authorized for the French-language area and also exercises authority in the bilingual Brussels-Capital area. The German Language Community is authorized for the German-language area. Concerning the bilingual Brussels-Capital area, the communities have a reduction of power with regard to language.

The distribution of competences is an ongoing process. Every state reform agreement leads to a transfer of competences, mainly from the national to the regional or community level. At the same time, the process of European integration also leads to a transfer of competences to the supranational level. In this multilayered political system, there is no hierarchy of competences. The federal state cannot overrule decisions taken by the communities or the regions since they have different competences. In case of conflict, it is the Constitutional Court that has the power to annul legislation if it goes against the constitutional division of powers.

Freedom of language is a fundamental right that is protected by the constitution. The language can only be controlled in the relationship between government and citizen. The use of language is then regulated by the authorized legislator. The Administrative Language Act has a broad scope and regulates the language of public service. This means, for example, that in the Brussels-Capital, the government has to understand both languages. Civil servants and authorities that bypass the language laws or do not apply them can be sanctioned. If a service uses the wrong language, the actions using that language can be annulled. The act then will be regarded as if it never existed and may be linked to no effect. However, this does not happen automatically; it must be established at the request of an interested party by an organization which is authorized. Contacts between citizens belong to the private sphere and are outside the scope of language legislation. In both parts of the country, the regional language is also the administrative, court and teaching language (Vuye 2010).

Where most federal states are composed of historical communities, this is not the case in Belgium, where the internal borders are based on a political agreement rather than on a historical reality. Federalism presupposes territoriality, but what makes the Belgian case unique is the combination of territoriality with communities that transcend these internal borders. This logic prevents a breakdown of the federation as it was the case in earlier Czechoslovakia or Yugoslavia (Deschouwer 2006). However, the institutionalization based on language and territory introduced its own dynamics within the monolingual Dutch-speaking Flanders and the French-speaking part of Wallonia. The political system shifted from an arena with national parties towards a regional party system only representing a part of the country; there is no national broadcast system but separate systems for the different language communities just as there are no national printed media, no national education system et cetera.

Language Contact and Language Conflict

Language and conflict are often mentioned in the same breath. Some authors stress the interrelation between language contact and language conflict (Nelde 1989) or state that conflict is inherent to a situation of language contact (Calvet 1998). Although the vast majority of the municipalities are monolingual, there are two situations where language contact is institutionalized: municipalities with language facilities and the Brussels-Capital Region. Both are subject to language tensions and conflicts, as will be explained in the following paragraphs.

Municipalities with Language Facilities

The results of the language censuses decided whether a municipality was monolingual, was offering a bilingual service when 30% of the municipality spoke another official language, or was officially bilingual. Especially on the linguistic border and around Brussels, the language frontier was porous. By fixing the language border, Brussels was restricted to 19 municipalities and the language barrier was no longer questioned. In the Flemish periphery around Brussels, there was never pacification because the language borders were constantly questioned by Francophone politicians. The political party FDF (originally Front Démocratique des Bruxellois Francophones, later Front Démocratique des Francophones and currently Fédéralistes Démocrates Francophones) was founded to fight the language pact of 1962-63. They contested the language homogeneity of the borderland and demanded both the expansion of Brussels with six suburbs and powers for the French-speaking community in the Dutch-language area (Vuye 2010). The political discussions and the inherent language conflicts had

lasted till the so-called ‘Pacification Law’ was voted in 1988 and the principle of ‘language facilities’ enshrined in the Constitution. Municipalities with language facilities are not bilingual; they are an integral part of the monolingual Dutch-, French-, or German-speaking regions. This implies that the municipal council, the relation with the higher authorities and everything concerning the internal governance of the municipality is done in the language of the region. Language facilities as a pacification mechanism exclusively refer to the contact between the administration and the citizens of the municipality and the possibility to organize nursery and primary education for the residents only.

