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Summary in English

Nederlandstalige Samenvatting
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1. **Prologue**

1.1. “**Lies, Damned Lies and Statistics**”

Statistics are supposed to present ‘hard’ facts. They are supposed to provide factual or objective information to the legislator, the policy-maker, the political activist, the voter, etc. But this common presentation is also somewhat simplistic and misleading (see, e.g., Hacking, 2000). Already in the nineteenth century, administrators and politicians used the saying: “there are three kind of lies: lies, damned lies and statistics” to warn against the persuasive and deceptive power of numbers (see, e.g., Courtney, 1895). In more recent years, a number of authors have suggested that the truth of statistics is not confined to the presentation of objective numbers, but that its meaning primarily builds upon the subjective choices that underlie it. According to Thierry Hentsch (2000: 484), for example, the ways in which states choose *what* and *how* to count is not only indicative of their current self-image but also of their projects and intentions. The concepts and categories, designed to standardize the basis of observation of the statisticians, are also instruments to educate the observers and the observed; they eventually end up disciplining the ‘phenomena’ themselves. Along the same lines, Sarah E. Igo remarks in her research on social statistics in twentieth-century North America that “ways of knowing, although less visible than memberships in civic associations and labor unions, are equally critical resources for structuring people’s encounters with the social world” (2007: 6; see also Jasanoff 2004).

Building upon some of the more recent scholarly literature, we might assume that statistical categories and classifications exercise a powerful influence over perceptions of the social body, of the *corps social* (Quetelet), of the societal
system. Or, in the words of Igo: “[...] social scientific data had a life and force of their own that extended far beyond the mere aggregation of facts. This knowledge could cause people to act in different ways, imagine their relationships in new lights, and re-evaluate their beliefs. [...] In a society constantly seeking information about itself, statistical means could themselves become normative” (2007: 261-262). Igo adds that these statistical techniques would also result in the development of modern survey methods, which not only helped to forge a mass public, but also “shaped the selves who would inhabit it, influencing everything from beliefs about morality and individuality to visions of democracy and the nation. [...] They offer a partial explanation for the official, if not actual, cohesion of ‘the American public’ in the middle decades of the 20th century” (2007: 282). Against this background, it can be claimed that the diffusion of statistical methods and classifications has led to a situation in which it has become nearly impossible to ‘imagine’ the social body or the nation-state without relying on its charts and curves, its averages and deviations (see Starr, 1987; Patriarca, 1996; Poovey, 1998; Scott, 1998; Hacking, 2000; Curtis, 2002; Wobbe, 2012).

Seen in this light, it is important not to underestimate the social impact of the development and diffusion of statistical methods, such as those to count the entire population of a nation-state at a given point in time. It is equally important not to underestimate the social impact of impersonal, ‘objective’ techniques of data collection, which privilege the national over the local, the aggregate over the individual and the average over the unique. Statistical enumerations require kinds of things or people to count; statistics is in this sense “hungry for categories” (Hacking, 1982: 280). To put it somewhat differently: a nation-state is not only a politically unified and politically structured space, but also a common cognitive space (see, e.g., Desrosières, 1998; Anderson, 2006). In various respects, the
‘state of the state’ is perceived and ordered by means of particular concepts and categories, by means of particular classification schemes (Desrosières, 2000: 42; see also Meyer, Thomas and Raminez, 1997). Especially in the nineteenth century, the organization or ordering of this cognitive space took on quite a distinctive, statistical form (see, e.g., Hacking, 1982; Wargon, 2000: 327). But the statisticians not only make use of categories and classification schemes for their enumerations, but also change or adapt existing ones and create new ones. Bureaucracies and state administrations are not only working with statistical concepts; they are also “making up people” (Hacking, 2000). They are not only creating ways to identify and classify people; their categories and classification schemes also ‘interact’ with the people, thereby shaping and transforming them. Seen in this light, it may be hypothesised that social statistics gave way to a new mode of representation. It led to the creation of both new forms of scientific knowledge and new modes of intervention. It helped to conceive a new sort of object, society as population, which could be the target of both research and policy interventions (see, e.g., Scott, 1998; Curtis, 2002).

In this dissertation, I will focus upon the genealogy of statistical forms and categories in order to analyse the articulation of ideas and ideals associated with modern government, and to shed light on the rules that underlie and make possible authorised state-ments of knowledge about the population in the state’s territory. By exploring this hitherto largely neglected aspect of the history of statistics by means of a case study, I hope to be able to throw new light on the articulation of ‘relevant’ or ‘legitimate’ distinctions and the elaboration of the complex interactions between science, government, and society. In order to delineate the subject of this dissertation in more specific terms, I will hereafter briefly discuss the socio-historical context within which modern statistics emerged in the western world, and the theoretical challenges that ensue from
this view on statistics as *state-istics*. Afterwards, I will introduce the methodological approach that has been adopted in this research. I will finally also provide a brief overview of the different chapters of the body of this work.

1.2. THEORETICAL CHALLENGES

1.2.1. STATES AND STATE-ISTICS

One can say that there have always been numerical people, for merchants and bureaucrats have been keeping accounts since ancient times. What was new in the eighteenth century, especially in the so-called Enlightenment era, was the idea that numbers could be used to analyse something other than money, such as population, health and illness, poverty, nature, etc. (see, e.g., Foucault, 1966; Hacking, 1982; Frängsmyr, Heilbron and Rider, 1990). In the course of the eighteenth century, a number of practical concerns with ‘the people’ (their health, well-being, productivity, etc.) aroused not only fear among ‘enlightened rulers’, but also a desire to be informed, to understand, to predict, to prevent, and to intervene (see also Bayatrizi, 2008). In the words of Ian Hacking: “The census became a hallmark of the enlightenment, but always for what at first sight seem good practical purposes” (1982: 289). While the first attempts to apply numerical methods to the study of population thus gradually took shape in the Enlightenment era, it is also clear that numerical data required amounts of information so large that only ‘big’ institutions like the church or the state had the resources to gather it (see also Headrick, 2000: 59-61). There is indeed a close relationship between state and state-istics. Only in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, as governments and state administrations grew more
elaborate and better organized, could the ‘quantifying spirit’ also spread rapidly throughout both the Old and the New World.

‘Conceptual’ issues also played a prominent and determining role in the history of administrative statistics. As Theodore Porter puts it: “The French Revolution, and perhaps one should add the American one, created conditions for the modern census” (2000: 492). In more general terms, it is important to take into consideration Benedict Anderson’s statement that the answer to the problem of the authority of the state was to ground the state in the sovereignty of the ‘people’. Questions like: ‘Who are the people, actually?’, ‘Who constitutes ‘the people’?’, imposed themselves on ‘enlightened’ or ‘modern’ rulers and policy-makers (Anderson, 2000: 109; see also Schulten, 2012). Such questions also served to fuel their interest in the ‘state of the state’, in the ‘nature’ of their nation and their people. The first ‘revolutionary’ nation-state was indeed also one of the first to conduct a population census within its territorial boundaries. The authors of the American Constitution of 1787 agreed to take a census every ten years in order to apportion both the expenses of the national government and the seats in the House of Representatives on the basis of state populations. The idea of counting the people was thus written into the original American Constitution – which also means that it became unconstitutional not to count the American people. As Hacking argues: “This was not some trifling bureaucratic aside: it is written into Article 1, section 2. The overt purpose of the constitutional counting was plain enough. It was to determine the size of congressional districts, so as to give equal representation to all free persons” (1982: 290).

In line with Hacking’s line of analysis, a number of other authors

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1 Hacking, moreover, notes another link between state and statistics. “The name of the first enlightenment ‘state’, the United States of America, was invented by Richard Price,
have also pointed to the existence of feedback or loop effects at this level. According to Margo Anderson, for example, the history of the American census makes clear that “the successful implementation of the population count and its use for legislative apportionment was absolutely essential to organizing the state itself” (2000: 111; see also Michels, 1911; Selznick, 1948; Merton, 1957; Woolf, 1989: 588; Beaud and Prévost, 2000: 64). In may also be said that the history of statistics displays the various dimensions in which modern nation-states are “holding” a national unity (see Desrosières, 2000: 43).

Along these lines, the French statistician and social scientist Alain Desrosières has pointed to the close link between democracy (one man, one vote) and administrative statistics, such as population censuses, in which all inhabitants of a particular territory are counted. He speaks of an “equivalence agreement”, which would be institutionalized within the modern nation-states. In Desrosières’ words: “Dans le cas de la statistique, l’acte politique fondateur n’est pas seulement l’exhibition d’un nombre (de préférence grand) comme celui de la population, […] mais la 
convention d’équivalence permettant de compter et d’additionner” (2000: 42). It is, however, also important to distinguish between the idea of an “equivalence agreement” and its implementation in population statistics. In the first American censuses, for example, the Indians (who did not have to pay taxes) were not counted. All other persons were counted, but only the free persons were counted as a whole person. Other people, like slaves, were figured in at the rate of 3/5 of a person (Hacking, 1982: 290). Statistics thus do not just provide a picture of ‘the people’. They do not treat all individuals equally.

the publisher of the work of Thomas Bayes (1702-1761), that we now call Bayesian statistics, and also publisher of the only tolerable actuarial tables available until well into the middle of the nineteenth century” (Hacking, 1982: 289).
Statistics also distinguish between people who count and people who do not count, between the individuals who are considered to be part of the population and the ‘strangers’ who are not considered to belong to the population. Seen from this perspective, analysing the history of statistical constructions may help us to shed light on the ‘system of thought’ underlying the categories and classification schemes used by states to enumerate, to represent, to classify and to ‘take care’ of their respective populations (see also Anderson, 2000: 109). It may help us to elucidate the ways in which the modern nation-state is indeed, to adopt Benedict Anderson’s (2006) felicitous phrase, an “imagined community”. Empirically detailed analyses of the cognitive or conceptual representations of this imagined community, which are produced by state administrations and their statistics, will thus help us to reveal the ‘knowledge regimes’ (Foucault), the ‘systems of thought’ (Bachelard, Hacking) and the intellectual frameworks that allowed administrators and bureaucrats to relate in new ways to ‘the public’ in the modern era (Scott, 1998; Anderson, 2000; Headrick, 2000: 59-95; Curtis, 2002; Foucault, 2007).

1.2.2. STATISTICS AND STATE-ISTICS

Ian Hacking has famously spoken of an “avalanche of printed numbers” in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, which started to change the ways in which the state and state administrations operated. Focusing on France, he argues that in the period 1820-1840, “the rate of increase in the printing of numbers appears to be exponential whereas the rate of increase in the printing of words was merely linear” (1982: 282). He links the avalanche of printed numbers, in France and elsewhere, with the elaboration of state administrations: “many new bureaucracies were created to collect information about the people
and to arrange populations into a well-organized data-bank” (1982: 285). Hacking moreover postulates that in the years 1820-1840 the population or public changed from non-numerate to numerate, thereby suggesting that “there are pretty good grounds for speculation that the illiterate were, by gossip, made fairly numerate thirty years before general education made them literate” (1982: 287).

For Hacking, early nineteenth-century statistics was, at least in part, a moral science. One of its main aims was to collect information about the morality of the population. While, according to Hacking, its motives were certainly philanthropic, statistics also aimed at the preservation and conservation of the social world as it was known or imagined at that time. Although it clearly had difficulty improving the morality of the population, the nineteenth-century ‘statistical enthusiasm’ put in place a strong administrative and bureaucratic apparatus that could later also serve other ‘regulatory’ and ‘administrative’ goals. In Hacking’s (1982: 282) words: “Equally important was the subtler, subversive influence of the new groups of human categories coming from this avalanche of numbers”. In this regard, Hacking (1982: 281) especially notes that “the subversive effect of this transition was to create new categories into which people had to fall, and so to create and render rigid new conceptualizations of the human being”. Hacking’s observations here also point beyond the period within which the so-called avalanche of printed numbers took place.

Hacking and several other authors also direct attention to the influence of the nineteenth-century Belgian *homo statisticus* Adolphe Quetelet (1796-1874). For Hacking, for example, Adolphe Quetelet was a “master statistical informant and creator of national bureaucracies and international congresses in the nineteenth century” (1982: 288). In 1828, Quetelet had become the first director of the Royal Observatory in Brussels. At that time, he also became involved in the
planning of the 1830 population census in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, a census that was never completed due to Belgium's secession from the Netherlands in 1830. In 1835, with the publication of *Sur l’homme et le développement de ses facultés, essai d’une physique sociale*, he started to gain world-wide fame. In the Belgian administration, he was in charge of its activities in demography and statistics at the *Bureau de Statistique*, and, from 1841 onwards, at the *Commission Centrale de Statistique*. The procedures to be used in the new census were tried out first in the city of Brussels in 1842, and the nationwide population census took place in October 1846. Both the method of census taking and the subsequent analyses with detailed tabulations on the basis of a range of population categories set new standards for similar undertakings in most other western countries (Lesthaeghe, 2001).

Quetelet remained in charge of the censuses conducted in 1856 and 1866 in Belgium, but for more than two decades he also defined the objectives of the *Congrès International de Statistique* (or *International Congress of Statistics*), whose sessions were actively attended by many high-level ‘state servants’ from countries throughout Europe and America. In the literature, there is a broad consensus that, via the *Congrès International de Statistique* and other international transfers of knowledge, Quetelet’s focus on the development of uniform methods and conventions had considerable impact on a broad range of statistical traditions in different nation-states – both in the nineteenth century and afterwards (e.g., Porter, 1986: 41-55; Brian, 1989, 2002; Bracke, 2008: 131-167; Desrosières, 2008: 7-59; Randeraad, 2011; Prévost and Beaud, 2012: 49-62). Indeed, ‘those who attended pushed their governments to adopt a standard template for census making on the Queteletian model’ (Curtis, 2002: 20-21).

In terms of theory, Michel Foucault’s late work has hitherto constituted an important point of departure for this approach. In a series of lectures on *Security,*
Territory, Population, delivered in 1978 at the Collège de France, Foucault uses the term ‘bio-power’ to refer to the set of mechanisms developed in the eighteenth century “through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy, of a general strategy of power” (2007: 1). For Foucault, the ‘population’ as a “sort of technical-political object of management” only developed in the eighteenth century (2007: 70). According to Foucault, in that century, a movement took place which revealed “the population as a given, as a field of intervention, and as the end of government techniques” (2007: 108). Following the author, in the nineteenth century, population finally became “the vis-à-vis of government, of the art of government” (2007: 79). Also, in that time-period, the instruments of government became “diverse tactics rather than laws” (2007: 99). As Foucault puts it: “a whole series of objects were made visible for possible knowledge on the basis of the constitution of the population as correlate of techniques and power”. It is against this background that Foucault refers to the human sciences as “nothing other than a figure of population”, which “should be understood on the basis of the emergence of population as the correlate of power and the object of knowledge” (2007: 79).

Foucault also notes the close relationship between the elaboration of statistical methods and the rise of the idea of the ‘population’. According to the author, statistics helped to establish a new idea of government and to replace the model of the family with that of the population (Foucault, 2007: 103). Or, in the words of Foucault: “statistics [...] discovers and gradually reveals that the population possesses its own regularities: its death rate, its incidence of disease, its regularities of accidents. Statistics also shows that the population also involves specific, aggregate effects and that these phenomena are irreducible to those of the family [...] Statistics enables the specific phenomena of the population to be quantified and thereby reveals that this specificity is irreducible [to the] small
framework of the family” (2007: 104). Because statistics produces aggregate-level data that can both reveal realities at the population level and legitimate new, ‘refined’ forms of control, Foucault included statistical observation methods among the key bio-political instruments.

It is against this background that the present dissertation focuses upon the sociological history of the Belgian population censuses. In line with Foucault and Hacking, I depict the modern census as a technology for screening and sorting large populations, whose development coincides with the rise of modern states. The chronological frame of the following chapters spans about a century; my focus is on the period from the middle of the nineteenth century – the first Belgian censuses organized by Quetelet – up until the middle of the twentieth century. I will hereafter discuss how the ‘modern’ Belgian state, prior to the expansion of the welfare state, not only aimed at acquiring and processing detailed information about its population, but also used its statistics to ‘take care of’ its population. I argue that the study of the concepts and categories used in the censuses sheds light on how particular ‘systems of thought’ and forms of social knowledge have been developed over time (Foucault 1998; Hacking 1979). I also argue that the study of the statistical representations of the social body may shed light on the population politics of the modern state (see also Foucault, 1994, 1998: 137-159, 2008: 44-46). In Foucauldian language: I use this case-study of Belgian statistics to shed light on the ‘power/knowledge grid’ in which individuals were processed and constituted as ‘governable citizens’ prior to the expansion of the welfare state (and the firm institutionalisation of inclusion imperatives).
1.3. Methodological approach

According to Theodore Porter, “histories of social science that cared about power and practices would assign statistics a far more prominent role than they do at present” (2000: 490-491). A history of social science that cares about the genesis of statistical forms may indeed shed a different light on the genesis and development of the social sciences than other forms of history, such as histories based on longitudinal series of printed numbers and classical histories of ideas and theories (see also Davidson, 1986; Power, 2011). In this context, Porter moreover suggests “that there is no better place than the history of social quantification to seek out that intersection of power and knowledge now associated with the name of Michel Foucault” (Porter, 2000: 495).

In spite of the popularity of Foucault, however, there is as yet little research that has looked into the episteme (Foucault, 1966) or conditions of possibility (Kant, 1781/2007) of social statistics. In the last two decades, a number of studies have contributed to the history of statistical reasoning (e.g., Hacking, 1990, 2006; Desrosières, 1998, 2008; Bayatrizi, 2008; Prévost, 2009) or of statistical bureaus and bureaucracies (e.g., Anderson, 1990; Bracke, 2008). For a range of states, there also exist studies of the genesis of official classifications of occupations, religious adherences, or ethnic distinctions (e.g., Szreter, 1984; Curtis, 2002; Desrosières and Thévenot, 2002; Van de Putte and Miles, 2005; Vanderstraeten, 2006; Patriarca, 2011; ILO, 2012; Wobbe, 2012). Also, in recent decades, some historical-sociological studies have tried to trace the genesis of distinctly modern statistical forms or categories, such as that of the inactive population or the unemployed individual (e.g., Topalov, 1994: 312-350; Baxandall, 2004). However, far less scholarly effort has hitherto been invested in genealogical analyses of the statistical representations of the corps social (see also Porter, 1986; Power, 2011).
As previously mentioned, social statistics has emerged both as a science (of the state) and as a technique of governmental intervention, viz. state-istics. Seen from this perspective, it may be argued that the actors of modern social science are ‘made up’ via knowledge practices that necessarily individuate their objects in ways we take for granted today (see Power, 2011: 38; Foucault, 1966). Seen in this light, the study of the genesis and evolution of statistical representations of the corps social may shed light on the conditions of possibility for the field of social statistics, and, hence, of later sociology. But, also, the study of the evolution in the statistical representations of the social body may also contribute to political sociology by shedding light on the intimate link between forms of government and modes of thoughts (about governing) in modern nation-states (Foucault, 1991b).

In this dissertation, I attempt to explore this hitherto largely neglected aspect of the historical sociology of knowledge by focusing on the study of one of the main instruments which states have used to ‘embrace’ their populations and to rationalize the problems presented to governmental practice, viz. the modern population census. More particularly, my focus is on one national tradition of statistics, viz. the Belgian population censuses. My time frame spans about a century; my focus is on the period between the first Belgian population census, which took place about a decade and a half after its independence (in 1846), and the tenth, which was taken shortly after the Second World War (in 1947). The period from the census of 1846 to the census of 1947 allows me to document the changes that took place in the statistical representations of the social body before the rise of the post-war welfare state in Belgium. This period is also of particular interest because the roots of the modern social sciences are usually traced back to this time-period.
In my dissertation, I do not focus on the disciplinary actions rising from the abstract capacities and intentions of ‘law’, ‘the state’ or ‘the economy’ which I consider to be too mythicized abstractions (see Power, 2011: 40; Foucault, 1991a). In my dissertation, I try to contribute to a new way to write the history of social knowledge regimes by centring on the ‘archival foundations’ of specific forms of disciplinary knowledge that are materialized in documents produced in the interest of the state in its population (see Foucault, 1995). In my dissertation, my focus is not on the census data themselves, nor on their accuracy. I intend to pursue the promising research avenues that have been opened up by calling into question our most familiar and taken-for-granted statistical notions and classifications. Statistics makes it possible to classify, to form categories, to fix norms. Seen from this perspective, the statistical representations and statistical classifications not only inform us about the social realities they strive to measure, but also about the constructs which organize that measuring. It is against this background that, in my dissertation, I focus on the emergence and transformation of representational categories and observation methods in order to shed light on the way in which these practices function, and to analyse the kind of order they create. Inspired by authors such as Foucault and Hacking, I do not regard the historical variability and historical contingency in the methodologies and nomenclatures used in the population censuses as a source of difficulty, but rather as a source of precious information on the genesis of the categories that have organized and still organize our observations and representations of the social world.

I have used discourse analysis to examine the genesis and evolution of statistical concepts and categories in the censuses. For my research, I had access
to the censuses on PDF-files, which were easily readable and searchable.² I started each analysis by identifying one key concept (e.g. indigence [l’indigence]) which repeatedly occurred in the censuses on different ‘places’ and in different contextual fields (e.g. in the explanatory notes of the statisticians on the results of the censuses, in the household enumeration sheets, in the stipulations to the census-takers, etc.). Next, I searched through the first census and made a detailed inventory of the statements I had found and of the ‘places’ and contexts in which the key concept appeared. On the basis of this detailed data collection, I gradually identified new key terms which repeatedly occurred in the context of the first key concept (e.g. hospitals [hospices], being admitted [admis(e)s]), the ‘alienated’ [les aliénés]). Next, I repeated this systematic analysis for each of the base words of these key terms and for the words related to these terms. My research could lead to concepts referring to a social phenomenon (e.g. indigence [l’indigence]) but also to concepts referring to more ‘practical’ and ‘technical’ issues, such as data collection and processing techniques (e.g. the de facto/de jure enumeration method [population de fait/de droit], the household enumeration sheet [bulletin de ménage], etc.). I repeated this systematic analysis for each census. Because the Belgian censuses are a serial source, published every ten years, it was possible to notice the way in which definitions, classifications and techniques in the censuses had changed every ten years. I compared the outcome of the discourse analysis of the different censuses in order to find out how definitions and formulations had changed over time and which concepts had appeared, disappeared or been modified over time. When deemed useful, I applied

² I would like to thank Sven Vrielinck of the History Department of Ghent University for being so kind to offer me access to the PDF-files which he had generated of the print materials of the censuses.
etymology to clarify the shifts in the meaning of concepts. On the basis of the outcome of my analyses, I have tried to explain the contingently formed relations of similarity that underlie the classifications. When I noticed that one of the concepts I had been focusing on often re-appeared in different contextual fields, I decided to take this concept as the starting point for a new chapter of my dissertation.