A political compromise can only be a pacifying mechanism when it is acceptable to both parties and preferably explained as a victory by them. It does not come as a surprise that these facilities are interpreted differently by the different language groups. For the Francophone politicians, the fact that the facilities are recognized in the Constitution means that it is a fundamental right for French-speakers to use their language in official communication in these Flemish municipalities, while Flemish politicians stress the fact that these facilities are meant to facilitate the integration of French-speakers and are temporary by nature. As a result, the principle of language facilities is still contested. Language facilities are exceptions within a monolingual language area. The facilities shall be without prejudice to the monolingual character which is guaranteed by Article 4 of the Constitution. The legislator in a monolingual area may not enter any facility regulation which in practice amounts to bilingualism. The most discussed rule, out of the framing circulars clarifying the application of the compromise, is that the municipalities with facilities have to send all the documents in Dutch. The citizens who like to have their documents translated have to ask for a French translation over and over again for each document. This means that facilities are not automatically granted but only on explicit request. Francophone politicians contested this interpretation and laid official complaints. The Constitutional Court and the Council of State have long disagreed about the use of language in the municipalities with facilities. In a judgment of March 1986, the Constitutional Court found that Article 4 of the Constitution does not contain a rule that governs the use of language. The Council of State found that Article 4 does contain that the bodies of the municipalities in the Dutch-speaking language area have to use Dutch. The two highest courts thus gave a radically different interpretation of Article 4 of the Constitution concerning the language of the bodies of the municipalities (Vuye 2010). French-speaking politicians also laid a complaint with the Council of Europe to press the Flemish political parties to ratify the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities so that French-speakers in Flanders can be considered as a national minority bypassing the principle of territoriality.

The principle of territoriality cannot prevent that some municipalities around Brussels have a French-speaking majority. Where the monolingual character of

the Flemish region is assured legally, the municipalities with language facilities attract French-speakers to opt for these municipalities as their dwelling place (see Janssens 2002). They are an important reservoir of votes for the French-speaking parties. Part of the pacification compromise was the constituency of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde. Belgium is divided into electoral districts, wherein everyone can vote for the same candidates. Most electoral districts fall within one of the language areas, but there is an important exception: the electoral district of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde, which contains the bilingual region of Brussels and the monolingual area Halle-Vilvoorde. Because everyone in an electoral district can vote for the same politicians, Francophones in the Flemish periphery, for example, can vote for French-speaking candidates from the Brussels-Capital Region. This is hard to accept for the Flemish politicians because according to them this would lead to a Frenchification of the Flemish Periphery. Therefore, they require the splitting up of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde. For both Flemings and Francophones, the constituency has got a high symbolic value. After a long political battle, in July 2012, a proposal was adopted and the constituency of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde split. As a result, there would be two electoral districts: the electoral district of Brussels as well as the electoral district of Flemish Brabant, where Halle-Vilvoorde would belong to. The downside of this solution is that the Dutch politicians in Brussels will no longer be able to count on the votes of Halle-Vilvoorde. As such, the principle of territoriality is reinforced.

The Bilingual Brussels-Capital Region

The division of responsibilities between communities and regions results in a fairly complex theoretical framework. Where traditional approaches to power-sharing require power-sharing across all aspects of governance, the alternate mechanism of consociational accommodation, as it is implemented in Brussels, is based on the equal status of both official languages (O'Conner 2012).

The bilingual Brussels area is governed by four main political actors: the Brussels-Capital Region, the French Community, the Flemish Community and 19 municipalities. The Brussels-elected representatives on regional level together form the Brussels parliament dealing with regional matters, while for community matters they are divided by language groups, which makes sense given the structure of the power distribution across regions and communities. This means that only monolingual parties are admitted at the regional level and that the elected representatives of the Flemish- and French-speaking lists are considered as Flemish, respectively Francophone. At the level of the local government in Brussels, there are 19 municipalities and at this level candidates may present themselves to voters on bilingual lists. In Belgium, the parties are primarily formed by language communities. For example, there is no Belgian Socialist Party, but there is a Flemish

one and a French-speaking party, which are different parties but share the same ideological background. A party, which is competing for the favour of voters in Flanders, assumes no candidate in the French-speaking part of the country. In this respect, political cohesion is missing at the national level in Belgium and at the regional level in Brussels. Both in Belgium and in Brussels, the political majority consists of monolingual French and monolingual Flemish parties or lists.

The asymmetric composition of the various components of the Belgian Federal State also raises the question of the interaction between the various regions and communities and the role of Brussels in this matter. To what extent does co-operation or conflict occur? To underline the strategic link between Francophones in Brussels and Wallonia, the French Community renamed itself since May 2011 to 'Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles,' just like the Flemish Community and the Flemish Region were merged in 1982 and transformed their name into Flemish Government. This discussion does also raise the question of the place and role of the Brussels-Capital Region in the Belgian state model. By establishing their parliament and government in Brussels, both communities have recorded the bilingual character of the metropolitan area in a symbolic way. As stated above, the language conflicts are due to the long Frenchification of the city. Both language groups had a different vision on the Brussels administration. The French-speaking political parties usually opted for a full third Region, while the Flemish politicians preferred a joint management of the capital by the two communities. The compromise between autonomy and shared governance reflected in the model that was finally retained. When the Francophones talk about 'Bruxelles région à part entière,' then it is about the valuableness of the Brussels-Capital Region compared to other regions and communities (Vaesen 2008). In the bilingual Brussels Capital Region, the community matters are organized by the Flemish- and French-speaking communities, and so by a legislative body that is referred to by all members of that Flemish- or French-speaking community. The regional responsibilities, by contrast, are exercised by the elected representatives of the Brussels Region, who are elected by all the inhabitants of Brussels (Janssens 2001).

Community matters are organized independently within the traditional language groups themselves. On the Dutch-speaking side, we have the Flemish Community and the Flemish Community Commission and for the French-speaking population there is the French Community and the French Community Commission. In these community commissions, the members of the Brussels-Capital Region were chosen on monolingual Flemish or French lists. They are responsible for the institutions of the Brussels-Capital that are set up for the Flemish- and French-speaking communities and are able to occur in organizational and subsidizing community affairs (Janssens 2001). The powers of the community commissions also depend on what the communities are willing to delegate. The Flemish Community Commission is in a much more dependent position in relation to the

Flemish Community compared to the French Community Commission and the French Community. This can be explained by the different demographic weight that both language groups in Brussels monitor on the communities as a whole (Vaesen 2008). Bi-communal matters, like language use in emergency rooms of hospitals, are dealt with in the Joint Community Commission. The representatives and the elected politicians manage community competencies that are common to both communities, the so-called bi-communal personal matters. The sixth state reform, the so-called 'Butterfly Agreement' of 2011, has brought more powers for the Brussels Region with it. Noteworthy here is that their powers were transferred to be officially recognized as community competences (e.g. in certain aspects of healthcare). For example, child support will be managed by the Joint Community Commission and there will no longer be a separation between the Flemish and Francophone child benefit system. It is the first time that the Joint Community Commission will carry a responsibility like that.

Theoretically, regional matters like economy and environmental issues have little to do with language communities. But the Belgian party system makes that at regional level in Brussels, even on these issues, an agreement must be found among French-speaking and Dutch-speaking political parties. The same is true for the local government of the Brussels layer system formed by 19 municipalities. The municipality manages the municipal territory to the extent that it is not constrained by the action of so-called higher authorities. In the Brussels-Capital Region, the 19 municipalities play a vital role in the field of urban governance through the city council, the mayor and the Board of Mayor and Aldermen. The municipalities are also represented in inter-municipal organizations to manage, for example, the distribution of water, gas and electricity in an efficient manner. The fact that bilingual political lists are quite common on the level of the municipalities does not mean that we have to deal with bilingual political parties. Depending on ideological or language choices, members of the various political parties form monolingual or bilingual lists, but ultimately they remain members of a monolingual political party. Even in relation to regional matters, the differences between the two communities remain a permanent occasion for political debate.

Apart from the protection by language laws, other measures prevent the dominance of one language group over the other. The complex system of checks and balances is based on the fact that in Belgium as a whole Dutch-speakers are a majority on the national level but a minority within the Brussels-Capital Region. Therefore, the system of proportional representation is adapted to the language cleavage. The composition of the government of the Brussels-Capital Region takes account of the protection for the Dutch-speaking minority. The government consists of five members: a chairman and two members from each language community. The decisions by this government must be taken by consensus. On the municipal level, the local council can increase the number of aldermen by

one if one of the language groups – in Brussels, a member of the Dutch-speaking minority – is not represented. Although it is not an obligation, there is an extra financial asset to do so. Paradoxically, no politician can be forced to choose which language group he or she wishes to belong to.

The Limits of the Current Pacification Model

The Belgian process of state reform is a continuing process of negotiations and compromises between the political parties in power. As such, it is rather an ad-hoc model based on problem solving that has grown over the last decades than a clear-cut theoretical model. The internationalization of Brussels, due to different migration waves, has altered the sociological composition of the city and thus turned the traditional bilingual city into a multilingual environment (Witte and Van Velthoven 2010; Janssens 2013). Where each year the city loses part of its population through internal migration, the total number of inhabitants grows due to international migration and the permanent rejuvenation of the population. Immigrants and their children account for more than 50% of the Brussels population (Deboosere a.o. 2009). Brussels is no longer the city of two language communities but a growing multilingual and multicultural world city.