1.4. Source material

As previously mentioned, my focus is on the Belgian population censuses. My main historical sources consist of the official census reports – which contain the enumeration sheets, the printed numbers, an interpretation of them and a rather technical part that reproduces the instructions to the census-takers and administrators. Besides, the censuses contain also juridical excerpts and other ‘related documents’, such as letters from the Governors of the Provinces addressed to the Minister of the Interior. Until 1920, the Belgian census reports were only published in French, but the enumeration sheets were send out in French, Flemish or German, depending on the language most spoken in the municipality (see, e.g., B 1846, X). From the census of 1930 onwards, the censuses were published in Dutch as well. After that, people were also free to choose the language of the questionnaire they had to fill in (see, e.g., B 1930, 21).

The first Belgian population census took place in 1846. Afterwards, censuses followed at regular, mostly ten-yearly intervals.\(^3\) Over time, however, throughout the last centuries, the population census has thus continued to serve as an important ‘apparatus of knowledge’; only recently has the availability of a range of

\(^3\) Throughout the last centuries, the population census has thus continued to serve as an important ‘apparatus of knowledge’; only recently has the availability of a range of
the number of items included in the census expanded considerably. New tools for
data analysis were put to use (such as punch cards) – although the overall aim
remained the same: providing a comprehensive overview of the population that
would satisfy “the needs of most public administrations as well as those of
science in its diverse manifestations: ethnography, history, economics and
statistics” (B, 1880: XIV). In 1930, the ninth Belgian population census took place.
The census scheduled for 1940 was never executed because of the outbreak of
the Second World War. Without much preparation, the tenth census only took
place in 1947. It was, moreover, a limited census in that much information was
omitted, and was primarily intended to take stock of the state of the nation after
the devastation of the Second World War. The censuses of 1930 and 1947
constitute the endpoint of the analyses presented in my dissertation. Although
my primary source material consists of all the census reports of the Belgian
statistical authorities, I also make use of additional source material for my
research. I have, in particular, also drawn upon the relevant sections of the
Belgian parliamentary papers (on line available via www.plenum.be), and
legislative sources. For the international context, I have also made use of the
reports of the International Statistical Congresses and the International Statistical
Bureau (which was the successor to Quetelet’s Congrès).

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electronic databases led to questions about the political as well as the scientific relevance
of new population censuses in Belgium (e.g., Surkyn, 2006). Since 2001, the census has
been replaced by ten-yearly ‘General socio-economic surveys’, which relies much more on
the national population register. Data for 2011 have not yet been published.

4 I refer to the census reports by the letter B followed by the year the census. For an
overview of the reports cited here, see the list of references at the end of this
introductory chapter.
1.5. Overview of the Dissertation

The main part of this ‘cumulative’ dissertation consists of four articles and thus of four case studies, which use Belgian administrative statistics to analyse different aspects of the state- and nation-building processes and governmental techniques that were developed and used between the mid-nineteenth and the mid-twentieth century. Each case-study has theoretical ambitions, which reach beyond the case-study itself. Each time, an attempt is made to articulate the complex interactions between science, government, and society in the modern era in new ways.5

In the first case-study, the point of departure is the ‘modern’ ambition to include the entire population into the nation-state and into the population censuses. On the foregoing pages, I have already referred to the “equivalence agreement” (Desrosières), underlying the modern nation-state. But in spite of this strong emphasis on social inclusion, censuses also legitimate and reinforce several kinds of exclusion. In this chapter, attention is drawn to the range of exclusions and exclusion places that appeared in the Belgian population censuses. It is shown how statistics identify ‘residual’ categories such as the poor and indigent, the disabled of body or mind, the elderly and invalids, beggars and vagabonds. It is also shown how the Belgian statisticians used exclusion places – asylums, barracks, colonies, madhouses, mental hospitals, monasteries, prisons, and so on – to distinguish between different categories of population members.

5 I have also co-authored an A1-article that deals with the census data on ‘human capital’ within Belgium during the second half of the twentieth century (Vanderstraeten, R., Louckx, K. and Van der Gucht, F., (2012), ‘The geographical diffusion of high- and low-skilled human capital in Belgium, 1961-2001’, Journal of Belgian History, 42 (4): 51-73). But this article is hereafter not reproduced.
The analysis presented here highlights the intimate relationship between *population and territory* in the ‘search engines’ of the Belgian statisticians. The discursive constitution of territorial exclusions allows me to analyse the articulation of inclusion ideals – in the period before such ideals became firmly institutionalised in the so-called welfare state of the post-war period.

The main unit of observation of the Belgian population census was the *household* in its place of residence. The second case-study focuses attention on the re-articulation of this time-honoured institution of the household within modern statistical discourse. The household was the proverbial cornerstone of society, to which individuals were attributed but to which they were also considered to ‘belong’. In this chapter of my dissertation, I focus on the representation and definition of the household in the censuses. Also, I pay attention to the implications following from more ‘technical improvements’, i.e. changes in data collection techniques, introduced by the statisticians to count the population. The changes in the notion of ‘belonging’ to a household show how the state (re-)articulated its expectations regarding the cornerstones of society. It is also shown how the representation of the household in state-istics not only reflected new ways of *managing* the population, but also mobilized specific *norms* and evaluative *standards* about the individuals who constitute the household.

The third case-study focuses on another aspect of belongingness in the nation-state, viz. that expressed by the notion of the *habitual place of residence*. In this chapter, I use the history of Belgian state-istics more particularly in order to shed light on the *politics of membership* in the modern state. Each territorial state is expected to embrace the social lives of the people contained in it; each claims the right to monitor the condition, to promote the welfare, and to protect the rights of ‘its’ people. In the modern world, individuals have become conceived
as incorporated into the political order as exclusive subjects of a single state. In this chapter of my dissertation, I try to illuminate this politics of membership and belonging by studying the instruments that states have used to embrace their populations. Changes in the articulation of the notion of ‘habitual residence’ in the Belgian population censuses show how the history of statistics is also a history of the struggles over belonging in and to the territorial state. Here again it becomes clear that the census not only generates facts about the population; it also creates facts that may form the basis of social interventions.

Nowadays conceptions of citizens and non-citizens, of ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ and their respective rights and obligations in a nation-state, highly depend on the historical trajectory of the nation-state itself. The final case-study addresses this historical trajectory by focusing on the socio-cultural aspects of ‘belonging’ to or citizenship in the nation-state. These socio-cultural aspects of citizenship involve mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion. In this final chapter of my dissertation, I examine the evolution of the socio-cultural boundaries of citizenship as conceptualized in the state-istics of the Belgian state, more particularly in terms of each individual’s place of birth, nationality and language. My analyses show how the statistical constructs did not merely reproduce existing concepts of citizens and non-citizens, of foreigners and nationals, but also actively contributed to the installation of new citizenship boundaries by changing the census questionnaires and putting forward new categories and classifications. By examining the modifications in these state-istical constructs, I hope to elucidate the more complex history of the construction of citizenship identities in the contemporary Belgian nation-state.

The epilogue, finally, presents a brief summary of the main findings of my research as well as some more general reflections on the anatomy of the corps social presented in the population censuses of the Belgian nation-state.
For reasons of clarity, I add that I am the sole author of the prologue and the epilogue. For the other chapters, I developed the research question and theoretical approach, collected the data, made the analysis and interpretation of the source material, and authored the first full draft. Afterwards, Raf Vanderstraeten seconded me in drafting the final version. I hold the final responsibility for each chapter.

1.6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

1.6.1. BELGIAN CENSUS REPORTS


1.6.2. Other references


2. **State-istics and Statistics: Exclusion Categories in the Population Census (Belgium, 1846-1930)**

2.1. **State-istics**

The term ‘statistics’ was first used in the eighteenth century. For Gottfried Achenwall, a professor at Göttingen and the author of *Abriss der Staatswissenschaft der europäischen Reiche* (1749), the term referred to the study of the state (*Staatswissenschaft*). In the latter part of the eighteenth century, the term also appeared in English. In 1797 the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* described statistics as ‘a word lately introduced to express a view or survey of any kingdom, country or parish’. These state-istics had to cover the growing need for information in the emerging ‘enlightened’ regimes and nation-states by means of surveys, population registers or censuses. In the scientific context, statistics has, from the late nineteenth century onwards, increasingly become perceived as a branch of mathematics, specifically concerned with theories of probability and inference (Porter, 1986; Stigler, 1986). This mathematical statistics, however, was antedated by various attempts to gather data about the state of the state.

Ian Hacking has used the phrase ‘avalanche of printed numbers’ to characterise the rapid development of information technologies and the growing scale of statistics in the nineteenth century. For illustrative purposes, he refers to the United States census and its expansion. In 1790, the first census asked four

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questions of each household. In 1880, the tenth census posed 13,010 questions in various questionnaires addressing people, firms, farms, hospitals, churches and more. As Hacking puts it, statistical thinking has been implanted in a great bureaucratic machinery: ‘It may think of itself as providing only information, but it is itself part of the technology of power in a modern state’ (1991: 181). In this regard, the state-istics had unforeseen consequences. It gave way to a new mode of representation, a new discourse about society. Society was made conceivable for statistics (Starr, 1987; Scott, 1998: 91; Curtis, 2002; Porter, 2003: 26-33; see also Bayatrizi, 2008; Osborne et al., 2008; McFall, 2011). It might hence also be argued that the contribution of social statistics was to conceive a new sort of object, which could be both the target of research and of policy interventions.

An exploration of this discourse may build on the work of Michel Foucault. For Foucault, statistics helped to unblock and reorient ‘the art of government’. It helped to establish a new idea of government and to replace the model of the family – characterised by diffuse concerns with the happiness of the family and a ‘power over “things” rather than territory’ (Foucault, 2007: 103) – with that of the population. It produced aggregate-level data that could both reveal realities at the population level and legitimate new, ‘refined’ forms of control. In a series of lectures on Security, Territory, Population, delivered in 1978 at the Collège de France, Foucault argued that statistics became part of ‘an administrative apparatus which would not just be the agent for executing the sovereign’s orders, or for raising the taxes, wealth, and men needed by the sovereign, but one that at the same time would be an apparatus of knowledge [...] as an essential dimension of the exercise of power’ (2007: 274-75). The activities associated with modern

2 After the demographic and social transitions of the eighteenth century, Foucault argued, the family became merely an instrument in the government of large populations. ‘The
government only became possible on a systematic basis if states were in a position to successfully ‘embrace’ their populations for the purposes of carrying out those activities (Torpey, 2007: 7). Seen from this perspective, the history of statistics may thus be used to analyse the articulation of these ideas and ideals, and to shed light on the rules that underlie and make possible authorised statements of knowledge about the population in the state’s territory.

We focus in this paper on the perception of population problems through the lens of state-istics, especially through that of censuses. In line with Foucault and Hacking, we think of the modern census as a technology for screening and sorting large populations, whose development coincides with the rise of modern states. The census is expected to embrace or include the state’s population. The term is commonly used ‘to refer to an attempt to count all the people in a country at a given point in time’ (Headrick, 2000: 76; see also Desrosières, 1998, 2008). But in spite of this strong emphasis on social inclusion, censuses also legitimate several kinds of exclusion. They distinguish and count particular groups of people; they create and legitimate particular social divisions; they identify ‘residual’ categories such as the poor and indigent, the disabled of body or mind, the elderly and invalids, beggars and vagabonds (Crossick, 1991; Paugam, 2005). We argue that the range of exclusions sheds light on the inclusive population politics of the modern state (see also Foucault, 1994, 1998: 137-59, 2008: 44-6). We do not postulate that the emergence of these exclusion categories is the

shift from the level of model to that of instrument in relation to the population is absolutely fundamental. And in actual fact, from the middle of the eighteenth century, the family really does appear in this instrumental relation to the population, in the campaigns on mortality, campaigns concerning marriage, vaccinations, and inoculations, and so on’ (Foucault, 2007: 105).
result of the censuses; obviously, the emergence of census classifications coincides with what is happening at ground level (Uprichard, 2012: 107). But we argue that these official representations rationalize and standardize the social into an administratively more convenient format. They not merely enhance state power; they make possible quite discriminating interventions of any kind, such as public health measures, political surveillance, and relief of the poor (Scott, 1998: 77, 343; Torpey, 2000: 8).

Historically our focus is more particularly on one national tradition of statistics: the Belgian population censuses. In 1846, about a decade and a half after independence, the first census was organised in Belgium by the homo statisticus Adolphe Quetelet. After 1846, censuses followed at regular, mostly ten-yearly intervals in Belgium (Quetelet remained in charge of the censuses taken in 1856 and 1866).³ In the following, we direct attention to the period in which concerns with the inclusion of the excluded became firmly incorporated into the self-description and raison d’être of the modern state. Our chronological frame spans about a century; we focus on the period before the Second World War (the census scheduled for 1940 was never executed because of the outbreak of the war). Our main historical sources consist of the official census reports –

³ Quetelet was a tireless promoter of statistical data collection based on standard methods and definitions. Both nationally and internationally, he gained a strong reputation for his approach to statistics and ‘social physics’. In 1841, he organised the Commission Centrale de Statistique in Belgium. In 1853, he organised, hosted and presided over the first International Statistical Congress, which launched the development of many methodological standards as well as of uniform nomenclatures applicable to all countries. Quite a number of contemporary statistical practices and classification schemes still build on these standards and nomenclatures (see, e.g., Porter, 1986; Desrosières, 1998; Beaud and Prévost, 1998). The following case-study may thus have broader relevance.
which contain the printed numbers, an interpretation of them, and a summary of the instructions to the census-takers and administrators. We hereafter discuss how the Belgian state, prior to the expansion of the welfare state and the firm institutionalisation of inclusion imperatives, aimed to ‘take care of’ its population – by providing social protection arrangements and thereby exercising ‘power over territory’.

In spite of the popularity of Foucault, we cannot build upon much research that has looked into the conditions of possibility of state-istics. While the census’ longitudinal series of ‘printed numbers’ are frequently used in quantitatively-oriented historical and sociological research, much less scholarly effort has hitherto been invested in genealogical analyses of the production of these numbers (see also Porter, 1986; Power, 2011). In the last two decades, a number of studies have contributed to the history of statistical reasoning (e.g. Hacking, 1990, 2006; Desrosières, 1998, 2008; Bayatrizi, 2008; Prévost, 2009) or of statistical bureaus (e.g. Anderson, 1990; Bracke, 2008). For a range of states, there also exist studies of the genesis of official classifications of occupations, religious adherences, or ethnic distinctions (e.g. Szreter, 1984; Desrosières and Thévenot, 1988; Curtis, 2002; Vanderstraeten, 2006; Wobbe, 2012). To our knowledge, however, there exist as yet no studies that look directly into the historical evolution of the various designations for inclusions and exclusions in official state-istics. By exploring this hitherto largely neglected aspect of the history of statistics by means of a case study, we hope to be able to throw new light on the articulation of ‘relevant’ or ‘legitimate’ distinctions and the elaboration of the complex interactions between science, government, and society.
2.2. Who counts?

For most of the nineteenth century, the statistical enthusiasm of Western government officials was not matched by the ability of local administrators to furnish the information requested, or by that of central bureaucracies to process the data. Reliable bureaucratic systems of population surveillance were hard to establish. Some ten years after the foundation of the new state, Quetelet’s Commission Centrale de Statistique became the central agency for the collection and publication of administrative statistics in Belgium. In 1846, this commission organised the first nationwide population and housing census, participation in which was obligatory for all residents. As Quetelet and others repeatedly stressed, the organisation of the census required extensive preparatory efforts, such as the introduction of a system of house numbering (B, 1846: XII-XIII; see also Curtis, 2002: 26-27; Tantner, 2009). Its results also had to provide the basis for a flexible registration system of the Belgian population (see B, 1846: LI-LII).

As in most other nineteenth-century censuses, the main unit of observation of the Belgian population census was the household in its place of residence. In the census of 1846 Quetelet introduced a household questionnaire to gather detailed information at the individual level. In each household, the household head had to provide detailed information about each resident. The 1846

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4 In England and Wales, the first population census was held in 1801; subsequent censuses were organised every ten years after that. At the individual level, however, one initially did not collect much detailed information. In the 1811 census, for instance, the census-takers gathered information of the following kind: ‘John Tubbs, bricklayer, 3 males, 2 females, total 5’ (Glass, 1973: 101). Not until 1841, nominal censuses were organized in which the names of all household occupants were taken. As similar developments took place elsewhere, it is not difficult to see why the origins of the
questionnaire asked for each resident’s age, place of birth, mother tongue, religion, marital status, profession, and type of stay at the place of residence on census day (habitual, temporary, *de passage*). The household head also had to indicate what kind of school education the children received (if any) and whether the household or particular residents received help from a public welfare institution. Similar information was requested from individuals who had no permanent home or who lived in institutions. Special schedules and enumeration sheets were distributed in ‘total institutions’ such as monasteries and cloisters, barracks, hospitals, madhouses, prisons, houses of correction, colonies for vagabonds, etc. The information for all the ‘inmates’ had to be provided by the directors of these institutions.

After 1846, the Belgian census combined two enumeration principles: the *de facto* principle, which calls for the enumeration of the actual population, and the *de jure* principle, which focuses on the legally or habitually resident population. Officially, the distinction between habitual place of residence and temporary residence was introduced in order to include individuals who were temporarily away from home on census day. But to avoid double counting, reliable ways had to be found to identify ‘temporary migrants’, such as students, migrant workers, fishermen, travellers, hospital patients, prison inmates, or soldiers in military quarters (Curtis, 2002: 26-27; Thorvaldsen, 2006).5 This not only required official

avalanche of printed numbers are dated in the period of 1830-1850 (Porter, 1986; Headrick, 2000: 59-95).

5 *De facto* and *de jure* counts differ in the way they put stress on the inclusion of some populations and the exclusion of others. The *de jure* principle puts stress on the inclusion of permanent residents who are temporarily absent on the census day, but it excludes temporary residents and visitors. The *de facto* principle incorporates everyone who is in the country on census day, including temporary residents and visitors, but it excludes
definitions of temporary absence or presence. The census-takers also had to reassign individuals administratively to places considered more appropriate. For sure, the statistical representations of the population could not but rely on a range of administrative conventions and interventions.

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Belgian government continued to organise extensive population counts. Many adaptations and adjustments were made, but the core of the census technology remained the same over this period. Censuses continued to be taken at the level of the household – although several changes were made in the way in which information was collected and processed about both population members without habitual residence (such as vagrants and beggars) and members of total institutions (e.g. B, 1866: VIII; B, 1880: IX; B, 1890: IV, LXIX; B, 1900: III-IV). Censuses continued to be conducted at regular intervals – although, following a recommendation of the 1872 International Statistical Congress to all its member-states, the project was shifted to the last year of the decade in order to facilitate the production of internationally comparable tables (B, 1880: VII-VIII). The number of items expanded considerably – although all schedules still had to be filled out by household heads at their place of residence and under the surveillance of local census-takers. New tools for data analysis were put to use (such as punch cards) – although the overall aim remained the same: providing a comprehensive overview of the population that would satisfy ‘the needs of most permanent residents who are temporarily absent. With two exceptions, the combination of both principles was practiced in the Belgian census. In 1846, the focus was on the de facto population, as the registration of the resident population was still incomplete (B, 1846: X, XLIV). In 1920, the Belgian statistical authorities invoked the mass migration caused by World War I in order to legitimate their near-exclusive focus on the de jure population (B, 1920: 1-3).
public administrations as well as those of science in its diverse manifestations: ethnography, history, economics and statistics’ (B, 1880: XIV).

Throughout the last centuries, the population census has continued to serve as an important ‘apparatus of knowledge’; only recently has the availability of a range of electronic databases led to questions about the political as well as the scientific relevance of new population censuses in Belgium (e.g. Surkyn, 2006). Hereafter our interest is not in the census data themselves, nor in their accuracy. We are, as mentioned before, interested in what interested the official observer, the state-istician. We attempt to reconstruct the genesis of the logic upon which the statistical discourse is built, the evolution of ‘the groundwork of bodies of knowledge’ (Hacking, 2004: 88). We direct our attention more particularly to the designations for inclusion or exclusion – in terms of ‘exclusion places’ and excluded populations. We do not argue that the diffusion of these designations is but the result of the census (see also Uprichard, 2012). As is well-known, however, the state is well equipped to insist on treating people according to its proper classifications and designations. State-istical categories may become categories that organize people’s experiences precisely because they are embedded in state-created institutions that structure that experience (Scott, 1998: 82-83).

2.3. HOSPITALS, HOSPICES, ASYLUMS OR COLONIES?

The 1846 census was the first to count the population of the new Belgian state. By law, all the residents had to be treated equally and uniformly. However, the last item of the questionnaire was intended to distinguish the needy or indigent (the term more commonly used in the census reports). It was used to identify
those who relied on public charity. In this sense, it was used to identify individuals with a precise legal or administrative status. But, as Quetelet remarked, this part of the census was less reliable than expected. He presented the aggregated data with great caution: ‘to avoid all confusion, it should above all be recalled that we deal here only with individuals assisted by the welfare bureaus’ (B, 1846: XXIX). While the welfare bureaus were locally funded, these data also depicted the prosperity of the local authorities. As some poor municipalities could not afford to finance local welfare bureaus, they also did not count residents who relied on public charity; as prosperous municipalities could entitle many of their residents to help, this resulted in an ‘exaggerated number’ of indigents being registered in these municipalities (B, 1846: XXIX). Although the Belgian census-takers continued to define ‘indigents’ as ‘all inhabitants depending on public charity, such as the elderly and the sick’ (e.g. B, 1866: XI), it should, in the light of these ambiguities and paradoxes, not come as a surprise that the Belgian statisticians removed the indigence item from their questionnaires after 1846. Nevertheless, their interest in the excluded parts of the population did not disappear.

As early as 1846 the census also contained references to needy groups, who could be more readily identified by the fact that they were maintained in institutions and thus lived outside the framework of the private household. In the instructions to the census-takers, special attention was directed to the enumeration of the indigents in ‘hospitals’ or ‘hospices’ (B, 1846: L; see also B, 1856: LIV). More detailed categories and instructions appeared after 1866. Between 1866 and 1900, the census-takers distinguished between the sick being treated in ‘hospitals’, the mentally ill or the ‘alienated’ [aliénés] residing in ‘hospices’ and ‘nursing homes’ [maisons de santé], and indigents staying in ‘charitable institutions’ [établissements charitables] or ‘with private families’ [chez des particuliers] (B, 1866: VIII, XLI; see also B, 1880: XLV; B, 1890: LXX, CXVII-
From the 1900 census report onwards, residences for the sick were distinguished from residences for the elderly and incurables. While the sick were ‘temporarily admitted for treatment in hospitals or in other public or private institutions destined to receive the sick’, the elderly and incurables were residing for indefinite time [à demeure] in ‘hospices’ or ‘placed in private families by a charitable institution’ (B, 1900: LXXXIII; see also B, 1910: 2, 28; B, 1920: 18-19, 109; B, 1930: 6-7). According to the designations used in the statistical reports, the mentally ill were no longer staying in hospices, but were forcibly interned [colloqués] in ‘asylums or colonies for the alienated and in nursing homes’ [dans les asiles ou colonies d’aliénés et dans les maisons de santé] (B, 1900: LXXXIII; see also B, 1930: 7).

The use of terms such as ‘charity’ or ‘charitable’ points to the religious origin or inspiration of the help provided to the indigent, but the differentiation and specialization of state-controlled organisations also reflect the expanding reach of the modern state. With Max Weber (1922/1976: 122-176), it might be maintained that the differentiation and specialization of institutions for indigents is characteristic of the development of a ‘rational bureaucracy’ that allows for the legitimate exercise of power over the population and territory of the state. The discourse reflects, moreover, the crystallization of a particular perspective on the reintegration and rehabilitation potential of these ‘non-members’. The differentiation of state-controlled organisations corresponds to differences in the

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6 Between square brackets, we provide the original formulation used in the census reports when some ‘translation’ was necessary. Until 1920, the Belgian census reports were only published in French. French was the only official language there throughout the nineteenth and early-twentieth century – although the questionnaires and instructions were send out in all national languages (French, Dutch and German).
expected duration of their treatment or stay. The mentally ill live more or less permanently in nursing homes, asylums and colonies; the elderly and incurables, such as the infirm, stay for an indefinite period in hospices or with private families; the sick reside temporarily in hospitals and other public or private institutions; whereas the less-identifiable remaining group of indigent people relies on the support of charitable institutions or private families for a less identifiable or less definable period of time.

The different places of exclusion to which indigents (sensu lato) could be confined also reflect different degrees of exclusion. Those for the alienated or mentally ill offer a good example. According to the censuses, the mentally ill were expected to reside in ‘colonies’ and ‘asylums’. The corresponding closure or exclusion is well expressed by the etymology of these designations. The French asile originally comes from the Greek a-syle (without right of seizure). An asylon was a refuge, an inviolable place. The Latin asylum refers to a sanctuary and reflects a religious connotation. The term later gained a more general meaning as a safe or secure place, a benevolent institution that could provide shelter. To formulate this differently: asylums are located within the territory of the state, but their residents can be subject to a different regime. The use of the designation colonie indicates a similar reference to territorial exclusion. This latter designation is derived from the Latin terms colonia (settlement) and colonus (colonist, tenant farmer, settler); the term colonus is in turn derived from colere (inhabit, cultivate, guard). Just as the asylums, the ‘colonies of the alienated’ [colonies d’aliénés] were states within the state – created and legitimated by the administrative apparatus of the modern state. In these places of exclusion, the residents could be set apart and counted as separate populations. In these places, one could impose severe limitations on the freedom of movement of the inmates,
but due to their confinement to specific social protection spaces, the excluded population groups were socially included.

In the Belgian population censuses, the designation *aliénés* remained in use until the census of 1930 (see B, 1930: 7). For the census-takers, the inmates of the colonies and asylums were to be defined as individuals who were strangers to themselves, who were estranged from themselves. The designation they used defined mental illness as psychological alienation, as an alienation of the self from itself. At the same time, the colonies and asylums were depicted as spaces where the self could re-gather itself. The exclusion space was transformed into a medical or psychopathological space – in which, on behalf of the state, experts could take care of the inmates and their problems. In other words, such classifications of the population do not merely register or reproduce ‘social’ problems. They also legitimate the progressive exclusion and subjection to expert power of particular groups of individuals – by inscribing these exclusions in a discourse that owes authority to its scientific character (see also Power, 2011: 37).

In the competitive political and economic environment of nineteenth-century Europe, the vitality of the population became closely tied to the larger projects of nation-building and modern government (see also Bayatrizi, 2008: 138). From this perspective, the poor were often the first subjects of social planning or social engineering. Our analyses also show the gradual elaboration of other exclusion categories, which correlated with other risks of unproductivity, deviance or illness. These categories reflected and reinforced differentiated management goals. The identification of hospitals, hospices, asylums and colonies as exclusion places legitimated far-reaching forms of surveillance and ‘normalization’. The distinctions were roughly commensurate with the depth of the envisaged intervention: the greater the officially perceived need for expert manipulation, the stronger the territorial exclusion.
2.4. ‘Pensionnats’, Schools, Houses of Correction or Depots?

In the Belgian population censuses, special enumeration sheets or bulletins were also used for ‘total institutions’ with explicit educational, re-educational and/or penitential goals. To various degrees, these institutions too were defined as places of exclusion in which the inmates could be legitimately subjected to ‘people-changing’ or ‘people-processing’ interventions by experts. Their inmates were identified as another group of excluded individuals.

In the 1846 and 1856 censuses a distinction was made between ‘boarding schools’ [pensionnats], houses of correction or ‘reform schools’ [écoles de réforme], ‘prisons’ and ‘depots of mendicancy’ [dépôts de mendicité] (B, 1846: XXXIX, L; B, 1856: LIV). From 1866 onward the statisticians also used the term ‘penitential institutions’ [établissements pénitentiaires or établissements pénitentiers] (B, 1866: VIII, XLI; B, 1880: X, XLIII- XLIV; B, 1890: LXVIII, LXX, CXVII-CXVIII). In 1900, a number of new designations appeared which remained in use until the middle of the twentieth century. The term ‘reform schools’ was abandoned and replaced by ‘welfare schools of the state’ [écoles de bienfaisance de l’État]; ‘houses of refuge’ [maisons de refuge] were added while ‘penitential institutions’ became ‘penitential houses’ [maisons pénitentiaires] (B, 1900: LXXXIII; see also B, 1930: 7). In 1910 Belgian statisticians also added residential institutions devoted to instruction or education of all kinds [de toute nature], as well as residential institutions for ‘the deaf-and-dumb, the blind, etc.’ (B, 1910: 28; B, 1930: 7).

These shifting distinctions and designations reflect underlying premises about the susceptibility of the different populations of inmates to disciplining processes (see also Dupont-Bouchat, 1995). The pensionnats and related
residential institutions are expected to educate their boarders; écoles de réforme and écoles de bienfaisance are expected to correct, to re-form or re-educate; penitential institutions must take in or im-prison; depots must store or stow away beggars and vagrants, and houses of refuge intern their residents [les personnes internées dans les maisons de refuge] (B, 1900: LXXXIII). From the perspective of population control, these institutions are hierarchically ordered. The designations reflect different degrees of exclusion from and within society. Proceeding from the top to the bottom of the hierarchy, we may distinguish between the pupils who are educated or re-educated in pensionnats, écoles de réforme, écoles de bienfaisance or other residential institutions, the delinquents who are detained in prisons or penitential institutions, and the beggars and refugees who are either stored in depots of mendicancy or interned in refugee houses. Again, these distinctions seem to reflect both the strength of the perceived deviance and the depth of the envisaged interventions.

In this respect, it is also interesting to have a closer look at the changes in the ‘fine distinctions’ between the inmates of total institutions. In the 1846 census, beggars are described as ‘those detained in the depots of mendicancy’ [les détenus des dépôts de mendicité] (B, 1846: L). In 1856, the census distinguished between ‘those detained’ [les détenus] and ‘those enclosed in the depots of mendicancy’ [les reclus des dépôts de mendicité] (B, 1856: XL). From 1866 on, the term reclus was not only used for the beggars in the depots of mendicancy, but also for the inmates of reform schools [les reclus ... des écoles de réforme] (B, 1866: XLl). In 1900 the statisticians moreover added the category of ‘those enclosed in houses of refuge’ [les reclus des ... maisons de refuge] (B, 1900: LXXXIII; B, 1910: 28). As a counterpart, the term détenu became used exclusively for the imprisoned.
The etymology of the terms may also shed some light on these distinctions and designations. The French term *détenu* is derived from the Latin *detinere*, meaning ‘hold off’, ‘keep back’, ‘keep away’. The term *reclus* comes from the Late Latin verb *recludere* (which comes in turn from *re-claudere*), meaning ‘to enclose’, ‘to shut again’. The terms thus have different emphases. Both the *détenu* and the *reclus* are included in society – but on the basis of different forms of territorial exclusion. The term *détenu* suggests a more active intervention by the state. While individuals in penitential institutions are detained and therefore ‘kept away’ from society, the various groups of *reclus* are ‘enclosed’ within society. The places of exclusion for the *détenu* and *reclus* facilitated and legitimated specific forms of population control, of surveillance, of intervention and of the maintenance of order.

In this respect, there exist clear parallels with the designations used to specify the exclusion of the mentally ill. As noted above, the mentally ill are forcibly interned in ‘asylums or colonies for the alienated and in nursing homes’. Delinquents are *im-prisoned*; their social inclusion is dependent on territorial exclusion, on detention. Refugees are interned; the verb ‘to intern’ is originally derived from the Latin *internus*, which means ‘within’ or ‘internal’. The statistically relevant status of beggars, too, is defined in terms of the complex relation between exclusion places, the inmates and the kind of surveillance and control that their confinement to these places made possible. The *dépôt* is literally a ‘place of deposit’. Beggars and vagrants are stored in the same way that objects are.

It might be said that no ‘agency’ is expected of these populations of non-members. About half a century ago, Erving Goffman has drawn attention to processes of ‘curtailment’ and ‘dispossession’ (of roles, of property and of the ‘identity kit’ required for managing one’s personal status and identity): the
inmates of total institutions are stripped of several of the rights and qualities which are commonly attributed to the rational, autonomous actor in the modern, enlightened world (Goffman, 1961: 14-35; see also Foucault, 1995). As our analyses show, the official discourse of the Belgian population censuses takes for granted and legitimates an instrumental treatment of the individuals in asylums and colonies, prisons and depots. These inmates do not have to be treated as subjects.7

This is also illustrated by the verbs used to ‘describe’ the relationship between these institutions and their members. These verbs express various expectations regarding people’s ‘agency’. As indicated before, verbs pointing to a somewhat active, ‘agentic’ role have been used in relation to the sick. The sick are temporarily ‘admitted’ [admises] for treatment in hospitals, while public and private health care institutions have to ‘receive’ [recevoir] them (see, e.g. B, 1900: LXXXIII). A less active role is assigned to the elderly, the infirm and the indigent. According to the census reports they are ‘assembled’ [recueillis] in hospices or ‘placed’ [placés] in private families (e.g. B, 1866: XLI). This is also the case for children; they are ‘placed in custody’ [placés en garde] or ‘placed’ in other private families or specialized institutions (e.g. B, 1910: 28). The alienated, refugees and prisoners, finally, are allowed to play at the most a passive role in entering their

7 One is also reminded of the Categorical Imperative, as formulated by Immanuel Kant at the end of the eighteenth century. In its second formulation, this moral imperative states: ‘Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never merely as a means to an end, but always at the same time as an end’ (Kant 1785/1993: 36). But the administrative apparatus of the modern state allows for the institutionalisation of ways in which the other (for a certain period of time, under certain conditions) does not need to be treated as a subject, but may be dealt with as a mere instrument or object.
residences. The mentally ill have to be ‘forcibly interned’ [colloqués], while delinquents and refugees are ‘imprisoned’ or ‘interned’ [internés] (e.g. B, 1866: XLI; B, 1900: LXXXIII). They are included as non-members, as excluded individuals.

From the state’s point of view, these different categories reflect different social risks (see Lupton, 1999: 114). These categories tend either to position individuals as particularly unproductive or weak, or as particularly dangerous to themselves or to others. In both cases, these categories both echo and reinforce calls for directing special attention to these individuals, positioning them in a network of monitoring and intervention. By including these individuals in exclusion categories, they can be made the object of intensive forms of social welfare – or social engineering.

2.5. Incorporated population members?

As noted above, the Belgian census-takers used special enumeration sheets for certain ‘total institutions’. These institutions were dealt with as ‘collective households’ [assimilé à un ménage] (see, e.g. B, 1866: VIII; B, 1880: X-XI, XLV; B, 1890: 19, 32). Next to the hospitals and hospices, colonies and asylums, reform and welfare schools, prisons and depots, religious organisations constituted the most important collective households. As such, these religious organisations did not cause much concern.8 Membership of these organizations was clearly

8 Of importance was the religious distinction between withdrawing from the world (vita contemplativa) and activity within the world – mostly in fields of education and/or health care (vita activa). In the light of the conflicts between state and church, statisticians were primarily interested in the active orders and congregations. For an overview of the printed
regulated; their members had taken religious vows (chastity, obedience and poverty) and had committed to spending their entire life in the order or congregation. It was also commonly accepted that all members had joined voluntarily, and that the convent constituted their place of residence (e.g. B, 1880: X).

In relation to the inmates of other total institutions, such as prisons or asylums, however, the ambiguity of the underlying assumptions of this statistical construction is obvious. On the special sheets or bulletins for the exclusion places, discussed above, inmates were asked to declare their habitual place of residence. As a matter of principle the inmates of institutions such as colonies, reform schools or prisons were considered to reside only temporarily where they were at the time the census was taken (e.g. B, 1900: IV; B, 1910: 27-29; B, 1920: 37, 109; B, 1930: 27, 158). Despite the fact that inmates could be assigned for many years (if not for life) to these institutions, they were not expected to reside in these institutions. Their habitual place of residence had to be somewhere else. These inmates had to be reported and coded by the census-takers as being temporarily absent from their last residence. But the instructions to the census-takers also testify to the difficulties encountered in practice in this regard (e.g. B, 1890: CXVII).

Time and again, the instructions to the census-takers stipulated that an institution such as a depot, prison or hospital could only constitute a temporary, but not a habitual place of residence for its adult inmates. Their last residence prior to their admission into the institution had to be declared on the numbers and debates in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Vanderstraeten (2014).
enumeration sheet. Over the years, however, several exceptions were granted. In the 1866 census, for example, the institution could be the place of residence for ‘the detained and the enclosed who have no parents, no residence, and who do not know where to settle after their release’ [des détenus et des reclus qui n’ont ni parents, ni habitation, et qui ignorent où ils se fixeront à leur sortie] (B, 1866: XLI). In 1890 an exception was made for inmates who did not belong to any other household (B, 1890: CXVII; see also B, 1900: CXLV; B 1910: 96). In 1920 the Belgian statisticians chose to illustrate the range of possible exceptions by means of a single example, namely that of the elderly and incurables placed for indefinite time in a hospice [vieillards et incurables placés à demeure dans un hospice] (B, 1920: 109).

For ‘minors’, the instructions to the census-takers repeatedly directed attention to the registration of those fed by or placed with a wet nurse [les enfants (placés) en nourrice] (e.g. B, 1846: IL-L; B, 1856: LXI; B, 1910: 28). In 1880 and 1890 the instructions also referred to the young placed in apprenticeship [les jeunes gens placés en apprentissage] and students residing in university colleges (B, 1880: X; B, 1890: LXX, CXVII). From 1900 on ‘children in custody’ [les enfants placés en garde], pupils in residential educational institutions (which now also comprised the apprenticeships), and boarders in the ‘institutes for the deaf-and-dumb, the blind, etc.’ were added (e.g. B, 1900: LXXXIII; B, 1930: 7). These categories had to be distinguished from ‘foundlings or abandoned children’ [les

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9 The practice of wet nursing was quite common in the nineteenth century, although the growing popularity of artificial feeding eroded demand at the end of that century (see Fildes, 1986; Golden, 1996). The labour force of wet nurses comprised two groups: women seeking other women’s babies to suckle in their own homes and women looking for jobs in service as maids. Under the category of wet nursing, the Belgian census-takers only registered women working in their own homes.
enfants trouvés ou abandonés] (B, 1866: XLI), and ‘orphans entrusted to wet nurses or placed in an orphanage’ [les orphelins qui ont été confiés à des nourriciers ou placés dans un orphelinat] (B, 1900: LXXXIII; B, 1910: 28). Only for these last categories could an institution of itself be the habitual or legal place of residence for the minors.

The increasing concern with the whereabouts of population members reflects the growing political emphasis on the resident population. ‘Temporary’ shelters, such as boats, sheds or caravans [navire ou bateau, baraque foraine, chariot nomade, etc.], too, were ruled out as legal or habitual places of residence (e.g. B, 1910: 31, 96; B, 1920: 18; B, 1930: 8, 47). But, in quite a number of cases, habitual residences were difficult to determine. As noted before, the census-takers could reassign people to places of residence considered more appropriate. Judged on the basis of the instructions to the census-takers, ambiguities of different kinds have continued to emerge during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. While the variability of the statistical conventions may be an obstacle to establishing historical long series or comparative tables (Thorvaldsen, 2006), genealogical analyses of these conventions also show how bureaucratic control was exercised over the population. Such analyses clarify how the incorporation of population members has come to depend on territorial control, on addresses and places of residence. The exclusion categories of the population censuses were closely tied to exclusion places; these exclusion places did not have a ‘normal’ status, but remained exception places.
2.6. Conclusion

In many regards, nineteenth-century statistics prepared the ground, and suggested a good deal of the content, for later sociology. It was conceived as empirical social science (or ‘social physics’, as Quetelet would have it). Following the original prospectus of the *Statistical Society of London*, for example, statistics were ‘facts which are calculated to illustrate the conditions and prospects of society’ (1838: 1). Statisticians tried to create order in the facts – not only biological (such as birth or death rates), but also social – that they collected. They developed a new mode of representing society, and hence a new object to act upon (Hacking, 2006; Gane, 2012). Their instruments translated the existing social complexity in a ‘legible’ and state-istically convenient format (Scott, 1998: 77, 343).

We have argued that the census helped to establish the practice of thinking of society as a population. But this practice also depended on the exercise of state authority; it depended on the exercise of ‘power over territory’ (Foucault). In our analyses of the Belgian population censuses, we have more particularly shown how the Belgian census-takers simultaneously included and excluded particular parts of the population. They identified particular individuals as both members and non-members. The excluded individuals remained members of the *corps social* (Quetelet) and thus part of the state’s population. But they were also identified as individuals who had to be treated, who had to be subjected to specific interventions. The statistical categories of exclusion achieved legitimacy, because the perceived deviances were judged to be an issue for intervention through action taken by public authorities and institutions (Scott, 1998: 3, 80). Put more generally: the modern state-istics contributed to creating
and representing an object, namely society, in the process of governing it as a population.

This statistical ‘system of thought’ was closely linked with the state’s interest in the productivity of its population. As we have shown, the different designations for excluded populations reflected and legitimated different modes of monitoring and treatment, different regimes of surveillance and regulation, different degrees of exclusion from and within society, different expectations regarding full membership of the state. In this regard, the structure underlying the exclusion categories of the population censuses indeed reflects ‘the regularities that determine a system of thought’ (Hacking, 2004: 90). The hierarchy of exclusion categories displays the importance of particular social parameters – and the necessity of monitoring and manipulating them. The state thus does not just make use of reliable data or facts produced by population statistics. The history of state-istics is in itself a history of the construction of authorized and powerful state-ments.

2.7. Bibliography

2.7.1. Belgian census reports


2.7.2. Other References


3.1. **Introduction**

In the last decades, promising research avenues have been opened up by interrogating the history of our most familiar and taken-for-granted statistical practices. While statistical data are nowadays routinely used in fields such as historical demography and historical sociology, the genesis of the methods and categories that define our representations of the social universe has only recently started to attract scholarly attention. The etymology of the word ‘statistics’, however, is telling in itself: statistics was originally state-istics, a scientific representation of the state for administrative, governmental purposes (e.g., Hacking 1991; Desrosières 2008). Examining the history of statistical forms may thus shed light on specific structural features of modern society – if only because the establishment of power structures is necessary to gather the information or data demanded by governments and state administrations.

In terms of theory, Michel Foucault’s late work has hitherto constituted an important point of departure for this approach. In *Naissance de la Biopolitique*, for instance, Foucault included statistical observation methods among the key bio-political instruments. He also noted the close relationship between the

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1 This chapter of my Ph.D. is forthcoming in the journal *Social Science History* as Louckx, K. and Vanderstraeten, R., ‘Household and State-istics: Cornerstones of Society in Population Censuses (Belgium, 1846-1947)’, *Social Science History* (scheduled for the Summer issue of 2015, volume 39 (2)).
elaboration of statistical methods and the rise of the idea of the ‘population’. Statistics or state-istics gave way to a new mode of representation. It led to the creation of both new forms of knowledge and new modes of intervention. It helped to conceive a new sort of object, society as population, which could be the target of both research and of policy interventions (see, e.g., Scott 1998; Curtis 2002).