Table 1 shows the evolution of home languages drawn on the basis of the official languages. Because the combination of Dutch and another language as home language arises in less than 1% of the cases among Brussels residents, it is not included as a separate category but incorporated in that of the Dutch-speaking families. This means that the five categories are retained: Brussels residents that grew up in a family that only spoke French, a family that only spoke Dutch, a traditional bilingual family that spoke French and Dutch, new bilingual people that grew up in a family that spoke French combined with a language other than Dutch, and other language speakers that grew up in a family that did not speak either Dutch or French. The figures are based on three surveys: Language Barometer 1, conducted in 2000; Language Barometer 2, conducted in 2006; Language Barometer 3, conducted in 2012 (Janssens 2013).

Table 1. *Original home language of families of Brussels origin (Source: Janssens 2013)*

Home language	LB 1	LB 2	LB 3
French	51.7%	56.4%	33.6%
Dutch	9.1%	6.8%	5.4%
NL/FR	10.1%	8.7%	14.1%
FR/Other	9.4%	11.4%	14.9%
Other	19.7%	16.7%	32.0%

The group of Brussels residents from monolingual French-speaking families is the largest, but its share has currently fallen to a third of families. The group of Brussels residents that grew up in a family that did not speak any Dutch or French is almost as great and is increasing. The number of Brussels residents from monolingual Dutch-speaking families continues to fall. In contrast, there is a significant increase in the number of traditional bilingual people. The number of new bilingual people also rises significantly and climbs to represent 15% of Brussels residents.

This evolution touches both the traditional relationship between the language groups and the functioning of the community institutions, as well as the relation between the Brussels-Capital Region and the surrounding Flemish Region. Three examples of evolution that put pressure on the current system are discussed briefly: minority education in the Brussels-Capital Region, the issue of integration policy and the Brussels Metropolitan Community.

Minority-Language Education in Brussels

Education is the responsibility of the language communities. The language of instruction is Dutch in the Dutch-speaking region, French in the French-speaking region and German in the German-speaking area. In the bilingual Brussels-Capital Region, the language of instruction in education is French or Dutch since both communities are competent within the region. Children living in Brussels have a free choice to attend a Dutch-medium or French-medium school. The fact that the pupil has previously attended a school of the other community, or that his brothers or sisters are enrolled in such a school does not affect that freedom. It reflects the way political bilingualism is interpreted in Brussels. The organization of community issues is such that it enables the citizens of Brussels to act as a monolingual Dutch-speaker or a monolingual French-speaker in a bilingual environment. As both official languages having the same status and linguistic background does not determine the choice of the school language, Dutch is only a minority home language, but Dutch-medium education is no longer the educational system for the language minority.

In 1971, the 'freedom of the head of the family' was reintroduced and the link between home language and school language was released. Since the 1970s, the Brussels Dutch-speaking primary schools presented themselves as a valuable educational network with rather small year classes that took in account modern urban developments. From the late 1970s, the number of children began to rise. This was followed a few years later by a rise in the number of pupils in primary education. In the 1980s, they invented campaigns for mixed-language families to promote bilingualism. An unforeseen side effect, however, was that children from French-speaking autochthonous families began to seep inside the Dutch

education system as well. This evolution was partly facilitated by the sense that the Dutch education was considered more qualitative than the French-language education and that the French-medium system hosted a growing number of immigrant children. Slowly, the consciousness was growing that the mastery of French and Dutch was needed to obtain a good position in Brussels. A few years later, the influx of French-speaking autochthonous students was followed by an influx of other pupils of immigrant origins. Because of the growing number and the proportion of non-native pupils in class groups, the integration of these pupils into the school system and the use of Dutch as the language of instruction were no longer obvious within a system provided to homogeneous classes of Dutch-speaking pupils. Therefore, the Flemish Community Commission took a package of measures focusing on the integration of non-Dutch-speaking pupils. In addition, there was gradually more attention for increasing teacher skills (VGC). Figure 1 illustrates the evolution of the number and language background of the pupils in primary education from the scholastic year 1979-1980 till 2012-2013. The education system organized by the Flemish Community in Brussels is characterized by four important tendencies. First of all, there is a sharp increase of pupils from monolingual Dutch-speaking families. Secondly, from the pupils with Dutch as a family language, the majority comes from bilingual families combining Dutch with another language, mainly French. Thirdly, there are more pupils with French as a family language than pupils speaking Dutch at home. And, finally, the largest group of pupils grew up in a family where neither Dutch nor French was spoken.