In recent decades, some historical-sociological studies have tried to trace the genesis or ‘genealogy’ (Foucault) of distinctly modern statistical forms or categories, such as that of the inactive population or the unemployed individual (e.g., Topalov 1994: 312-50; Baxandall 2004; Vanderstraeten 2006; Wobbe 2012). However, the rise of the modern world also depended on forms of continuity with older traditions, on the incorporation (in one way or another) of existing forms or categories. In this paper, we will focus on the re-articulation of the household in the modern state with special regard to its state-istics. Following the Oxford Dictionary, the term has been used since the fourteenth century for a group of people (especially a family) living together as a unit; it refers to a domestic establishment (including any servants, attendants, etc.). It has often also been defined in terms of the common cooking pot: the household includes those who eat together at the same table. For the early-modern era, the household is widely considered to be the most fundamental unit for social, political, economic, and reproductive purposes (see, e.g., Laslett and Wall 1982). In the modern era, too, the social order is often perceived to revolve around the household. Despite growing heterogeneity at the household level, this social unit remains in most discourses the proverbial cornerstone of society. In the population censuses, which have been conducted from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, for instance, household schedules have nearly always been used to gather and process individual data. But how have the expectations regarding the household
as a distinct social institution shifted in the modern era? In our view, the history of social statistics may also be used to analyse the articulation or re-articulation of this notion.

A sociological history of the household, as it is depicted and defined in the world of social statistics, may not only add to the relatively small body of historical-sociological research of statistical conventions and observation methods (see Curtis 2002: 506; Ellickson 2008: 5). It may also be relevant for the large body of historical and comparative contributions about, for example, the size and composition of the household, the cultural values that underpin its modes of solidarity, and/or the forms of management of the state’s population (e.g., Laslett and Wall 1982; Wilk and Netting 1984; Tadmor 2004). In this paper, we intend to complement the existing bodies of research by means of a case-study of the Belgian population censuses. These censuses have been organized with regular, mostly ten-year intervals since the mid-nineteenth century. We will, more particularly, focus upon a period of about one hundred years: from the mid-nineteenth until the mid-twentieth century, when the ‘welfare state’ more actively ‘took responsibility for’ its population.²

In our view, the Belgian population censuses provide an interesting case-study, as it was the *homo statisticus* Adolphe Quetelet who played a key role in their development. Quetelet had already acquired a solid international reputation

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² The ninth Belgian population census took place in 1930. In 1940, no census could be conducted because of the outbreak of the Second World War. Without much preparation, the tenth census only took place in 1947. It was, moreover, a limited census (limited in terms of much information being omitted), primarily intended to take stock of the state of the nation after the devastations of the Second World War. In 1961, the next decennial census was organized. The censuses of 1930 and 1947 constitute the endpoint of the following analyses.
as statistician (or ‘social physicist’) when he established the *Commission Centrale de Statistique* (in 1841), tried out new procedures for census-taking in the city of Brussels (in 1842), and organized the first nationwide population census in Belgium (in 1846, i.e. about a decade and a half after its independence). While Quetelet remained in charge of the censuses conducted in 1856 and 1866 in Belgium, he also defined the objectives of the *Congrès International de Statistique*, whose sessions were actively attended by many high-level ‘state servants’ from countries throughout Europe and America, for more than two decades. As other researchers time and again testify, Quetelet’s focus on the development of uniform methods and conventions had considerable impact on a broad range of statistical traditions – both in the nineteenth century and afterwards (e.g., Porter 1986: 41-55; Brian 1989, 2002; Desrosières 2008: 7-59; Bracke 2008: 131-67; Randeraad 2011; Prévost and Beaud 2012: 49-62). Indeed, ‘those who attended pushed their governments to adopt a standard template for census making on the Queteletian model’ (Curtis 2002: 20-21). Although and because we are attentive to differences in social statistics in Europe and elsewhere, we also believe that a sociological case-study of the history of Belgian statistics and statistical constructs may have broader relevance.

Our primary historical sources consist of the Belgian census reports. These reports contain a presentation of the results of the census, as well as a rather technical part that reproduces the instructions to the census-takers and local authorities. We will particularly focus on the ways in which data about the household were collected and processed in the successive Belgian censuses. While the census questionnaires had to be intelligible to both the census-takers

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3 We refer to the census reports by the letter B followed by the year the census was taken. A list of all the primary sources is included in the bibliographic part of this article.
asking them and the population answering them, the changes in the descriptions and definitions of the household may reflect more fundamental shifts in our ways of representing society, and conceiving of the population. We therefore believe that the world of statistics and state-istics allows us to develop a sociological history of the household in the modern era.

Hereafter, we start with an overview of the development of the enumeration techniques used by the Belgian statisticians. We then consider changes in the representation of both family households and collective households, such as barracks, religious communities, hospitals or prisons. Next, we discuss the changing expectations with regard to the membership of these households, to the inclusion and exclusion of particular individuals as household members. In the concluding section, we formulate and discuss some more general conclusions regarding the ‘reorganization’ of the modern population and its basic social units.

3.2. Enumeration forms

Although a population census is mostly defined as an ‘attempt to count all the people in a country at a given point in time’ (Headrick 2000: 76), social statisticians have often distinguished between two definitions of the population. The total population may comprise either all ‘usual’ residents of the country or all persons present in the country at the time of the census. The total of all usual residents is referred to as the de jure population and the total of all persons present as the de facto population. In Belgium, both principles have been used side by side, although the statisticians’ emphasis shifted in the latter half of the nineteenth century from the de facto to the de jure principle. In this section, we
will trace the adaptations of the census questionnaires and enumeration forms, while the technical ‘improvements’ of the statistical armamentarium also embody structural changes in the idea of the population and of the household as its basic social unit.

In Belgium, the 1846 population census was mainly based on the *de facto* principle, which was considered to be the simplest and most efficient method at that time (e.g., B 1846: X; B 1856: VIII, XLV, LIV, LV, LXXVI; see also Thorvaldsen 2006: 84-5). The census-takers made use of household schedules, on which all persons living within the household had to be listed. Two types of schedules were used: one for ‘typical’ family households and one for institutions or ‘collective bodies’ [corps collectifs], such as barracks, monasteries or prisons. In principle, the head of the household or of the institution had to fill out the questionnaire. If the head was absent or unable to complete the form (e.g., because the head was illiterate), other household members or the census-takers themselves had to fill out the form (B 1846: L, LXIX). According to the official instructions, the census-takers had to control and, if necessary, correct the information provided on each questionnaire.4

The household schedule collected data about a wide variety of issues, such as age, gender, place of birth, language, religion, civil estate, occupation,

4 As a rule, one census-taker was responsible for one hundred households (see B 1846: LXII; B 1856: XLIII; B 1866: XXXVIII). Already in the 1846 census it was argued that an attractive remuneration was necessary in order to find sufficient competent census-takers: “Afin de prévenir les difficultés auxquelles donneraient lieu l’ignorance, l’indifférence ou la mauvaise volonté, il fallait que l’agent de recensement, partout où il se présenterait, surtout dans les communes rurales, ne se bornât pas à distribuer et à retirer les trois bulletins du recensement; il devait, en outre, être en état de les rédiger d’après les déclarations des habitants qui n’auraient pas été à même de le faire” (B 1846: 3).
reading and writing skills, and reliance on public support (see, e.g., B 1846: X, XXV). In line with the *de facto* principle, information about the whereabouts of all individuals *present* in the household or institution had to be provided. But the 1846 census also distinguished between three types of residences: habitual, temporary and *de passage*. Hotels or dwellings, where people stayed for less than one month, were considered to constitute *résidences de passage*. Institutions that sheltered individuals for more than one month, such as prisons, barracks or boarding schools, were called temporary residences. Generally, however, individuals were expected to be in their usual residence on census day (e.g., B 1846: L). For the statisticians, the distinction between these types of residences made it possible to identify and count the so-called ‘floating population’ (as part of the *de facto* population). In 1846, the individuals also had to be listed in a specific, prescribed order on the household form: the head of household, the spouse, the children, the in-living family or non-family members, the in-living servants, and finally the individuals who were but temporarily present in the household. Although the main concern was with the *de facto* population, this last category thus again served to distinguish between the floating population and the habitual, resident population.

In 1856 the individuals had to be listed on the household schedule in the same order as in 1846, although it was added that the children had to be ranked by age. But the household schedule now also included a field in which information on the habitual residence of temporary visitors had to be listed (B 1856: XXXVIII-XXXIX, XLI-XLII). In addition, the head of household was explicitly instructed to provide the information for individuals who did usually belong to the household but who were temporarily *absent*. The 1856 census thus also included and counted absentees, at least if they were expected to return to their habitual place of residence (B 1856: XLVIII, LVI). This may be regarded as the first
deliberate attempt to apply the *de jure* principle, as well as to distinguish between the *de facto* and *de jure* population.

In the 1866 census, the *de facto* and *de jure* method were officially used side by side in Belgium. On the household schedule, the list of individuals was to be divided into two separate groups: those who belonged to the household, whether present or temporarily absent on census day, on the one hand, and those who were present in the household but did not belong to it, on the other (e.g., B 1866: VII-VIII, XI-XII, XXXVI, XLII). A field was also added to provide information about their actual residence [*séjour réel*] and their habitual or regular place of residence [*résidence habituelle*] on census day. To guard against over-enumeration, the Belgian statisticians started to reiterate that individuals could only be member of one household or institution at the time (e.g., B 1866: XII). For each individual in the household, the degree of parenthood with the head of household had to be indicated, too (B 1866: IX, XXXII-XXXIII).

Following a recommendation made by the International Statistical Congress, the Belgian statistical authorities started to conduct censuses in years ending on a 0 (Quetelet 1873: 121). Therefore, the fourth population census, which was originally scheduled for 1876, ended up taking place in 1880. In the 1880 census, two extra census forms were distributed (see, e.g., B 1880: IX). Next to the household schedule, special forms were introduced for the individuals who

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5 After the death of Quetelet in 1874, the organization of the Belgian censuses increasingly became part of the routine practices within the Belgian Ministry of the Interior. The ninth and last session of Quetelet’s *Congrès International de Statistique* took place in Budapest in 1876. Its successor, the *International Statistical Institute*, was founded in 1885. The detailed guidelines and instructions, issued by the *Congrès* and its successor, provide evidence of the ‘path-dependent’ character of the statistical regimes in national and international contexts (Brian 2002; Randeraad 2011).
were only temporarily present in a dwelling on census day. A distinction was made between the individual card [carte individuelle] for the ‘strangers’ or temporary visitors in family households and the bulletin special, which was used to collect the same kind of information for all the ‘inmates’, who were expected to reside only for a limited time in the collective bodies. In 1890, these forms were reused but named bulletin spécial personnel, on the one hand, and bulletin spécial collectif, on the other (B 1890: IV, CXXXI). As such, it proved to be a relatively stable statistical innovation; together with the household schedule, both bulletins remained in use throughout most of the twentieth century (see B 1900: CVI-CIX; B 1910: 44-47; B 1920: 18-21; B 1930: 46-51; B 1947: 108-113; B 1961: 49-51; B 1970: 46-49). As a consequence, the ‘visitors’ were immediately set apart and counted by means of separate forms. By focusing on the number of individuals formally belonging to the household in its regular place of residence, the Belgian censuses also began to elevate the de jure principle above the de facto one (see, e.g., B 1880: LXXXVIII; B 1890: CXXXI; B 1900: X; B 1910: VI).

In the discourse of the statisticians, these ‘technical’ changes in/of the enumeration forms mostly constituted innovations and improvements. They were accompanied by numerous instructions to the census-takers and heads of households, who had to complete the forms. However, these technical improvements also reveal basic changes in the idea of population. The statisticians developed a particular idea – at the cost of others. In contrast with the de facto method that informed about the ‘real presence of individuals’ [présence réelle], the de jure method focused on individuals’ official or regular residence (B 1890, XIV). The de jure counts emphasized the place where individuals ought to be on census day, regardless of the place where they were actually staying on that day. Concomitantly, the criteria for household membership shifted. The first, de facto censuses registered all individuals who
were staying at the same place on census day as members of the same household. From the 1880 census onwards, a regular residence became a *sine qua non* for household membership. Only the habitual or regular residents could be registered on a household sheet; only *de jure* habitants could be counted as household members (e.g., B 1880: IX, CXXII; B 1890: CLIV, CLXXXVIII; B 1900: IV; B 1910: 2; B 1920: 3; B 1930: 5). The state thus became involved in (re-)defining the household and the conditions for individual membership of the household and the population. As we will see, the history of the enumeration principles and practices not only – mostly indirectly – informs us about the difficulties that this legalization process brought about, but also displays the practical and state-istical consequences of this shift.

### 3.3. Family Households

As mentioned before, the household is the basic population unit for the censuses. In the first Belgian censuses, the household was described as ‘the union’ [*la réunion*] of two or more individuals who were ‘living together’ [*vivant en commun*] (B 1846: L, LXIX; B 1856: XXXVIII, LIV). But after the adoption of the *de jure* method, the statisticians were forced to be more specific about the criteria for household membership. From 1880 onwards, they mostly defined the household in terms of habitual co-residence. Although the rather vague description *l’ensemble des personnes* was used in the 1880 and 1890 censuses (B 1880: XLV; B 1890: IV), the statisticians typically made use of phrases like ‘habitually living under the same roof’ [*résider habituellement dans la même maison/habitation*] or ‘sharing a common life’ [*avoir une vie commune*] (e.g., B 1880: XLV; B 1890: IV; B 1900: LXXXII; B 1910: 28; B 1930: 6). In its specific
historical details, however, the criteria for household membership also displayed some important implications of state-istical decision-making.

From the first census onwards, it was already specified that ‘singles’ [les individus de l’un ou de l’autre sexe, vivant seuls] could be considered to constitute a household of their own (e.g., B 1846: LI; B 1866: XXXIX). From the 1900 census onwards, the statisticians distinguished more explicitly between a ‘simple unit’, which consisted of ‘one person living alone’ [une personne vivant seule], and a ‘collective unit’, which was formed by ‘the union of two or more persons’ [la réunion de deux ou plusieurs personnes] (e.g., B 1900: LXXXII; B 1910: 2-3, 28; B 1930: 6).

Of more conceptual concern was the relation and distinction between the ‘household’ and the ‘family’. In the first censuses, these terms were occasionally used as synonyms (B 1846: XLV, L; B 1856: LX; B 1866: XI). At the same time, however, attention was directed to the distinction between both social institutions. For instance, it was stipulated in the instructions to the census-takers that live-in servants or workers had to be treated as members of the households in which they were employed (e.g., B 1846: L; B 1856: LIV, LXXII; B 1866: VIII, LXXV, LXXXV). In the 1846 and 1856 censuses, the information about the heads of households and their relatives also had to be listed prior to that of the other residents on the household schedules. From the 1866 and 1880 censuses onwards, the census-takers were more explicitly instructed about the distinction

6 But housekeepers and porters, living with their family on the premises of their ‘master’ or their ‘patron’ [leur maître ou leur patron], could receive a separate household sheet (B 1866: XXXIX). Following the instructions, they were often not considered as living together with, and being part of, their master’s family household. The census-takers were urged to make the ‘appropriate’ decision after having visited the dwelling(s).
between co-residential groupings and family or kinship structures (e.g., B 1866: XXXIX; B 1880: XI; B 1890: CXVI; B 1900: LXXXIII; B 1910: 2-3, 28; B 1920: 4; B 1930: 6). It now became routinely reiterated that households were not characterized by kinship relations (see also B 1880: XLV; B 1890: IV). But such instructions also defined ‘the facts,’ which the censuses had to inform about.

Initially, the elaboration of the distinction between household and family mainly provided the background for analyses of family and kinship relations. The 1866 census started to inquire into the family ties established by marriages. In 1846 and 1856 only an indication of marital status was required (with two options: married or widowed), but the 1866 questionnaire also asked for the name of people’s (former) spouse (B 1866: XLI). After 1866, it was stressed that married women could not use their own family name, but had to be registered under their husband’s name – even when they were no longer married, but widowed or divorced (e.g., B 1890: CXX, CXXVI; B 1900: CIV-CIX, CLIII). These women thus became defined by their (former) marriage; men were expected to represent the family households. In this sense, the censuses both confirmed and

7 In 1866, divorced individuals were treated as widowed ones [on assimilera les habitants divorcés aux veufs] (B 1866: XLV); they also had to report the name of their former spouse. In 1880, the option ‘divorced’ was included among the civil status categories, although an instruction to the enumerators summoned them to record divorced individuals as married ones (B 1880: LXXXV). In 1890, it was stressed that divorced women had to keep using the name of their (former) husband (B 1890: CXX, CXXVI). In 1900, married and widowed women had to provide their husband’s family name and add their own one, while divorced women had to provide their own family name and add their former husband’s name (B 1900: CIV-CIX, CLIII). In the following censuses, widowed and divorced women were treated alike: their own family name had to be mentioned first, while that of their former husband had to be added (e.g., B 1910: 103; B 1920: 16-21; B 1930: 40-51).
reinforced the subordinate position of women in the family household (see also Zimmermann 2001; Wobbe 2012).

Moreover, the 1866 census started to inquire explicitly into the filiation between the head of household and the other residents in the household. ‘Popular terminology’, instead of a formal description of the degree of parenthood, was allowed in order to clarify this filiation (B 1866: XLI). Among the examples provided were terms such as son, grandson, son-in-law, nephew, cousin, and uncle. According to the summary report, this part of the census questionnaire was specifically intended to gather information about ‘the filiation within households that bring together several generations of the same family’ [en établissant la filiation dans les ménages qui réunissent plusieurs générations de la même famille] (B 1866: IX). The wording of the item and the related instructions to the census-takers also shows that the lineage with the pater familias was considered to be a defining characteristic of each family member.

Similar items and instructions were used in the following population censuses (see B 1880: XLVIII-XLIX; B 1890: LXXXII-LXXXIII, CXX). But, after that the distinction between household and family had been firmly established, more response options for this item were allowed for. From 1900 onwards, residents without kinship relation with the head of household also had to inform about their ‘position’ or ‘situation’ [position, situation] in the household and their relation to the head of household. Among the examples provided in the instructions were descriptions such as governess, tutor, servant, pupil, friend and associate. In cases that the relationship could not be specified, the answer ‘none’ was allowed (B 1900: CLIV; B 1910: 2-3, 103; B 1920: 10; B 1930: 6; B 1947: 104; B 1961: 43). Like the family, the household was depicted as a unitas multiplex, as a structured whole (see also Luhmann 1990: 196-217). Perhaps this extension of response options first of all signals a growing awareness of the household as a co-
residential voluntary association that may bring together different individuals in different constellations.

In sum: the relative neglect of the distinction between household and family in the mid-nineteenth-century censuses may be seen to still reflect the traditional, lasting importance of the family household as the basic social, co-residential unit of individuals who share in common consumption and production. The emphasis on the difference between family and household, as it can be observed in the censuses of the latter part of the nineteenth century, signals the institutionalization of different forms of understanding. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, the household could no longer be depicted as a traditional and ‘natural’ reality. Gradually it became perceived as a voluntary association, even if the statisticians initially focused most of their attention on the natural, kinship relations within the family (as part of the household). In the twentieth-century population censuses, the family household itself became analysed as a dynamic – relatively unstable – institution, to which individual members might belong for various reasons. The social statistics rely on this Gestaltswitch, although the ‘printed numbers’ themselves do not shed light on it.

3.4. Collective Households

Because of its focus on co-residential groupings, the term ‘household’ could also be applied to individuals living together in ‘collective bodies’ [corps collectifs], such as monasteries, nursing homes, asylums, prisons, workhouses (providing employment for paupers and support for the infirm), barracks, orphanages, and
so on. As mentioned before, two types of schedules were used in the first Belgian censuses: one for the typical family households and one for the collective bodies (B 1846: XIV; B 1856: XXXVIII, XXXIX).

The extension of the term ‘household’ was, however, not obvious. In fact, the term was initially only used for the typical family households (B 1846: L; B 1856: XXXIX). In 1856 and 1866, it was added that collective bodies were ‘assimilated to a household’ [assimilé à un ménage] (B 1856: XXXIX; B 1866: XXXIX). From the last decades of the nineteenth century onwards, (several of) these collective bodies were no longer just ‘assimilated to’, but presented as ‘real’ alternatives to households (e.g., B 1880: X; B 1890: IV, LXX). In the censuses of 1900 and 1920, for example, both family and collective households were described as elementary social groups [groupe sociale élémentaire] (B 1900: XXVI) or elementary social collectivities [collectivités sociales élémentaires] (B 1920: 4). Such statistical formulations may reflect the growing social importance of ‘total institutions’ in the modern era. On the basis of their household definitions, the

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8 In international contexts, one also speaks of group accommodation or group quarter. The expression initially used by the Belgian statisticians describes the co-residential unit as a body, a corps, a social organism. This expression already conveys the idea of a differentiated and structured whole. In this sense, knowledge about the organization of the collective households was a priori knowledge. In the middle of the nineteenth century, it was not uncommon among ‘proto-sociologists’ to use metaphors borrowed from biology (see Heilbron 1995). In the following section, we will see how the Belgian statisticians defined this idea of structure within the corps collectifs.

9 Remarkably, even hotels and hostels were treated as distinct households in the first Belgian censuses; the inn-keepers had to provide the information for all their guests (e.g., B 1856: XXXIX; B 1866: XL). At the moment that the focus of the census shifted towards the de jure population, the visitors in hotels and hostels had to be assigned to other habitual residences (see, e.g., B 1890: CXVIII).
‘disciplinary institutions’ may be dealt with in the same way as the ‘typical’ family households (see also Foucault 1978: 107; Foucault 2006: 47). Interestingly, however, there were also differences in the way in which the meaning of the term ‘household’ was extended by the Belgian statisticians.

Special attention was given to religious communities, such as orders and congregations (see Vanderstraeten 2014). But despite the strong tensions between state and church in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Belgium, the statistical definition of religious communities did not cause many problems. For the statisticians, membership of these organizations was clearly regulated. Their members lived in splendid isolation behind high brick walls; they had taken religious vows (chastity, obedience and poverty) and committed to spending their entire life in the religious organization. It was also commonly accepted that all members had joined voluntarily, and that the convent constituted their place of residence (e.g., B 1880: X). In this light, it seemed obvious to treat these total institutions as households – characterized by a joint, shared life (e.g., B 1900: V, LXXXIII).

But more ambiguity existed regarding the ‘status’ of a number of other total institutions, such as prisons, barracks, hospitals, sanatoria, madhouses, hospices, homes for the elderly, or boarding schools. Census after census, the statisticians tried to draw a distinction between institutions that either temporarily or permanently sheltered individuals – such as sanatoria and hospitals, on the one hand, and residences for the elderly and incurables, on the other (e.g., B 1900: LXXXIII; see also B 1910: 2, 28; B 1920: 18-19, 109; B 1930: 6-7). Time and again, the census-takers were instructed to deal with institutions of the first type as temporary, but not as habitual places of residence for their inmates. By consequence, the ‘inmates’ were perceived as formally belonging to another family household, to which they were believed to return – at the end of
their posting, after having served their sentences, after having been treated for their illnesses, etc. In the population census, the inmates thus had to be reported as being momentarily or temporarily absent from their last residence. Despite the fact that they could be assigned for many years (if not for life) to these institutions, their habitual place of residence had to be somewhere else. According to the instructions, these inmates had to be enumerated ‘back home’ – in what was considered to be their habitual place of residence (e.g., B 1900: IV; B 1910: 27-29; B 1920: 37, 109; B 1930: 27, 158).

In other words: the census-takers had to reassign these individuals administratively to places considered more appropriate. In practice, however, this requirement often proved difficult to fulfil. Time and again, exceptions had to be granted. In the 1866 census, for example, it was noted that institutions, such as prisons and colonies, could be the habitual place of residence for ‘the detained and the enclosed who have no parents, no residence, and who do not know where to settle after their release’ [des détenus et des reclus qui n’ont ni parents, ni habitation, et qui ignorent où ils se fixeront à leur sortie] (B 1866: XLI). As of 1890, a more general formulation was used to indicate the special circumstances that could provide the ground for exceptions: the institution could constitute the habitual place of residence for all the inmates who did not belong to any other household (B 1890: CXVII; see also B 1900: CXLV; B 1910: 96; B 1920: 109; B 1930: 7). Only in exceptional cases, the disciplinary institutions could constitute households in themselves. Or stated differently: the statisticians remained cautious in extending the term ‘household’ to disciplinary contexts. Despite the fact that their definition allowed and forced them to apply the term ‘household’ to all co-residential groupings, they continued to use other, mostly unarticulated criteria to redefine the idea of household and household membership. Their
instructions reveal a hidden preference for a social order based upon family households.

3.5. A PLACE OF BELONGING?

Co-residence is the main distinguishing feature of the household. Obviously, however, co-residence has a social dimension, too. In this section, we analyse whether the household was also regarded as a social and emotional setting that embodied a sense of belonging.

Not coincidentally, the statisticians’ language was often formal. The household was said to be ‘formed’ [formé] (B 1846: L; B 1866: XXXIX; B 1880: XI; B 1890: LXX; B 1900: XXIV; B 1910: 3; B 1930: 6), ‘composed’ [composé] (B 1846: XXIX; B 1856: LXXII; B 1890: LXVIII; B 1900: LXXXV; B 1910: 3; B 1920: 10; B 1930: 29) or ‘constituted’ [constitué] (B 1880: XI; B 1890: IV; B 1900: CXLV; B 1910: 95; B 1930: 26). The individuals within the household were considered to be its constitutive parts (B 1846: L; B 1856: LXXXII; B 1866: LXXXIV; B 1880: X; B 1890: LXVIII; B 1900: XCV; B 1910: 2; B 1920: 10; B 1930: 5).

More ‘coloured’ expressions of belongingness, however, also appeared. In 1846, for instance, the term ‘membership’ was not yet used in the context of the household. While persons were included [comprises] in the household, only the family had ‘members’ (e.g., B 1846: LII, LIV). But from 1856 onwards, the statisticians also started to speak of household membership (e.g., B 1856: LXXXII; B 1866: VIII; B 1880: X; B 1890: LXVIII; B 1900: CLIV; B 1910: 6; B 1920: 29; B 1930: 10). A similar shift in the use of the term ‘belonging’ [appartenir] took place. Initially, this term was reserved for the family and its members (B 1856: LXXII). However, its use was extended to the household and household members as of
the 1866 census (B 1866: XL; B 1880: XLVIII; B 1890: CXXXIII; B 1900: CXCV; B 1910: 2; B 1930: 6). As we have already pointed out, the state-istical interest in intra-household relations gradually also transcended the level of family or kinship relations. From the 1900 census onwards, the statisticians adapted the questionnaire items dealing with intra-household relations to include non-family or non-kinship relations in the household, too. In other words: for the statisticians, the household gradually developed into a social entity *sui generis*, evoking a sense of belonging. Interestingly, this shift not only applied to the ‘typical’ households. We found similar developments for the collective households. They were initially described as *corps collectifs*, as organized social bodies. In the early-twentieth century, the statisticians occasionally also underlined the existence of some forms of ‘solidarity’ (as Durkheim would say) within all households (e.g., B 1900: XXVI; B 1920: 4).

From 1866 onwards, the questionnaires had to inform about the nature of the bonds between the household members and the head of household – not about the bonds of all the household members among each other. Perhaps mainly for reasons of statistical calculability, the household members were listed primarily as dependents of the head of household; they were registered as, for example, ‘the son of the head of household’, ‘the spouse of the head of household’, or ‘the mother of the head of household’ (e.g., B 1890: CXX). As we mentioned before, the procedures for the registration of family names also confirmed and reinforced the central position of the head of household. In the statistical representations, the relational network within the household thus was expected to revolve around the head of household. In the prototypical case (i.e. for the family households), ‘belongingness to the household’ was translated in terms of ‘dependence from the male head of household’.
At the start of the twentieth century, at the moment that an inventory of non-natural bonds was demanded, other forms of depicting the household structures could be probed. But the Belgian statisticians remained inclined to focus on hierarchical structures. This is perhaps best illustrated by two technical ‘innovations’, with which they experimented in the first half of the twentieth century. In the 1920 census, the Belgian statisticians introduced a special individual card for each head of household – in addition to the household sheet. This special card was used to gather more detailed information about these heads and their households and to separate this information from that of the ‘mass’ of other data (B 1920: 3-4). A quite similar special individual card was used in 1930 in order to acquire more detailed information about all married men and their offspring (B 1930: 10-11). Both innovations did not have a lasting effect; these special cards did not reappear in the censuses conducted after the Second World War (see B 1947: 51-52). But both these innovations make clear that the Belgian statisticians continued to depict the household and the family in hierarchical terms in the early-twentieth century. Heads of households and married men were singled out; the other members of the family or household were regarded and classified as dependents.

As we have already seen, the statisticians also began to reiterate the rule that every individual could only be member of one household at a time in the latter part of the nineteenth century (e.g., B 1866: XII; B 1900: LXXXII). Technically, this rule had to be emphasized in order to guard against over-enumeration in the de jure population censuses. Remarkably, however, the notion of ‘not belonging’ to the household also emerged – as a complement of the legalization of household membership and of the conceptualization of the household as a place of belonging. Its diverse manifestations have already been discussed. From the 1866 census onwards, those present in the household on
census day had to be divided into two separate groups: the members of the household and the individuals who were regarded as ‘being foreign to the household’ [les individus étrangers au ménage] (e.g., B 1866: XL; B 1900: XCIV; B 1910: 39; B 1930: 30). Especially with regard to the residents of collective bodies, it then became common practice among the census-takers and statisticians to focus on household membership status. In most cases, they had to reassign these residents to other family households. As we have seen, the variety of instructions and regulations dealing with the population of the ‘total institutions’ also incorporate normative expectations underlying the statistical notion of solidarity within, or belongingness to the modern household. Not all forms of ‘living under the same roof’ were considered to be of equivalent social value. The census-takers repeatedly had to distinguish between ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ forms of belongingness.

In the Belgian censuses, individuals have always been registered on household sheets – as household members. But the meaning of ‘household’ and ‘household membership’ shifted substantially in the era between the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth century. The distinctions that were drawn and the relations that were depicted in the households also shifted considerably in this period. The changing statistical perspectives on belongingness illuminate the shifting concerns of the state with its population; they shed light on the premises

10 All de jure household members had to be registered on the census questionnaires as household members, regardless of whether they were present or absent on census day (e.g., B 1866: XL; B 1880: X). ‘Foreigners to the household’ could only be registered when they were present in the household on census day (e.g., B 1866: XL). They were counted as part of the de facto population (e.g., B 1880: IX).
on the basis of which the welfare state developed alternatives to kinship and household dependence in the era after the Second World War.

3.6. Conclusion

Although the history of social science has usually been written with an emphasis on social theory, social science was from the beginning also a project of collecting and analysing facts or data. Much of this work was performed by state administrations. It was also bound up with systematic ‘governmental’ interventions. In this perspective, a basic task of social science in general and of state-istics in particular was to work out forms of observation and classification appropriate to the new, ‘modern’ social conditions (Porter 2012: 299). At present, it can also be maintained that statistics has become a way of ‘making up people’ (Hacking 1991). It has become a way to understand, interpret and reform social reality.

Our interest in this paper has not been in the observed facts or the data as such, but in what interested the official observer, the state-istician. We have focused on the administrative tools, which were constructed and reconstructed by the statisticians. In particular, we have focused on the variability of the concepts and definitions of the household, which have been used in the Belgian population censuses, and which constitute in our view traces of the intentions and conflicts that presided over the production of these data.

As our findings show, the mid-nineteenth-century statistical notions of the household were still closely linked with early-modern ideas and ideals. The household was perceived to be a natural, ‘sovereign’ institution grounded in kinship. The articulation of the household in *de jure* terms, which took place in
the latter part of the nineteenth century, reflected and enhanced the trend towards a ‘governmentalization’ of this social institution. The state not only became entitled to control and regulate membership within this institution; its state-istics also contributed to specifying ‘normal’ household structures or relationships.

Of course, statistical definitions of the household had to come to terms with changing social realities, with changing forms of co-residence in modern society, with new expectations regarding the role of individuals in this co-residential unit. But the process of defining and redefining the household was also one of endorsing particular ideas and ideals about the household. The state-istical and de jure view on the household also mobilized specific norms or evaluative standards. It disciplined and ordered the reality it aimed to measure. The observation and classification forms of statistics not only identified the cornerstones of society, but also depicted the ‘normal’ household in very specific hierarchical terms. They not only focused on the de jure population members, but also reinvigorated a view of the social order based on family households and their male heads. They not only distinguished between those who belong and those who do not, but also articulated specific expectations regarding solidarity within the household and the population. As such, statistics thus certainly do not merely collect scientific facts about the state of the state. The preceding ‘genealogical’ analyses have shown how the population statistics also served to produce and reproduce ‘normalized’ individuals and households. L’homme moyen (Quetelet) also is a result of the conceptual and administrative organization of statistics.
3.7. Bibliography

3.7.1. Belgian census reports


3.7.2. Other references


4. Population, Territory, and State-istics: ‘Habitual Residence’ in the Census (Belgium, 1846-1947)\(^1\)

4.1. Introduction

In most European languages, the term ‘state’ (état, Staat, estado, etc.) was originally used to designate social status or real estate. Only between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries did it become the name of a particular type of political organization (see Reinhard, 2001: 14972). Most dictionaries now define the ‘modern’ state as a nation-state, as an organized political community under one government. Its attributes commonly include: a clearly defined territory, a resident population, a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence internally, and independence from outside authority (or recognition as a sovereign entity within the global system of nation-states). Accordingly, there are at present about 200 political communities in the world that are considered as constituting nation-states. Alternative types of political organization are even no longer considered to be legitimate types (e.g., Tilly 1975; Rueschemeyer, Skocpol and Evans 1985; Beaud 1994; Meyer et al. 1997; Reinhard 1999).

As an emerging or actually existing territorial unit, the modern state has been assumed to coincide with the nation as an “imagined community” – to use Benedict Anderson’s (2006) well-known phrase. Each territorial state has been expected to be able to embrace the social lives of the people contained in it; each

\(^1\) This third case-study is submitted for publication to the European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes de Sociologie.
has claimed the right to monitor the condition, to promote the welfare, and to protect the rights of ‘its’ people. With Michel Foucault, we may in this light also speak of a new politics of belonging, of the étatisation of membership and belonging (Foucault 1984: 302-303; see also Noiriel 1997; Brubaker 2010; Surak 2012). In the modern world, individuals are conceived as being incorporated into the political order as exclusive subjects of a single state.

One way to illuminate this politics of membership and belonging is to study the instruments that states have used to embrace their populations. In this paper, we will present a case-study that focuses on one such instrument, viz. statistics. In the eighteenth century, statistics was understood and designed as state-istics, as a scientific representation of the state, its territory and its population for administrative, governmental purposes. In 1797 the Encyclopaedia Britannica, for example, described statistics as “a word lately introduced to express a view or survey of any kingdom, country or parish.” Statistics, however, not only provides scientific or ‘objective’ representations of the state of the state; it also rationalizes and standardizes its object into administratively convenient formats. Its history thus also displays the shifting interests and concerns of the state. Analyzing the history of the forms and categories used in state-istics may therefore shed light on the politics of membership in modern nation-states. In particular, it may clarify some of the “banal” or “invisible” ways in which states tend to take care of their populations (see also Billig 1995, 2009).

To this end, we present here a historical-sociological case-study that analyzes the politics of membership in a pre-eminent example of modern statistics, viz. the population census. The census is commonly defined as an “attempt to count all the people in a country at a given point in time” (Headrick 2000: 76). In most nation-states, statisticians opt for the household in its habitual place of residence as their census’ basic unit of observation. In fact, this starting
point has been so often used as to be almost invisible (e.g., Anderson 1988; Bracke 2008). By analyzing the implications of this ‘natural’ point of departure, and the various ways in which statisticians assigned individuals to habitual residences, we may, however, illuminate some basic expectations regarding ‘legitimate’ forms of membership and belonging. By examining the different ways in which statisticians and census-takers organize the population census, we may be able to clarify how the coupling between population and territory is articulated in modern nation-states (Foucault 2009; see also Jasanoff 2004; Carroll 2006; Malesevic 2013).

Our case-study focuses on the Belgian population census. The first census in Belgium was organized in 1846, about a decade and a half after its independence, by the statistician Adolphe Quetelet. After 1846, the censuses followed at regular, mostly ten-year intervals. Quetelet remained in charge of the Belgian censuses conducted in 1856 and 1866, but he was at the same time very active and influential at the international level. He created, for example, the International Statistical Congress, which first met in Brussels in 1853. The meetings of the Congress and its successor, the International Statistical Institute, were attended by many high-level ‘state servants’ from countries throughout Europe and America.² The start of its activities not only coincided with what has been called the “avalanche of printed numbers” (Hacking 1991). As other researchers time and again emphasize, Quetelet’s concern with the development

² It might be added that the Belgian state also constituted an influential early example of a modern state, whose political construction was widely used as a source of inspiration in the revolutionary constitution-making and state-building period of the middle of the nineteenth century. Quetelet’s influence on the world of state-istics was also made possible by the modern organization of the Belgian state and its influence in the emerging global political system (see Hawgood 1964; Desrosières 2008: 41-45).
of standardized methods also had considerable impact on the infrastructure of a broad range of statistical traditions – both in the nineteenth century and afterwards. Indeed, “those who attended [these meetings] pushed their governments to adopt a standard template for census making on the Queteletian model” (Curtis 2002: 20-21; see also Brian 1989, 2002; Desrosières 2008: 7-59; Bracke 2008: 131-167; Randeraad 2011; Prévost and Beaud 2012: 49-62). While we do not claim to clarify the state-istical representations of membership and belonging, the following case-study may yet have broader relevance.

Our primary historical sources consist of the official reports, which contain a presentation of the census results, as well as a rather technical part that reproduces the instructions to the census-takers. In order to contextualize these historical sources, we have also made use of reports of the International Statistical Congress, and of Belgian juridical sources.

Altogether, our time frame spans about a century. Our focus is on the period between the first Belgian population census (1846) and the tenth, which was taken shortly after the Second World War (1947). Within this time frame, specifications of the notions of habitual residence and resident population have not only come to define the state-istical representations of the state; our analyses also show how the classification schemes of the Belgian population censuses shed light on an underlying politics of membership and belonging within the Belgian state. In view of the path-dependent character of the development of the state,
it should not come as a surprise that these classifications have remained influential in the postwar period, in which the ‘welfare state’ has more actively taken responsibility for its population. It may moreover be added that the state is well equipped to insist on treating individuals according to its proper classifications and designations. It is able to use and impose its own instruments in order to distinguish between individuals who belong and individuals who do not, to acquire from its population the resources it needs to survive, to exclude from among the beneficiaries of state largess those parts of the population deemed ineligible for benefits, and so on (Scott 1998: 82-83).

In the following section, we trace the articulation of the basic principles used to determine habitual place of residence in the Belgian population censuses. Afterwards, we analyze how these general principles were specified for different population categories, such as military personnel, institutional inmates, or people without ‘appropriate’ habitual residence. In the concluding part of this paper, we briefly summarize how our findings shed light on the articulation of the coupling between population and territory in the modern nation-state.

4.2. PRINCIPLES

In the late eighteenth century, the notion of ‘habitual residence’ was already used in legal texts and contexts. The notion of habitual residence carried less legal implications than that of legal domicile, but it clearly implied more than ‘simple residence.’ It referred to the formation of particular habits, to the development of
démographiques existantes, c’est elle aussi qui décide de la structure sociale et économique du territoire donné” (BIIS 1934: 161).
a moral attachment to a place, to the establishment of a home. It also comprised the idea that each individual could only be morally attached to one territorial unit or place of residence (e.g., Proudhon 1798: 95-96; Sirey 1808: 453-454; Sirey 1809: 7). In this sense, it appeared, for example, in legislation on the territorial jurisdiction of courts. Courts were given jurisdiction over persons who habitually resided within the bounds of their geographical territory. In the nineteenth and twentieth century, the idea that a habitual residence ought to be established over a ‘reasonably significant’ or ‘considerably long’ period of time would remain an important element within all legal and administrative definitions of this concept. Once the statisticians had taken hold of this notion, however, they also had to specify what, according to a state-istical view, could and could not constitute a habitual place of residence. In order to reconstruct these decision-making premises or rationales, we hereafter pay particular attention to three cognate concepts that were related to, but also distinguished from that of habitual residence in the Belgian state-istics: temporary residence, legal domicile, and household membership.

4.2.1. Habitual residence vs. temporary residence

Although the census is mostly defined as an attempt to count all the people in a country at a given point in time, statisticians often also distinguish between two definitions of the total population. This population may comprise either all persons physically present in the country or all habitual residents of the country at the time of the census. The total of all persons present is referred to as the de facto population and the total of habitual or usual residents as the de jure population. The Belgian statisticians have traditionally aimed at including both de facto and de jure enumerations, although an increasing emphasis on the de jure
principle emerged in the latter half of the nineteenth century (see also Thorvaldsen 2006: 84-85). In the process, the meaning and relevance of the distinction between temporary and habitual residence shifted, too.

Quetelet’s official aim in 1846 was to count and classify the *de facto* population. But the census-takers also had to distinguish between three types of residence at the level of the municipality as the primary territorial unit within the nation-state: habitual, temporary and *de passage* (B 1846: L-LII).  

Family households were expected to be present in their habitual residence; hotels or dwellings, where people stayed for less than one month, were considered as constituting *résidences de passage*; institutions that sheltered people for more than one month, such as prisons, military barracks or boarding schools, were called temporary residences. Two census forms were used: one for the family households and one for the *corps collectifs* in momentary or temporary places of residence. For Quetelet, the distinction between these types also allowed for distinguishing between the resident population and the so-called “floating population” [*la population flottante et mobile*]. In the 1846 census, all persons physically present in what was counted as habitual residences on Belgian territory were also counted as habitual residents, while all persons in temporary residences and *résidences de passage* were seen as temporary movers, i.e. individuals habitually residing in or belonging to another municipality (and perhaps another nation-state).

 Attempts were also made to count individuals who were temporarily absent from their habitual place of residence; both the heads of household and the census-takers were asked to include information on absentees on the household schedules. But the statisticians did not yet put forward guidelines or instructions in order to distinguish between the individuals staying in temporary places of residence and those temporarily absent from their habitual place of residence.
In 1856, Quetelet made a more explicit attempt to identify, enumerate and classify the *de jure* population. While the different census forms for family households and *corps collectifs* remained in use, the structure of these forms changed in important respects. In the 1856 census, information not only had to be provided about all people physically present in the household. On the one hand, the household schedules now included a field in which information about the habitual residence of temporary *visitors* had to be listed (B 1856: XXXVIII-XXXIX, XLI-XLII). On the other hand, the head of household was also explicitly required to provide information about household members who were temporarily *absent* at the moment the census was taken. The 1856 census thus explicitly included and counted absentees, at least if they were expected to return to the household and their habitual place of residence (B 1856: XLVIII, LVI, LXXII). In comparison with the first population census, the territorial focus thus also shifted from counting people in different types of residence to determining temporary absence from their habitual place of residence.

The following censuses built upon and elaborated the 1856 model. The distinction between temporary and habitual residence became a starting point for the Belgian state-isticians. On the 1866 census forms for family and collective households, a field was added to provide information about the actual presence [*séjour réel*] and the habitual place of residence [*résidence habituelle*] of all individuals in/of the household on census day. These individuals also had to be divided into two separate groups: those who belonged to the household, whether present or temporarily absent on census day, in the upper part, and those who were present in the household but did not regularly belong to it, in the bottom part. Against this background, the instructions to the census-takers time and again reiterated the point that each individual could only be member of one household at any given time (B 1866: VII-VIII, XI-XII, XXXVI, XLII). The census-
takers were also urged to make the ‘appropriate’ decision after having visited the dwellings.