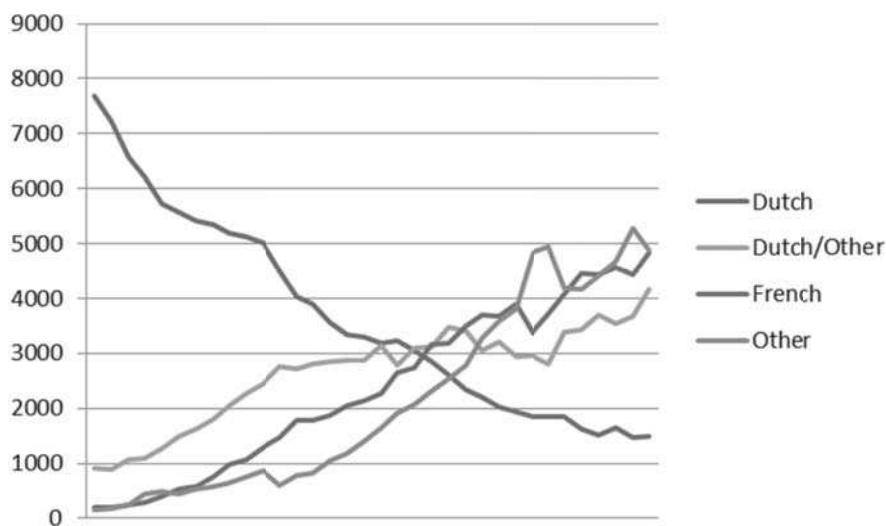


Figure 1. *Evolution of pupils from 1979 till 2012, according to language background (Source: VGC)*

The challenges in Dutch-medium education are manifold: the pedagogical approach is based on a classroom of pupils with Dutch as their family language, while in reality Dutch-speaking pupils are a minority; after an average of five years of teaching, teachers leave for more homogeneous classes in Flanders, and the condition of the infrastructure is often poor. From 2009, the emphasis shifts from infrastructure to the creation of additional capacity in order to give the growing compulsory education population of Brussels a place in school. Population growth is indeed so high and going so fast that the total teaching capacity in the region will soon be insufficient to offer all children a spot.

These evolutions are putting pressure on the relation between both communities. The schools are no longer schools for the French-speaking and Dutch-speaking community but schools for a multilingual and multicultural school population with French or Dutch as the languages of instruction. Among the school boards, there are two tendencies: some stress the fact that their school is designed for Dutch-speakers and they want to restrict the number of children with other home languages; others advocate an approach in which all children with their different backgrounds must feel comfortable. The lack of school capacity resulted in a common on-line enrolment system with a guaranteed contingent for Dutch-speakers. The French Community contested this system by stating that education is free and that having a quota for Dutch-speakers contradicts the free choice that is guaranteed by law. On the other hand, the demographic evolution required the regional authorities to play a co-ordinating role and to invest in extra infrastructure and school buildings. The Flemish Community, however, filed a complaint against the Brussels-Capital Region because they interfered into education, a domain which they are not competent in. Education sets both the relationships between communities and between these communities and the region under pressure.

Integration Policy

The communities take care of the integration policy towards newcomers. In practice, Flanders and Wallonia have developed different strategies and have been working separately for many years. In Flanders, new immigrants must participate in a mandatory integration programme with language classes and lessons in social orientation. In Wallonia, there is no compulsory integration trajectory for newcomers. Today, the Brussels Region captures one third of all immigrants who come to Belgium. The fact that the communities are responsible for integration issues makes that the Flemish Community offers the same citizenship trajectories in Brussels as in Flanders although not compulsory, while the French Community has no structured integration policy but it finances local initiatives oriented towards the guidance of newcomers and aims at a model

of multicultural citizenship based on principles of legal equality rather than on integration into the French Community, which is actually taken for granted (Vermeulen 1997; Torrekens a.o. 2013).

Within the Flemish Community, there have been calls for a more active integration policy in Brussels. The Flemish Community wanted to put the Brussels integration policy under an external autonomous agency. In February 2014, the Brussels civic integration sector was incorporated into this External Autonomous Agency (EVA). That decision was against the demand of the sector and the Flemish Community Commission, which wanted to preserve the specificity of the Brussels field. This means that local organizations, like BON (the Brussels office that welcomes newcomers) and Foyer (the Regional Integration Centre), will no longer be responsible for integration and naturalization. Brussels will be given a special status within the EVA and will maintain its specific role according to the Flemish Government. Opponents say that it would be better to co-operate with the Francophones, who want to expand their integration policy. Brussels will be a separate branch within the Agency and there will be a Brussels Advisory Committee, in which the Flemish Community Commission gets a say. As such, the Flemish Community Commission will be able to perform a more directing role on the integration in Brussels as it is provided in the Decree.

It could be stated that the integration policy in the Brussels-Capital Region is deeply marked by the cultural-linguistic dichotomy of the country. Currently, politicians of both community commissions aim at gaining greater influence over migration associations by granting them financial resources and incorporating them into the existing dual policy system. The migrants themselves, however, show little tendency to adapt to Belgian minority identities, i.e. to identify themselves with the Flemish or Walloon models, which carries the risk of excluding themselves from the institutional structure of Belgian society (Borkert a.o. 2007). Today it is an institutional reality that newcomers in Brussels have to choose between integration via one of the two language communities. Recent research shows that the majority of the inhabitants of Brussels of migrant descent, which is about 68% of the population, identify themselves with their local multicultural environment but seldom with one of the traditional language communities (Janssens 2013).

Integration into a multilingual society is far from evident. The community approach makes it even more complicated. The distinctive situation of the Brussels-Capital Region seems to make a territorial approach more desirable although politically unacceptable. It even provokes tensions between the Communities as such and the Community Commissions.

The Brussels Metropolitan Community

Urban regions develop along functional networks rather than according to administrative boundaries. Economic development, mobility, environmental issues etc. exceed these borders and make mutual arrangements between the regions indispensable. However, politically and culturally, the Flemish political parties evolve into the opposite direction and emphasize the difference between the Brussels-Capital Region and the surrounding Flemish municipalities (see *infra*). But whereas Brussels is limited to the 19 municipalities, the Brussels City Region based on the economic influence of Brussels is made up of 62 municipalities (Luyten & Van Hecke 2007).

In 2012, in the framework of the sixth state reform, a metropolitan community was created (see, for instance, Van Wynsberghe 2013). This community should facilitate the consultation between Brussels and its hinterland. The area covers the old province of Brabant and should simplify co-operation around issues like employment, mobility or spatial planning. This means that all regions are involved. However, the implementation is still vague. The consultation platform is non-committal, there are no incentives to co-operate and it has no clear planning. Moreover, the country has to deal with centrifugal forces – which they call the expansionist tendencies within the Brussels-Capital Region – that are considered as a threat. Some mayors in the municipalities around Brussels see the compulsory membership of the platform as an infringement. They laid a complaint with the Constitutional Court.

The territorial approach was set up to pacify the language struggle damming the so-called ‘oil stain’ of the advancing bilingual status of the municipalities around Brussels. Some Flemish politicians see the current platform as another attempt from the French-speaking politicians in Brussels to regain influence in Flanders. It results in an unyielding attitude hampering economic co-operation and expansion.

Conclusion

Territoriality is an important pacification principle in the Belgian society. The fixation of the language border was the starting point of the evolution towards a federal state. The basic principle behind linguistic territoriality in Belgium is that one single language is imposed in every region. In reality, there are exceptions: the Brussels-Capital Region has two official languages, while in the other regions official languages can be used within the restricted confines of the language facilities system. Political tensions over language issues are manifold, but the

successive stages in the process of state reforms always led to a balanced situation based on a shift of responsibilities between the different governmental levels, communities and regions. This resulted in the institutionalization of a particular form of territorialism with no official language for the country as a whole and no national political parties. In this constellation, Brussels is the binding force where both traditional communities are represented.

But societal evolutions endanger the – at the first sight – clear-cut differences introduced by the territoriality principle and its attendant political concepts of the federal state. The institutionalization of these differences hampers the co-operation between the regions and the communities. The demographic and international evolution of the Brussels-Capital Region blurs the regional boundaries and demonstrates that new forms of co-operation are urgently needed. The growing multilingual and multicultural population of Brussels and its periphery also interferes with the relations between the traditional language communities. Both tendencies put pressure on the current political structure.

However, the territoriality principle proves to be highly flexible. Although there are clear-cut monolingual or well-defined territorial entities, the Belgian system has always provided the necessary tools to deal with language diversity. The territorial approach enables to solve the problems in the Brussels context in such a way that it does not affect the situation in Flanders and Wallonia too much. Territoriality offers a framework in which the subsidiarity principle can be applied more easily. The Belgian case proves that there is no unique model of territoriality but that it can offer the necessary means for conflict management and prevention. However, achieving these goals also implies a quasi-permanent process of creative political negotiation and adaptation.

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