In 1880, this template did not change. However, special cards were introduced for individuals who were considered to be but temporary visitors on census day. While the head of household still had to complete the census questionnaire for the temporarily absent members of the household, these special cards were used to collect the same information from the temporary movers themselves. Both the horizontally split household schedule and the special individual cards proved to be stable statistical innovations (e.g., B 1880: IX; B 1900: LXXII; B 1920: 18-21; B 1930: 4; B 1947: 108-113; B 1961: 49-51). They had to provide a better picture of what the statisticians did not stop calling “the facts.” They had to ensure that the groups of habitual and temporary members were always clearly distinguishable from one another; they also had to eliminate the double-counting of persons who were enumerated both at their permanent residence and at the residence they were visiting on census day. The introduction of these technical ‘improvements’ also reflected and legitimated the statisticians’ focus on the de jure population of their state. They also showed how the state started to specify and impose its proper membership criteria. For example, already in the census of 1866, the last one organized and directed by Quetelet, only the individuals who resided habitually in the municipality were counted and depicted as its “real habitants” [les véritables habitants de la commune, ceux qui y résident habituellement] (B 1866: XLIV-XLV).

6 Following a recommendation made during the 8th session of the International Statistical Congress in 1872, the Belgian statistical authorities started to conduct censuses in years ending on a 0. Therefore, the fourth Belgian census, which was originally scheduled for 1876, ended up taking place in 1880 (see also Quetelet 1873: 121).
The underlying distinctions remained of relevance in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century censuses – as the Belgian statisticians built upon and elaborated the “Queteletian model.” But how could they distinguish between actual presence and regular residence? What constituted for them habitual residence, when physical presence as such could not be regarded as decisive? How did they separate the real habitants from the others? What kind of problems emerged when these definitions were applied? In the next sections, we will look in more detail at the interactions between this statistical view and both legal and common-sense representations of society.

**4.2.2. Habitual residence vs. legal domicile**

Despite their emphasis on the *de jure* population, the Belgian statisticians had reason to rely on the concept of habitual residence instead of that of legal domicile. For Quetelet, departing from legal domicile would lead to a fictive or false rather than a factual image of the population, while the census-takers would never be able to immediately verify people’s declarations about their legal domicile. In all of the Belgian censuses, the census-takers have in fact been instructed to register people’s habitual residence and not their legal domicile (e.g., B 1856: LXXII; B 1880: CVI, CVIII; B 1900: LXXXIX; B 1930: 27; B 1947: 50). Examples of differences between habitual residence and legal domicile have also

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7 It may be added that the results of the first population census were used to construct a permanent register of population at the communal level within Belgium. This register was to be regularly updated. Legal residents have since 1847 been required to report to their local administration all changes of domicile, both moves from one household to another and moves from one municipality to another (see Bracke 2008: 286-289).
been amply provided. Under the Belgian law, the partners in a married couple are deemed to have the same legal domicile. Non-emancipated minors also have to share their legal domicile with their parents or guardians. But, according to the census instructions, the habitual residence of married women who lived separated from their husbands and that of non-emancipated minors who lived apart from their parents or guardians was the place of residence where they were regularly living, and not their legal domicile. Following its own self-description, the main aim of the census was to provide accurate information about the real situation in the country at the moment the census was taken (e.g., B 1846: XL; B 1900: XC; B 1947: 64). In 1890, the legal domicile was even qualified as “strange to the census” (B 1890: CXXXV).

In this sense, the Belgian statisticians did not use the de jure/de facto distinction in a strict, judicial sense. It was, for example, not used to distinguish couples who are legally married from those who are just cohabiting de facto. The de jure population of a particular, administratively relevant territory was defined as the total of all persons ‘habitually’ living within the bounds of this territory. This focus may be seen to reflect and underpin the rise of “rational-legal authority” within the modern state (see Weber 1978). Legal authority is needed to define and identify the de jure population, but the Belgian state-isticians also insisted on the difference between legal domicile and habitual residence to provide evidence of their orientation towards “the facts.”

However, legal definitions of the situation continued to play a role in the world of the Belgian statisticians. From 1866 onwards, the census-takers were

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8 Alternatively, it is common in legal discussions to describe the habitual residence as a situation of fact. The habitual residence is “a factual notion and needs no connection with any given law system” (De Winter 1969: 428).
instructed to use the legal domicile to classify individuals who, according to the state-istical criteria, only disposed of a temporary but not of a habitual residence. Moreover, the statisticians also incorporated elements of the idea of legal domicile into their notion of habitual residence. While the notion of habitual residence primarily puts stress on past experience (the fact that a residence had been established and maintained for a ‘reasonably significant’ period of time), the notion of legal domicile includes some future intention. To establish a legal domicile within a particular jurisdictional territory, a clear factual base must be accompanied by an *animus semper manendi*, i.e. an intention to reside there “indefinitely” (e.g., De Winter 1969; Krebs 2011). As we will see in more detail in our analyses of specific cases in the second half of this paper, the intention to establish a residence somewhere for an indefinite period of time already played a role in discussions about the habitual residence of parts of the population in the 1866 census (B 1866: LXXV, LXXXIII-LXXXIV). From the 1900 census onwards, the *animus* was more generally employed as a criterion for defining people’s habitual place of residence. A temporary residence was defined as a place where people temporarily stayed without having the intention to establish at this place their new home (B 1900: CXLIV; B 1910: 95; B 1920: 8; B 1930: 5, 27; B 1947: 50). As we will see, however, the statisticians were more willing to invoke residential intentions for particular parts of the population than for others.

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9 In addition, for individuals with more than one habitual residence, the statisticians argued that the legal domicile had to be recorded as the habitual residence (see B 1866: LXXXVII; B 1890: CXVII). From the 1900 census onwards, the term ‘domicile’ was replaced in this context by ‘principal residence’ or ‘principal home’ (see B 1900: CXLVI; B 1910: 3; B 1930: 7, 27; B 1947: 50). People who had neither habitual residence nor domicile had to be counted as members of the *de facto* population (see B 1890: CLXXVIII).
4.2.3. Habitual residence vs. household membership

Since 1846, the Belgian statisticians have reduced the diversity of social, co-residential units to two basic forms or types. They worked with two types of census forms: one for family households and one for collective bodies or collective households, such as workhouses, prisons, asylums, sanatoria, madhouses, hospitals, barracks, orphanages, boarding schools, hotels, hostels, floating vessels, and so on. While the census questionnaires were almost identical for both types, important differences were imputed at the level of their territorial or residential commitments.

In the Belgian censuses, the *family household* was redefined primarily in terms of its place of residence. All individuals habitually living together were assumed to be members of the same household. Inversely, the household was understood to consist of all the individuals who habitually lived under the same roof (e.g., B 1846: LI; B 1866: XXXIX; B 1880: X; B 1890: LXX; B 1900: CXLV; B 1910: 2, 28; B 1930: 5; B 1947: 50). The statisticians’ main emphasis was thus on residential commitments, not on kinship relations. Not the family members of the household head, but the habitual residents in the same household had to be included as “real habitants.”

10 Against this definitional background, the household head was instructed to provide information on all temporary movers (visitors and

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10 On this basis, the statisticians also developed a strong interest in relations within the household. From the 1866 census onwards, they started to inquire into the degree of parenthood between the head of household and the other household members (B 1866: XLI, LXXXV; see also B 1880: XLVIII-XLIX; B 1890: LXXXII-LXXXIII, CXX). From 1900 onwards, household members without kinship relation with the head of household also had to provide more detailed information about their “position” or “situation” in the household (B 1900: CLIV; B 1910: 2-3, 103; B 1920: 10; B 1930: 6; B 1947: 104; B 1961: 43).
absentees). Against this background, it was also repeatedly stipulated that the habitual residence of live-in servants or workers had to coincide with the habitual residence of their maître ou patron. Even if these servants and workers were married and did have their own family, they could not have their own household. All of them were considered to belong to the household of their master (e.g., B 1856: XXXVIII, LXXXII; B 1866: VIII, LXXXII; B 1890: CXXXI; B 1900: CXLIII; B 1910: 48; B 1920: 10; B 1930: 6; B 1947: 50). The definitions specified and imposed by the statisticians thus also ‘bracketed’ other potentially relevant distinctions. In their perspective, the family household was defined as a territorial, not as a natural unit.

The emphasis was quite different in the case of the corps collectifs. In 1846, all individuals present in collective bodies were counted as part of the floating, non-resident population. In the following censuses, when the focus was more explicitly on the de jure population, the statisticians remained hesitant to treat a corps collectif as a relevant residential unit. The census-takers were mostly instructed to treat these people as temporary movers. They had to be entered as but temporarily present in the collective household on census day and as temporarily absent from their habitual place of residence. They could not habitually stay at the place they were physically present on census day (e.g., B 1866: XLI, LXXXII; B 1890: CXXXIII; B 1900: V; B 1910: 28; B 1930: 7; B 1947: 51). It proved, however, difficult to treat all (individuals in) collective bodies uniformly. It often also proved difficult to determine the place where these individuals habitually belonged – in the case of foster children in orphanages, paupers in workhouses, vagrants in colonies, aliénés and lunatics in madhouses, elderly in nursing homes, prisoners in penitentiary institutions, monks and nuns in convents, conscripted soldiers in barracks, and so on. People living in so-called “ambulant” dwellings, such as living wagons, ships or boats, also created
problems for statisticians, whose classifications are based on their residential categories. In the following part of this paper, we will look in more detail at some of these issues in order to further clarify the coupling between population, territory, and belonging in modern state-istical discourse.

In sum: the Belgian statisticians built upon the idea that there is only one habitual residence where the individual usually resides and routinely returns to after visiting other places. This habitual place of residence had to be a “matter of fact” (see also Latour, 2004). It had to be a *habitation réelle et effective*. Although there was no consensus on the length of time a person should have a place of residence for it to become habitual, the statisticians first of all distinguished between habitual residence and temporary residence/presence. Although there was no consensus on the strength of intention (*animus semper manendi*) that would have to be shown to establish ‘habit’, the statisticians also tried to come to terms with shifting forms of legal authority and shifting common-sense representations of residence or co-residence. In order to identify and count the habitual population, however, their means of observation and description intervened in the social and territorial order they tried to depict. As we will see, the recurring problems and difficulties, and the diversity and variability of the solutions imagined to overcome them, are also indications of how ‘the facts’ themselves resisted the territorial containment of populations by the modern nation-state.

### 4.3. Specifications

The specification of the rules for determining people’s habitual place of residence did not solve the ‘practical’ problems and difficulties with which census-takers
were confronted. In response to these problems and difficulties, the statisticians repeatedly put forward more detailed instructions with regard to specific population groups. Hereafter, we will look at the shifting rationales behind the instructions for particular parts of the population, such as the members of the military, the inmates of other total institutions, and the individuals without habitual residence or legal domicile. As we will see, these different population parts could not only be treated differently at the same point of time. The territorial commitments could also be specified differently for each group at different points in time. In our approach, this variability ceases to be a mere obstacle to using the “printed numbers” in historical and sociological research. At the level of specific population groups, too, the rationales behind the instructions/constructions of the statisticians are probably as historically and sociologically relevant as the many comparative and longitudinal data series which build upon the “printed numbers” of the population censuses and other statistics.

4.3.1. **Military personnel**

Census after census, much attention was paid to the classification of the members of the Belgian Army. This should not come as a surprise, as recruitment into the armed forces was organized and controlled by the state itself. In the decades after independence, the main basis for recruitment into the troops was one of selective conscription. A system of drawing lots was used to select the annual intake of conscripts, but exemptions could be purchased by arranging substitutes. Shortly before the First World War, this system was abolished and compulsory and universal military service for young men established (Warnier and De Vos 2010). But while conscription lasted for a period of three years for
most of the nineteenth and early-twentieth century, many changes took place in the ways in which the Belgian statisticians and census-takers assigned the conscripts and other military personnel in their barracks to ‘appropriate’ habitual places of residence.

In the 1846 census, all members of the military were counted as being temporarily present at the place they were on census day (B 1846: L). In the next census, it was specified that conscripted soldiers resided habitually at the place they were living before they had joined the army or at the place where their family was living on census day. For the census-takers, their habitual place of residence could not be the military garrison where they were stationed at the moment the census was taken. For the officers, too, the habitual residence coincided with the place of residence of their family household. If officers were living with their family in a residence provided for by the army, this residence had to be regarded as their habitual place of residence (B 1856: LXXII).

In the 1866 and 1880 census, the statisticians explicitly distinguished between two categories, viz. the conscripted recruits, on the one hand, and the volunteers and substitutes [les remplaçants or les substituants], on the other. For the regular residence of conscripted soldiers, the census-takers again had to list the habitual place of residence of their family household. The regular residence of volunteers and substitutes who belonged to a household to which they were planning to return also had to coincide with their household’s habitual place of residence. But for the volunteers and substitutes who had given up their home or who were not planning to return to it, the regular residence had to be the place where they were stationed on census day (B 1866: XL; B 1880: X, XI). The statisticians thus invoked the aforementioned animus principle here – at least for the volunteers and substitutes, not for the conscripts. The conscripts were not
expected to have their own residential intentions; they were expected to return to their household of origin.

Interestingly, sharp objections to this practice were raised in 1890. It was established that the members of the military no longer lived in their household of origin; their habitual residence had to be in the military barracks where they were habitually quartered (B 1890: IV, LXX, CXVII). It was added that counting soldiers and officers as residents of the place where they came from could easily lead to false or fictive numbers, as these people were in reality living where they were stationed. A more practical argument was added, too. If the members of the military were not defined as temporary movers, the information would not have to be gathered in two ways: via the forms for their original households (to be completed by the heads of household for the temporary absent household members) and via the special individual cards for the members of the collective households. Both extra work and extra problems (caused by differences between the individual cards and the household schedules) could thus be avoided (B 1890: CXVII, CXLI).

However, the rules for determining the habitual residence of military personnel were changed once again in the 1900 census. Practical concerns were no longer expressed. Instead, the statisticians returned to the distinction between conscripted recruits, volunteers and substitutes. For the conscripted soldiers, the habitual residence had to coincide with the place of residence of their household; exceptions were granted only for conscripted soldiers who did not belong to any family household (B 1900: XCV). But the habitual residence of the volunteers and substitutes was the place of residence assigned to them by the Belgian Army (B 1900: XC). To legitimate this difference, the statisticians now recurred to the distinction between obeying the law [obéir à la loi] and practicing a freely chosen profession [une profession volontairement choisie] (B 1900: XC). Following this
line of reasoning, the conscripted soldiers did not actually leave their family. They had only temporarily ‘interrupted’ their career to obey the law; they were expected to return to their family after they had fulfilled their legal duties. The volunteers and substitutes, however, were presumed to have established a new habitual place of residence as a consequence of their free choice.\(^{11}\) They were expected to belong to the ‘neighborhood’ where their own career choices had brought them (B 1900: IV; see also B 1910: 3; B 1930: 6).\(^{12}\)

In the case of the military personnel, classificatory changes thus did not only take place in the course of time; despite the fact that the members of the military often lived under the same circumstances, different kinds of territorial attachment were also presumed to exist for different membership categories at the same moment in time. Moreover, the history of the presumed territorial commitments of the members of the military also demonstrates that the

\(^{11}\) “Ils ont embrassé la carrière des armes comme ils auraient exercé tout autre métier. Il est logique de reconnaître qu’ils ont, par suite de leur engagement volontaire, acquis une nouvelle résidence en dehors du ménage et qu’ils doivent appartenir à la population de droit de la commune où l’exercice de leur métier les appelle à résider” (B 1900: XC; see also B 1900: IV; B 1910: 3; B 1930: 6). In the 1920 census, which took place shortly after the First World War, the habitual residence of soldiers, who served in the army of occupation in the Rhineland and who had not preserved a home in Belgium, was in their municipality of origin (B 1920: 7).

\(^{12}\) At that time, it was frequently contended that the possibility of purchasing exemptions by obtaining substitutes (cf. supra) put the burden of the conscription system on the poor (see Warnier and De Vos 2010). Remarkably, however, the statisticians defined the time spent by substitutes in military service as a voluntary choice. As a result of this distinction between conscripts and volunteers, members of the same household who served under different ‘regimes’ in the Belgian Army could also be reassigned to different habitual places of residence.
statisticians themselves had difficulty coming to terms with the implications of the classifications they used. Statistics is often presented as an objective or natural way of describing the nation-state, but the many hesitations of the statistical authorities themselves in the case of these state servants already abundantly demonstrate that there is nothing natural or uncontestable about it.

4.3.2. Institutional Inmates

The statisticians encountered different kinds of problems and difficulties in the case of institutional inmates. As mentioned before, they remained hesitant to enter collective households as the habitual place of residence of its ‘members’ (e.g., B 1856: LXXII; B 1866: XLI; B 1880: XLIII-XLIV, CIX; B 1890: CXXXIV; B 1900: LXXXIX-XC). The individuals had to be registered as only temporarily present in the corps collectif at the moment the census was taken – and thus as temporarily absent from their habitual place of residence. They were expected to return ‘home’ as soon as they no longer had a reason to be part of these collective households. On various grounds, the statisticians could thus administratively reassign these individuals to places considered more appropriate. In the course of time, however, a number of exceptions were also granted.

In general terms, the Belgian statisticians tried to distinguish between collective households that either permanently or temporarily sheltered individuals. For collective households that were considered to constitute places of residence only temporarily, no exceptions were allowed. For the statisticians, it would, for example, be “illogical” to treat a hospital as a habitual place of residence, because hospitalization was “by nature” but a temporary event. Hospital stays had to be compared with hotel stays (B 1900: V, LXXXIV, XCI; see
also B 1910: 3, 36; B 1930: 7; B 1947: 50). For “temporarily” hospitalized individuals who no longer possessed a home, their last residence or their municipality of origin had to be entered as their regular place of residence.

In contrast, the 1866 census accepted that the elderly and incurables who received shelter in hospices could be habitually residing in these institutions. Prisoners could also enter their total institution as their habitual place of residence, at least if they did not have a family or a habitual residence, and if they did not know where to go to after their release (B 1866: XLI, LXXXII). In 1880, much attention was devoted to the introduction of the special cards for the temporary movers, but the instructions to the census-takers did not mention grounds for possible exceptions. All individuals in collective households were expected to be but temporarily present at the place they were on census day (e.g., B 1880: XLIII-XLV, CIX). In the following censuses, some grounds for exceptions were again stated. Next to the elderly and the prison inmates, exceptions could then also be granted for the mentally ill in asylums or nursing homes, the children placed in foster homes, and the students living in boarding schools. But these exceptions were, again, only possible when these individuals did not belong to a family household from which they were just temporarily separated (e.g., B 1890: LXX, CXXXIII; B 1900: LXXXIII; B 1910: 28; B 1947: 50, 99).

Of course, the growing number and diversity of “total institutions” (Goffman) may be seen as reflecting the growing range of interventions of the state in the state. Interestingly, different principles were also called upon to legitimate and explain the interventions made. The statisticians compared the elderly and incurables in hospices and the children in foster homes or orphanages with the military volunteers. They argued that all these individuals had established a new home that replaced their former one. It was therefore legitimate to consider the place they were living as their regular or habitual
residence (B 1900: XC, CXLV; B 1910: 28, 36; B 1947: 84). A slightly different line of argument was developed for students in boarding schools, mentally ill in nursing homes, and prison inmates. These population categories were compared with the military conscripts. Following the statisticians, all of these individuals could be expected to reside but temporarily in these institutions – either on the basis of their own will or of the will of those who had authority over them, or in order to obey the law [soit par suite d’un déplacement dépendant de leur volonté propre ou de la volonté de ceux qui ont autorité sur elles, soit pour obéir à la loi] (B 1900: XC). But exceptions could be granted out of sheer necessity, viz. by la force des choses (e.g., B 1900: XCI, CXXXVIII; B 1910: 36).

A very different approach, finally, was developed for the members of religious communities, especially Roman-Catholic monasteries and cloisters. However, a number of changes also took place for this part of the population. In 1846, the members of religious communities were only counted as part of the floating, non-resident population, despite the fact that monastics promise to spend their entire life in one particular monastery and to remain tied to one place

13 As of 1900, as mentioned before, conscripted soldiers who had no family household could also be registered as habitually residing in their military barracks (see B 1900: XCV).
The census report only refers to difficulties that census-takers encountered when trying to include monks and nuns who had ‘withdrawn’ from the world in the population census. As the members of religious communities were – in their own terms – in this world but not of it, many of them also objected to being included in worldly systems of surveillance, such as the census. But while some concerns about the accuracy of the presented data are implicitly expressed, it is at the same time explicitly stated that all people on the territory were to be included in the population census – if only as members of the country’s floating population (B 1846: LXVI).

In 1856, the census-takers still remained somewhat prudent with regard to the enumeration of the members of monasteries and cloisters. They left it to the members of the religious communities themselves to specify their own habitual place of residence [le lieu de la résidence habituelle tel qu’il a été déclaré dans le bulletin] (B 1856: LXXIX). The census report includes no further details or instructions. Starting in 1866, it then was more directly stipulated that the de jure residence of these individuals was in the monastery or cloister to which they habitually belonged. If some of them were not present in their community on census day, their absence had to be recorded on the enumeration sheet (e.g., B

14 In Roman-Catholic Canon Law, a distinction is made between contemplative orders and active orders or congregations. In Europe, most active congregations emerged in the nineteenth century as part of the religious reaction to the perceived secularization of society. Its members were mainly active in the fields of education and health care. The active congregations did not require stabilitas loci from their members. They were indeed often defined as a kind of sacred militia, whose members could be put to use in a wide variety of settings under a wide variety of circumstances. But the Belgian census-takers did not distinguish between both forms of religious devotion. In fact, they often seemed ignorant of the difference (Tihon 1976; Vanderstraeten 2014).
1866: LXX; B 1880: X, CXXXV; B 1890: LXX, CXVII, CXXXIII). Following the statisticians, they applied in this case the same rule as for other voluntary workers (B 1880: X; B 1900: XXIV; B 1910: 3, 28; B 1930: 6-7; B 1947: 50). In the 1890 census, it was added that the monastery or cloister was likely to be the “final destination” of its members. Implicitly invoking the *stabilitas loci* vow, it was added that they were likely to live at this place until the end of their lives [*il y a lieu de croire qu'ils y termineront leur existence*] (B 1890: CXVII). Again, a variety of choices and rationales can thus be reconstructed during the time period under study for a relatively well defined and easily identifiable part of the population.

As we have seen, the statisticians gradually built their classifications upon individualist notions such as intention or free choice. They also referred to legal obligations or decisions that emerged out of “sheer necessity.” But they never directly inquired into the motives of individual residential choices. They made use of these notions in order to legitimate and justify some of their own choices and interventions. Convergences or divergences between the descriptions of the statisticians, on the one hand, and those of the population groups themselves, on the other, also inform about official representations of the social status of these groups. Only few collective households were routinely perceived as voluntary associations whose members were habitually attached to the territorial units where they gathered (see Weber 1946: 452; Weber 1978: 37). ‘Agency’ was not attributed to the members of all groups; ‘fine distinctions’ continued to play an important *a priori* role in the classifications.
4.3.3. **Individuals without (habitual) residence**

Despite their emphasis on counting all the people in the country, preferably at their habitual place of residence, the statisticians also decided to depart from their own doctrines – and either exclude particular residences and particular parts of the population from the census, or deliberately blur the boundaries between habitual and temporary places of residence.

Shifts in the ways in which foreign diplomats were enumerated or not enumerated in the census provide a good illustration of the shifting concerns of the Belgian statisticians and its underlying rationales. No special instructions for counting foreign diplomats were put forward in the first population censuses. From 1866 onwards, however, it was stipulated that foreign diplomats could not be included, as it was not possible to consider them to be part of either the *de jure* or the *de facto* population (B 1866: X; see also B 1880: CVIII; B 1890: LXXI; B 1910: 33; B 1930: 5, 27). As they represented other nations, they could be neither habitually nor temporarily residing in Belgium. Although they could doubtless be physically present in the country on census day, they could thus neither be included in the *de jure* nor in the *de facto* population count. The distinction here thus did not follow from the facts; it preceded the observation of these facts.

Other, somewhat similar administrative interventions occurred for people living in the “ambulant” dwellings. Although it was explicitly stated in 1866 that living wagons, floating vessels and other ambulant dwellings could be treated as habitual residences, this practice changed around the end of the nineteenth century (B 1866: XLV). From the 1890 census onwards, an ambulant dwelling could no longer serve as regular place of residence (B 1890: LXX; B 1900: V, LXXXIII, LXXV; B 1910: 3; B 1930: 10; B 1947: 52). On the census form for collective households, its inhabitants had to be recorded as being temporarily
absent from their former habitual place of residence. In the absence of a former habitual place of residence, their domicile of origin had to be registered as if it was their habitual place or residence, regardless of whether they were in reality living there with the other members of the household [elles y ont réellement ou fictivement leur ménage] (see, e.g., B 1900, LXXXIII; B 1910: 3; B 1930: 8). It was also stipulated that these individuals were counted as members of the de jure population of the municipality in which they had their domicile. Individuals who had neither habitual residence nor legal domicile had to be counted as members of the de facto population (B 1890: CLXXVIII). The argument was that these dwellings were not “fixed on the ground” [fixées au sol]. It was added that these individuals could not be counted as part of the de jure population of a municipality when they only temporarily resided within that municipality (B 1890: CXVIII; B 1900: CXLV-CXLVI; B 1910: 36). For the statisticians, this decision “necessarily” had to be made. It resulted from la force des choses (B 1900: CXXXVIII; B 1910: 89).

Related to this, it was specified that non-residential buildings, which were fixed on the ground, could not serve as habitual places of residence because individuals were not allowed to live there. For the 1900 census, the examples provided in the census report included administrative buildings, post or telegraph offices, churches, museums, factories, mills, ateliers, railway stations, and so on. Exceptions were possible if parts of these buildings were designed and constructed for dwelling purposes, as for janitors or wardens, but only on condition that these inhabitants had no other habitual place of residence (e.g., B 1900: CXLII; B 1947: 69).

In the opposite direction, in the 1920 census it was added that the provisory constructions in which victims of the First World War were living could be considered habitual places of residence. Even if these victims no longer had a
home, they had to be attributed a habitual place of residence. Two options were presented. If the victims intended to return to the municipality in which they had originally been living, they had to be counted as residents of their place of origin; if the victims had other intentions or were still uncertain about where to settle, they had to be attributed to the municipality in which they were temporarily residing on census day (B 1920: 8). In the 1947 census, related but also somewhat different rules were created for those victims of the Second World War who had had to abandon their home and had not yet found another one. It was stated that the habitual residence of these individuals was the place where their home used to be located. In addition, all individuals who had had to leave the country during the war (prisoners of war, political prisoners, deported individuals, forced laborers) and who had not yet returned on census day were counted as de jure residents – at least if they had kept a home in Belgium or intended to return to Belgium, and when their absence was not caused by a conviction (B 1947: 51-52).

4.4. Conclusion

We have thus far analyzed the articulation of the notion of habitual residence in the Belgian population censuses. Following the (Belgian) statisticians, this habitual residence is the place where the individual usually resides and routinely returns to after visiting other places. In order to allow for a scientific, objective description of the state of the state, it needs to be a “matter of fact.” Our analyses have focused on both the elaboration of the basic principles for determining such territorial commitments and the specifications for particular population groups. We have not only pointed to the variability of the conventions used to determine this “matter of fact.” We have also drawn attention to the increase of detailed instructions for assigning habitual residences to a broad
range of distinct population groups in the course of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. Seen from this historical-sociological perspective, the history of state-istics sheds light on the politics of membership and belonging in the Belgian state.

Even if some of the specifications we reconstructed may appear quite odd, none is arbitrary or insignificant, since the range of options available is determined by the basic premises and properties of the statistical classification system. In part, this is a consequence of the path-dependent structure of the censuses: the range of options is at each moment limited by the interventions that have been made in the past. In part, this is also a consequence of the fact that these classification schemes possess ‘systemic’ qualities: none of their elements can be completely determined without taking into account its place in the overall structure.

As we have seen, the articulation of the notion of habitual residence enabled Quetelet and his successors to direct attention to what was increasingly considered to be the ‘relevant’ population of the state, viz. the de jure population. Ostensibly technical improvements in the census methodology first introduced and then built upon the distinctions between those who regularly reside on Belgian territory and those who do so only temporarily or momentarily, between those who are considered to be real habitants and those who are not, and between those who belong to the nation-state and those who do not (or only partially). “What counts” has been cast and recast in ways that build on or depart from the coupling between population and territory, between individual and habitual place of residence. Even in scientific or objective descriptions of the state of the state, only individuals who regularly reside in a given municipality are counted as its “real habitants.”
In many regards, the state-istical interventions have also become increasingly direct and intrusive. Individualist notions such as intention or free choice (i.e. agency) were invoked to clarify or legitimate certain options, but the statisticians never directly inquired into the residential commitments of individual people. They used these notions to justify their own choices and interventions. As we have seen, the statisticians also considered an increasing number of population groups to be ‘deviant.’ Its members were not counted on the place they were physically present at the time the census was taken; they were, on various grounds, reassigned to places considered more appropriate. Individual ‘agency’ was never attributed to the members of all groups. The nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century history of state-istics hence shows how the Belgian state and its statisticians have tried to manage ‘their’ population. Without postulating a strict correspondence between this state-istical system and other kinds of state interventions, our analyses hence also shed light on the differentia specifica of what with Foucault and others may be called the étatisation of membership in society (Foucault 1984).

In the course of the last centuries, nation-states have subjected their population to ever-more sophisticated technologies of regulation and control. It often remains difficult to contest and hence politicize the properties and premises of these technologies. The census methodology, as shaped by Quetelet and others in the nineteenth century, shows how nation-states have used their territorial organization to embrace ‘their’ populations. It shows how the scientific or objective representations of the state of the state have from the very beginning built upon and legitimated particular politics of membership or belonging. The history of this state-istical system is also a history of the struggles over belonging in and to the nation-state. It is also a history of the doubts or contestations regarding de jure membership status for particular parts of the
population. The census not only generates facts about the population; it also creates facts to act upon.

4.5. **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

4.5.1. **BELGIAN CENSUS REPORTS**


4.5.2. Other references


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5. THE NATION-STATE IN ITS STATE-ISTICS (BELGIUM, 1846-1947)\(^1\)

5.1. INTRODUCTION

The term ‘statistics’ was first used in the eighteenth century. For Gottfried Achenwall, the author of the influential *Abriss der Staatswissenschaft der europäischen Reiche* (1749), the term referred to the study of the state (*Staatswissenschaft*). In the latter part of the eighteenth century, the term also appeared in English. In 1797 the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* described statistics as ‘a word lately introduced to express a view or survey of any kingdom, country or parish’. During most of the nineteenth century, the etymology of the term ‘statistics’ was still much alive: statistics meant state-istics, the empirical or scientific study of the state.

The rise of statistics and other information systems is linked with fundamental social and cultural changes that took place in that period (see, e.g., Headrick 2000). State-istics had to cover the growing need for information in the emerging ‘enlightened’ political regimes in Europe. Absolutist monarchs could still refer to their divine right to rule in their own personal or dynastic interests, as though these were the only interests they had to consider. In contrast, enlightened politics implied that monarchs ruled for the benefit of their subjects or citizens. Knowing what was in the interest of one’s people, however, required a lot more information than knowing one’s own personal or family interests.

\(^1\) This final case-study has not yet been submitted for publication.
Since the nineteenth century, numbers and statistics have become basic parts of the bureaucratic machinery of modern states.

Ian Hacking (1990, 1991) has used the phrase ‘avalanche of printed numbers’ to characterize the rapid development of information technologies and the growing scale of statistics in the nineteenth century. For illustrative purposes, he refers to the United States census and its expansion. In 1790, the first census asked four questions of each household. In 1880, the tenth census posed 13,010 questions in various questionnaires addressing people, firms, farms, hospitals, churches and more. Statistical thinking has thus also been implanted in a bureaucratic machinery. Behind the rise of state-istics and the avalanche of printed numbers, as Hacking puts it, ‘lay new technologies for classifying and enumerating, and new bureaucracies with the authority and continuity to deploy the technology’ (1990: 2-3). It may be added that censuses and other statistics not only provide objective or scientific representations of the state. They also depict their object in state-istically relevant formats. Modern states not only introduce and make use of particular distinctions to classify and enumerate their population; they are also well equipped to insist on treating their people according to their proper classifications and designations (see Scott 1998: 82-83). Seen in this light, the history of state-istics and of state-istical concepts and classifications may shed light on the shifting interests and concerns of the modern state.

In this paper, we will present a historical-sociological case-study that focuses on the ways in which the modern state has come to conceive of itself as a nation-state, on the modifications in the definition of national identity and national citizenship in the population census. The census is commonly defined as an ‘attempt to count all the people in a country at a given point in time’ (Headrick 2000: 76). In the census, the statisticians typically included a range of questions
about the socio-economic situation of households and their individual members. However, they also inquired into the ‘nation’ and its citizens. They also explored ways to legitimize the existence of the nation-state and to distinguish between members and non-members, nationals and foreigners. By tracing the ways in which the ‘nation’ (as idea and as community) was delineated, we hope to illuminate the tensions and conflicts that presided over the production of some basic modern state-istical concepts and categories.

We will, more particularly, present a historical-sociological analysis of the population censuses conducted in Belgium. We believe that Belgium allows for a particularly interesting case-study, not only because of the specific characteristics of the Belgian nation-state, which resulted in the second half of the twentieth century in fundamental processes of state-reform, but also because of the fact that the Belgian homo statisticus Adolphe Quetelet played a key role in the development of population censuses and state-istics – both nationally and internationally. Perhaps the following case-study therefore also has some broader relevance. The time frame of our analysis consists of a period of about one century: from the first Belgian population census taken in 1846 until the tenth population census conducted in 1947. As we will see, it is in this time period that contemporary representations of the Belgian nation-state and its state-citizenship emerged.

Our primary historical sources consist of the Belgian census reports. These reports contain a presentation of the results of the census, as well as a rather technical part that reproduces the instructions to the census-takers. We will refer to these reports by the letter B followed by the year the census was taken. In

\[2\] The Belgian censuses take place with regular, mostly decennial intervals. Under Quetelet, the first ones were organized in 1846, 1856 and 1866. Afterwards the Belgian
order to contextualize these historical sources, we have also made use of reports of international statistical organizations, such as the *International Statistical Congress*, and of Belgian juridical sources, such as the Belgian Constitution and the Belgian Civil Code.

In the Belgian censuses, three different items have been connected with the nation-state as such: language, place of birth, and nationality. Hereafter we will first discuss the language question and its modifications in the course of time. While language is said to have a relatively defined territorial component in the modern era (Gellner 1983; Rokkan 1999), the idea of ‘one nation, one language’ was also contested in Belgium. We show how language has become the source of relatively strong social and cultural cleavages within the Belgian nation-state – with the well-known tensions between its different linguistic communities in the second half of the twentieth century. Afterwards we analyse the ways in which data about each individual’s birthplace and national citizenship were collected and processed in the Belgian censuses. These analyses also show how definitions of national identity correspond with changing state-istical interests in managing and controlling migration in a world characterized by increasing transnational mobility. In the final section, we conclude with a discussion of the historical and contemporary relevance of the distinction between insiders and outsiders, or nationals and foreigners for the project of nation-building within Belgium.

Statisticians followed a suggestion made by the *International Statistical Congress* (which aimed at facilitating international comparisons) and started to organize the census in years ending with a 0. Due to the outbreak of the Second World War, no census could take place in 1940. The tenth census only took place in 1947; it also was a limited one, which was primarily intended to take stock of the state of the state after the devastations of the War.
5.2. RELIGION AND LANGUAGE

In early-nineteenth century Europe, the idea had started to gain ground that language and territory were (or had to be) inextricably linked. One more or less standardized and unified language was increasingly seen as an identifying marker for a particular state; knowledge of ‘its’ language also became an essential requirement for social mobility in the state (see Burke 2004; Edwards 2009). Peter Burke (2004: 10), for example, refers to the French priest and politician Henri Grégoire, who at the time of the French Revolution started to propagate the teaching of Standard French all over France in order to ‘fondre tous les citoyens dans une masse nationale’ (melt all citizens into a national mass).³

However, the nineteenth century not only saw the development of direct links between territorial and linguistic unity. In various parts of Europe, linguistic diversity also gained ground. Several ‘other’ languages used, or formerly used, within the territory of the state could be revived. Examples include the Frisian, Norwegian or Finnish movements. It was also in the context of this struggle between unifying forces and, to some extent, diversifying forces, that Belgium was founded in 1830.

At the Congress of Vienna in 1814, the Southern Netherlands had been united with the Northern Netherlands to form the United Kingdom of the

³ The first census also inquired into religious adherence. It was concluded that almost the entire population adhered to Catholicism (B 1846: XXXVII). The following population censuses, however, did not again include an item about religion. In our source materials, we found no explanation for this shift. But we may speculate that the ideological tensions in Belgium in the second half of the nineteenth century made the inclusion of this item too controversial.
Netherlands. But a range of social differences created obstacles for the unification policies of King William I. Especially religious matters (the Protestant North versus the Catholic South) were important in the conflict preceding the separation. The language issue also played a role in the conflict. William’s language policy had aimed at uniting the two regions under a common Dutch language. After the Belgian Revolution, the new Constitution guaranteed freedom of language (Servais, Mechelynck, Servais and Schnock 1933: 5). In practice, however, French was perceived as the more prestigious language and quickly replaced Dutch in all official domains and official functions (see, e.g., Dubois 2005; Vandenbussche 2007; Wils 2009). French was not only the language of enlightenment, progress and modernity; above all, it also was a symbol for the national struggle for independence (Vandenbussche 2007).

The census reports were drafted in French only until 1930. With the exception of the 1856 census, all censuses taken between 1846 and 1947 included language items. In the first Belgian census, the statisticians defined language as one of the most enduring distinguishing features of people or populations. The census included, more particularly, a question on the habitually spoken language [la langue parlée habituellement] (B 1846: LV). People were asked to declare the language they most frequently used. No options were specified; the respondents could fill in any language. In the summary tables with

4 ‘Parmi les caractères qui distinguent les populations entre elles, l’un des plus inaltérables est sans contredit le langage’ (B 1846: XXXVI). In the second half of the nineteenth century, similar ideas prevailed at the level of the International Statistical Congress. Language was referred to as the core marker of nationality; concomitantly, language items had to be used to obtain information about the different nationalities within a state (e.g., Commission Permanente du Congrès International de Statistique 1874: 11, 37-38, 43).
the results, the statisticians grouped the data in the following categories: French or Walloon (which they considered to be a variety of Standard French), Flemish or Hollandish (which was considered to be a variety of Flemish), German, English, and other languages (B 1846: XXXVII). The figures presented made clear that the majority of the Belgian population spoke either French or Flemish, while German was spoken in parts of the Belgian province of Luxembourg. The statisticians added that all other languages were only used by a small group of migrant workers and merchants, and by foreigners who were only temporarily residing in Belgium (B 1846: XXXVII).

In the 1846 census report, the Belgian statisticians also invoked the authority of ‘philologists’ to refer to the unifying force of a common, standardized language. In their view, the line of demarcation between the French- and Flemish-speaking populations was a symptom of more fundamental social divisions within the Belgian state [le peuple belge se trouve divisé sous le rapport du langage parlé] (B 1846: XXXVI).

Without any explanation, the 1856 census questionnaire entailed no item about language. But, as of 1866, new attempts were made to inquire into the linguistic identity of the population of the Belgian nation-state. The statisticians also rephrased the language item. In 1866, the aim was no longer to collect data about the variety of languages spoken within the country. Instead the statisticians started to collect information about the ability of citizens to speak French, Flemish or German. The statisticians seemed to distance themselves from the idea of ‘one state, one nation, one language’. They now depicted the most commonly spoken languages in Belgium – French or Walloon, Flemish or Hollandish, (Lower) German or Luxembourgish – as the state’s national languages (see, e.g., B 1866: XII; B 1880: XLIX; B 1890: CL; B 1900: CLXX).
From 1866 onwards, individuals were more particularly asked to declare which and how many of the Belgian national languages they habitually used. Hence, the language data could not only be used to determine the strengths of the different monolingual blocs within the state. The statisticians also started to show interest in the incidence of bi- and trilingualism among the Belgian population (see B 1866: XXI-XXII; B 1880: XXV; B 1890: XXXV-XXXVIII; B 1900: XXXIX-XLV; B 1910: 105, 203; B 1920: T1, 16-17). It might be assumed that this interest was politically and state-istically motivated. The emphasis on bi- and trilingualism could serve to distinguish Belgium from France with its assimilatory French-only policy which ruled out all regional languages. This official ‘presentation of self’ could strengthen the Belgian identity and protect the nation-state against France’s expansion plans (see Vogl and Hüning 2010; Hüning 2013).

At the moment that the statisticians started focusing on the ability to speak one of the Belgian national languages, they also started to refrain from processing data on the use or knowledge of ‘foreign’ languages, such as English, Italian or Latin. People unable to speak any of the national languages also did not have to specify the languages they were able to speak; they were simply classified in the residual category of ‘inhabitants who don’t speak one of the three languages’ (see, e.g., B 1866: XLII; B 1880: LXXXV; B 1890: CXXII; B 1900: CLVI; B 1910: 105).

5 The directives to the census-takers were straightforward. In 1866, for example, the statisticians stated: ‘Il ne faut pas s’occuper des langues étrangères: anglais, italien, etc.’ (B 1866: XLII). In 1880, they remarked: ‘Il ne sera tenu aucun compte ici des renseignements qui auraient été fournis, dans le bulletin de ménage, sur d’autres langues parlées que les trois langues nationales qui viennent d’être indiquées, notamment sur l’anglais, l’italien, le latin, etc.’ (B 1880: LXXXV).
As of 1910, while continuing to ask about the national languages known, the Belgian census-takers also asked those who named more than one language a second question, namely, which one they used most frequently (see, e.g., B 1910: 4; B 1920: T1, 26; B 1930: T1, 41; B 1947: 70). In summary tables about the linguistic state of the nation, bi- or trilingual inhabitants were afterwards counted two or three times. For example, Flemish-speaking inhabitants who also had knowledge of French were added to both the Flemish- and the French-speaking population (e.g., B 1910: 203; B 1920: T1, 63; B 1930: T2, 14). But much opposition crystallized around this strategy, especially in the Flemish-speaking part of the country. As Flemings were more often than Walloons bilingual (amongst others while secondary education was on the entire territory French until the late-nineteenth century), the census data were believed to overestimate the number of French-speakers (see Levy 1960; Verdoodt 1983). Although, at the end of the nineteenth century, new legislation had started to grant more linguistic rights to the Flemish-speaking population, the so-called Flemish movement now increasingly pursued the idea of a linguistically homogeneous Flanders. In this context, bilingualism was viewed as a transitional stage from Flemish- to French-speaking (see also O’Neill 2000; Haarman 2012).

Already in the 1880 census, the statisticians had started to express their doubts about the completeness and correctness of the language count (B 1880: LXXXIII). The census-takers were instructed to double-check the responses to the language item (B 1890: CXXVIII-CXXX). Fines were imposed to penalize individuals who attempted to make false declarations (B 1890: CXI, CXXIX; B 1900: CXXXVII; B 1910: 88). However, the statisticians did not believe that these measures had the hoped for results. In the early-twentieth century, they explicitly invoked the
increase of false language declarations to account for the declining number of bilingual Flemings (e.g., B 1910: 203-204; B 1920: T1, 64).  

Another series of statistical interventions is worth mentioning, too. Throughout the entire period under study, the collection of data on the language skills of (very) young children and mute people caused concern. In the 1846 census, the rule was put forward that the language spoken in their family had to be registered for all newborns and mute persons (B 1846: L, LV, LXIX). In the 1866 census, a residual category was created for the deaf-and-dumb, while the language(s) of the parents had to be entered for all children who were not yet able to speak (B 1866: XLI). In the 1880 census, the residual category for the deaf-and-dumb again disappeared; dumb people who knew one of the national languages were now considered to speak this language. At the same time, it was now argued that children over two years of age were considered to be able to speak, while children below that age were not (B 1880: XXV, LXXXV). In the 1890 census, the census-takers again entered for the children who were not yet able to speak.

6 A longer quotation seems appropriate: ‘La connaissance simultanée des deux langues nationales aurait-elle brusquement cessé de se propager en pays flamand pour ne faire des progrès que dans le Brabant et les provinces wallonnes? Il est permis de douter que les statistiques révèlent la véritable situation à cet égard. Il est à remarquer en effet, que la diminution relative du nombre des habitants parlant les deux langues est, à peu de chose près, compensée par l’augmentation relative de ceux qui ne parlent que le flamand. Cette remarque permet de se demander si un certain nombre de flamands bilingues n’auraient pas déclaré à ce recensement-ci ne connaître que le flamand’ (B 1910: 203-204; see also B 1920: T1, 64). In the eyes of the state-servants, only the Flemish population was expected to be bilingual. It did not work the other way round: French-speaking Belgians did not have to be bilingual, as Flemish was seen as inferior and thus not considered worth learning (see Vogl and Hüning 2010; Hüning 2013).
speak the language of their parents (B 1890: IV). As of 1900, however, they returned to the rule applied in 1880 – and thus re-created a category for children who were not yet able to speak a language but in the process of learning one (e.g., B 1900: V; B 1910: 4; B 1920: T1, 16; B 1930: T1, 41; B 1947: 106). For the dumb, the statisticians stuck to the rule that these people were considered to speak the national language they habitually used to express their ideas [*dont ils se servent habituellement pour exprimer leurs idées*] (e.g., B 1890: CXXII; B 1900: CLVI; B 1910: 105; B 1947: 99).

Some more systematic observations may be added. Despite the focus on the *langues parlées* (the spoken languages), the census reports show many traces of the impact of standard written languages on national identity constructions in Belgium. The nationalization of the languages commonly used in Belgium depended on processes of standardization and homogenization. In 1880, the census-takers were explicitly directed to consider Walloon as a variety of French, Dutch or Hollandic as varieties of Flemish, and Lower-German or Luxembourgish as varieties of German (see, e.g., B 1880: LXXXV; B 1890: XXXV; B 1910: 44, 105). From the 1890 census onwards, only French, Flemish and German appeared as headings in the census reports (see, e.g., B 1890: LXXXIII, LXXXV; B 1900: CV; B 1910: 45). This homogenization did not cause problems in Wallonia. Throughout the entire period under study, the Romance varieties spoken in Wallonia were regarded as dialects of the prestigious French language. In the whole French

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7 As of 1890, the statisticians also more explicitly defined what was meant by being able to speak a language (e.g., B 1890: CXXXI; B 1900: CLVI; B 1910: 105). Literacy (i.e. the ability to read and write) was not required. But people had to be capable of expressing themselves by means of this language in their daily life. ‘C’est ainsi qu’il n’est point un habitant du pays, quelque illettré qu’il soit, qui ne sache parler; fût-ce incorrectement, le français ou le wallon, le flamand, etc.’ (B 1890: CXXXI; see also B 1900: CLVI; B 1910: 105).
language area, local dialects had been in decline since the sixteenth century, i.e. since the development of standard French out of the dialect of the Île de France (Nadeau and Barlow 2006). But the sociolinguistic situation was different in Flanders. Not only was there, due to the lack of official regulation policies, no Flemish standard language. In the nineteenth century, the aforementioned religious differences also stood in the way of closer linguistic collaboration between Flanders and the Netherlands. In the Catholic South, the opposition to a joint Flemish-Dutch standard language was at least in part motivated by the fear of possible Protestant influence from the Netherlands.

In the early-twentieth century, however, the Flemish movement had become more oriented toward the Netherlands. The identification of the Flemish varieties in Belgium with the Dutch of the Netherlands was a way to enhance the prestige and thus strengthen the position of Dutch (Flemish) against French in Belgium (Vogl and Hüning 2010: 238). In 1947, the label Flemish was replaced by that of Dutch in the Belgian population census (e.g., B 1947: 106-112). In the eyes of the state and its state-istics, Flemish now was a variety of Dutch (while the Romance varieties spoken in Wallonia had always been viewed as varieties of standard French). In 1932, new language legislation specified that the results of the language count had to be used to determine the language regime of the local municipalities (see B 1947: 52). In Flanders, however, the results of the language count (which pointed to the ‘frenchification’ of Brussels and a number of other municipalities) were again highly contested. While the objectivity of the language census was called into question, pressure was also built for the establishment of a constitutional language border between the Dutch- and French-speaking regions within Belgium. Many local authorities in Flanders opposed any new language census. Owing to this political conflict, the government postponed the 1957 census (see, e.g., Levy 1960; Verdoodt 1983; Louckx 1982). The next census was
conducted in 1961, but language questions were now dropped from the census. Shortly afterwards, the territorial language border was established (1962-1963).

In the course of the nineteenth and twentieth century, different ideas and definitions of the nation-state have developed within Belgium. As in most other nation-states, a common and uniform language was in the new, independent state regarded as an identifying marker that could hold all the inhabitants of the state together (see, e.g., Arel 2002; Edwards 2009; Malesevic 2013). Over time, however, the Belgian state has become subdivided into separate language territories. The official demarcation of these language territories was not simply a solution to a language conflict; it also followed from and reinforced the nineteenth-century idea of ‘one state, one nation, one language’. The history of the Belgian language census and its representations of the nation-state sheds light on the identity problems with which the Belgian state was faced. As we have seen, this state-istics did not simply provide information about the state of the nation-state; it also created a dynamic that came to threaten the very existence of the Belgian nation-state. From the perspective of the Belgian state, there might have been a number of reasons to henceforth forbid the organization of language censuses on Belgian territory. But it is questionable whether the abolishment of the language census is or will be a solution to the identity problems of the Belgian nation-state.

5.3. PLACE OF BIRTH AND NATIONALITY

The Belgian state originated at a time when states were ideally linked to one language (and one religion) and when languages had – at least in theory – to be uniform and to serve as identifying markers holding all the members of the
nation-state together. But not only linguistic unity was at that time linked with national unity. The concept of citizenship also arose together with the concept of the nation-state. In the course of the nineteenth century, the rights conferred upon citizens started to grow in number and substance. But these rights were also increasingly confined to nationals. An increasing delimitation of national citizenries took place. Citizenship came to mean membership in the nation-state (see Hobsbawn 1990; Brubaker 1992; Torpey 2000; Surak 2012).

After the Belgian Revolution of 1830, nationality law established Belgian citizenship. On the basis of this nationality law, citizenship could be automatically attributed (by the state to the individual), acquired (by the individual through procedures prescribed by the state) and withdrawn (from the individual by the state authorities). Until the early-twentieth century, the basic principles of this legislation remained unchanged. After the First World War, protectionism prevailed and greater restrictions in granting Belgian citizenship to foreigners were imposed (Caestecker 1999; Caestecker and Vrints 2012; Foblets, Yanasmayan and Wautelet 2013).

Citizenship was in principle granted at birth. The dominant Belgian practice built upon the principle of *jus sanguinis paterni* [right of blood in the paternal line]: a child whose father was a Belgian citizen automatically acquired Belgian citizenship, irrespective of the place of birth. This mode of attribution was legitimized by the conviction that citizenship could not simply follow from ‘accidentally’ having been born in Belgium, but had to be seen as the consequence of family or blood ties, as the heritage of a community, which is made up of people who together form a sovereign nation. But the principle of *jus soli* [right of soil] was also introduced: a child born in Belgium to non-Belgian
parents, for example, could acquire the Belgian nationality if certain requirements (mainly pertaining to age and residence) were fulfilled.\(^8\) Belgian citizenship could moreover be lost by individuals who voluntarily acquired the citizenship of a foreign state, voluntarily served in a foreign army, or settled abroad and did not show any evidence of a will [\textit{animus}] to return to Belgium.

However, despite the elaboration of the politico-legal institution of Belgian citizenship, and despite its symbolic importance for the new state, the Belgian census did not include any question about nationality until the end of the nineteenth century (1890). In the first censuses, the census-takers were even instructed not to take nationality into account. The census-takers had to gather data about all those present in the household – \textit{quelle que soit leur nationalité} (B 1866: XXXI). The Belgian statisticians used another variable to provide a more detailed overview of the modes of membership in the nation-state. Instead of nationality, they focused on people’s place of origin or birth (e.g., B 1846: XXXVI-XXXVII; B 1856: XIX, XLVIII, XLIX; B 1866: 19; B 1880: XXI; B 1890: XXIII-XXIX).

In the view of the Belgian statisticians, the question about the place of origin or birth enabled them to monitor people’s ‘movements’ on the territory of the Belgian state (B 1846: XXXV; see also B 1856: XVIII; B 1866: XX). Initially, the statisticians showed a strong interest in both intra- and inter-national movements (B 1846: XXV; B 1856: XIX; B 1866: 18; B 1880: XXII). But in the last decades of the nineteenth century, their state-istical interest shifted almost exclusively towards

\(^8\) The principle of ‘one family, one citizenship’ was also stressed. A foreign woman who married a Belgian took the citizenship of her husband and so did the children born in wedlock. Inversely, a Belgian woman who married a foreigner, or whose partner no longer remained Belgian, lost her Belgian citizenship, on condition that she acquired the citizenship of her husband.
international migration. At that time, they also started to speculate on the motives the growing number of migrants might have. In their opinion, economic motives dominated. The statisticians argued that most étrangers living on Belgian territory had left their country of origin to find fortune in Belgium. They added that it was not likely that these étrangers would return to their country of origin or birth (e.g., B 1890: XXXIII; B 1900: XXXVII).

As of 1880, the census reports started to include longitudinal overviews of population movements to and from Belgium. However, the distinction between place of birth and nationality disappeared in the 1880 report. The table drafted by the statisticians divided the growing number of foreigners residing on Belgian territory on the basis of their place of birth, but the table’s title promised an overview par nationalité (B 1880: XXIII). Based on census data from a number of other countries, such as France, Germany, the United States and Great Britain, the 1880 census report also tried to provide an overview of the number of ‘Belgians’ living abroad. But in an explanatory note, the statisticians clarified that the term ‘Belgians’ solely referred to people born in Belgium and not to people with the Belgian nationality in the legal sense of the word (B 1880: XXIV). In its

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9 As of 1880, the Belgian census reports show evidence of growing international collaboration among statisticians and other state servants (see B 1880: VII, VIII; B 1890: V). The census-takers also started to record more detailed information about the place of origin of foreigners. Foreigners no longer only had to inform about the country in which they were born, but also provide more specific information, such as municipality and province of birth (see B 1890: IV-V, LXXXIII; B 1900: CLVII; B 1910: 43, 107; B 1920: T1, 21; B 1930: T1, 40; B 1947: 110).

10 The footnote to the table reads as follows: ‘Le mot Belge doit être ici entendu seulement en ce sens qu’il s’agit de personnes nées en Belgique, abstraction faite de la question de nationalité légale’ (B 1880: XXIV).
official state-istics, Belgium thus applied the principle of *jus soli*. Its state-isticians primarily distinguished between nationals and foreigners on the basis of territorial criteria. The Belgian nation-state was conceived of as a community of birth, of native-born citizens.

Six decades after Belgium’s independence, the 1890 census was the first to include an item on the legal nationality status of the inhabitants. According to the statisticians, the inclusion of this item constituted *un intérêt national et international*; they also mentioned that they followed the example of several other states (B 1890: IV-V). In the census report, the statisticians now made clear that only individuals who possessed Belgian nationality status could be identified as Belgians or nationals. Inversely, foreigners were defined as individuals who did not possess Belgian nationality status (B 1890: LXXXIII; B 1910: 49). The item on the legal nationality status did not replace but supplement that on people’s place of birth or origin. Different understandings of belongingness were thus introduced. The difference was also stressed on many occasions; in the instructions to the census-takers, the statisticians repeatedly insisted that nationality declarations needed to be made in conformance with the legal definition of nationality (e.g., B 1900: LXXXIV; B 1910: 29).

However, the presentation of the data on national citizenship in the census reports also shows the lasting concern of the statisticians with the increase of the number of migrants. In fact, the Belgian statisticians often presented tables in which the data on nationality and place of birth were compared or crossed. In 1890, for example, the statisticians started to focus on the countries of birth and of nationality of the largest number of foreigners on Belgian territory (e.g., B 1890: XXXV; see also B 1900: XXV; B 1910: 192; B 1920: T1, 59). As of 1900, they also focused on the balance between migration from and to Belgium (e.g., B 1900: XV; B 1910: 183; B 1930: T3, 53). With some pride, it was for example noted
in the 1900 census report that the emigration was higher than the immigration. While the growth of the population living on Belgian territory was mainly ‘homemade’, Belgium was also able to contribute considerably to the so-called ‘international circulation of humanity’ (B 1900: XV).\footnote{Il est très intéressant de noter que la Belgique ne tire que de ses propres forces l’augmentation remarquable de sa population et que […] elle fournit encore un contingent d’environ 3 par mille de ses habitants à la circulation internationale de l’humanité’ (B 1900: XV).}

As of 1890, the statisticians also devoted substantial parts of the census reports to the presentation and interpretation of cross-tabulations in which different categories of citizenship appeared. They distinguished, for example, between Belgians born in Belgium, Belgians born abroad, individuals of foreign nationality residing in Belgium and born in Belgium, and foreigners residing in Belgium but born outside of Belgium. They not only compared the size of the different citizenship categories, but also discussed changes over time (or the lack thereof) and speculated about push- and pull-factors, such as economic opportunities and urbanization (e.g., B 1890: XXXIV; B 1900: XXXVI-XXXVIII; B 1910: 195-198; B 1920: T1, 59; B 1930: T3, 48, 54-55, 58-59, 72). Indirectly, these tables allowed to identify the individuals who might qualify for naturalization procedures and hence be entitled to acquire the Belgian nationality.

In the same context, the statisticians also started to pay attention to gender differences (e.g., B 1900: XXXV; B 1910: 195; B 1920: T1, 59). For example, they linked the finding that most immigrants were men with economic factors. Male immigrants were depicted as economic players, who migrated to Belgium to find jobs (B 1890: XXXIII; B 1900: XXXVII; B 1910: 197). The high number of women from the neighboring countries that lived in Belgium was attributed to
the demand for household workers in Belgium (B 1890: XXXIII; B XXXV; B 1910: 195; B 1920: T1, 59; B 1930: T3, 77). The high proportion of women born in Belgium to foreign parents was said to be the counterpart of men’s higher mobility. Not only for economic reasons did men more easily migrate, they often also had to return to their country of nationality to fulfill their military service (B 1900: XXXVII; B 1910: 197). The higher proportion of women among the Belgians born abroad was linked with the nationality legislation: women born to foreign parents could become Belgian by marrying a Belgian, while men less easily lost their foreign nationality (B 1900: XXXVII; B 1910: 197).

In the interwar period, the Belgian statisticians continued to publish analyses of citizenship categories in relation to migratory movements. Foreigners now also needed to inform about the duration of their stay in Belgium; they also had to specify whether or not they had applied for a residence permit – and hence had the intention to stay in Belgium (see, e.g., B 1930: T1, 41, 47, 49; B 1947: 105-106, 111-112). Interestingly, the statisticians also (again) developed an interest in intra-national migration movements. More particularly, in the 1930 census, the statisticians started to calculate emigration and immigration flows from Flanders to Wallonia (B 1930: T3, 51). They now took this internal division as the point of departure of their analyses well before the establishment of the language border in Belgium and the regionalization of the nation-state (B 1930: T3, 50-52).

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12 It should, however, be added that in 1920, thus shortly after the First World War, it was only possible to organize a limited census. In 1930, the statisticians also indicated that it became difficult to establish and interpret the longitudinal data series, because the territorial borders of Belgium were redrawn after WWI (B 1930: T3, 74). More in particular, the German-speaking ‘Eastern cantons’ came to Belgium as a consequence of the 1919 Versailles Treaty.
After the Second World War, the bureaucratic regulations about citizenship increased once more (see also Brubaker 1992; Simon 1999; Surak 2012). In the 1947 census, the statisticians thus asked naturalized Belgians to specify how they had acquired Belgian citizenship (B 1947: 51, 99, 106). The foreigners residing on Belgian territory on census day had to provide detailed information about their residence rights (B 1947: 67). The Second World War and the collaboration with Nazi Germany also left its traces. Individuals from whom the Belgian citizenship status had been withdrawn (and who had hence become foreigners) had to be identified separately (see B 1947: 69). Altogether, the statisticians now distinguished between no less than 13 categories of Belgian citizens, 7 categories of foreigners and 4 categories of state-less individuals (B 1947: 93).

This evolution reflects the rise of what Max Weber has called the ‘rational-legal authority’ within the modern state. With Michel Foucault, we might also speak of the étatisation and nationalisation of membership (Foucault 1984: 302-303; see also Brubaker 2010; Surak 2012). In the nineteenth and twentieth century, citizenship has become increasingly articulated as membership in nation-states – both in Belgium and abroad. But the history of the statistical articulation of citizenship also shows the growing grasp of the state bureaucracy. In twentieth-century Belgium, the political community has become divided into ever more categories. For the modern state, such distinctions between citizens and citizenship categories might fulfil another set of instrumental purposes. Although citizenship is still a key instrument for defining national identity, it has also become a key instrument for controlling access to particular social rights, for disciplining the national citizens, and for monitoring migration in a world characterized by increasing transnational mobility.
5.4. Conclusion

The Kingdom of Belgium was founded in 1830. In many different ways, it has tried to establish itself as a modern nation-state. As other nineteenth-century nation-states, it has invested much energy in order to integrate its members, and to define the difference from other national communities. On the basis of analyses of one of its key instruments, viz. its state-istics, it is possible to reconstruct how the Belgian state has created its ‘imagined community’ (see also Anderson 1983; Scott 1998; Desrosières 1998). On the foregoing pages, we have more particularly looked at the state-istical ‘nationalization’ of languages and citizenship status.

Belgium has never been a state based on the principle of ‘one state, one nation, one language’ – although it was founded at a time when one state was ideally linked to one nation and one language. Its Constitution guaranteed a number of freedoms, including the freedom of language choice, but French remained the socially and culturally dominant language throughout the nineteenth and early-twentieth century. In the nineteenth and twentieth century, however, the Flemish movement was also able to create its ‘imagined community’. It built on the same, nineteenth-century principle of ‘one state, one nation, one language’. In the second half of the last century, the pursuit of a linguistically homogeneous Flemish state has become part of Flemish mainstream politics. As we have pointed out, conflicts over the statistical representations of this identity marker played an important role in the course of this historical process. The state-istical constructions of national identity created a reality of their own within the Belgian state. But analyses of the printed numbers of the census reports only tell part of the story. Analyses of the various ways in which linguistic unity and national identity were counted and envisaged also shed light
on the premises and principles underlying the Belgian nation-state. In this setting, what was not counted was as important as what was counted.\textsuperscript{13}

The statisticians also used other criteria to define and circumscribe the nation. In the first Belgian censuses, they registered people’s place of birth. In this sense, they initially defined the nation as all those united by birth. In the 1890 census, they also started to record people’s nationality or legal citizenship status. In the first half of the twentieth century, ever more elaborate and complex classifications of people’s citizenship status had to be put to use. As we have seen, this historical shift evolved with and reflected the development of a new politics of belonging, which is characterized by the \textit{étatisation} and nationalization of membership or citizenship (Foucault 1984). The Belgian statisticians have thus come to define the nation as the community of individuals who have received full citizenship rights from the Belgian state, and thereby used citizenship categories to monitor the ‘wealth of the nation’.

5.5. Bibliography

5.5.1. Belgian census reports


\textsuperscript{13} The same might be assumed in the case of religion. As we pointed out earlier, only the first Belgian census included a religion count. Religious adherence was no longer counted at the moment that the ideological conflicts between Catholics and Liberals started to increase. On this basis, different ideological ‘pillars’ started to develop in nineteenth-century Belgium.


5.5.2. Other references


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6. EPILOGUE

6.1. UNE HISTOIRE A-HISTORISANTE

It is often said that the nineteenth century statistics had to cover the growing need in modern nation-states for information about the ‘state of the state’. This point of view was also echoed by the nineteenth-century statisticians in Belgium. The Belgian censuses had to satisfy “the needs of most public administrations as well as those of science in its diverse manifestations: ethnography, history, economics and statistics” (B, 1880: XIV). But it is also clear that the “avalanche of printed numbers” (Hacking, 1982) produced by modern state-istics helped to think of society as a social entity, as a social reality sui generis, as a corps social that was governed by its own laws and regularities. In my dissertation, I have argued that the population statistics not only provided detailed figures about the population, but also actively contributed to the establishment of a conceptual framework that made it possible to conceive of the population as a social entity, as a corps social with particular features and possibilities. The nineteenth-century population statistics also created and rendered rigid new conceptualizations of the social by subjecting the population to specific ‘search engines’ or information technologies and specific knowledge regimes. Both politicians and statisticians believed that censuses and statistics could further social progress by facilitating inquiry, analysis and intervention.

On the foregoing pages, I have used a genealogical approach to shed light on the ways in which social complexity was translated into a ‘legible’ and statistically convenient format in the nineteenth and early-twentieth century (see also Foucault, 1977b; Fairclough and Holes, 1995; Scott, 1998; Schulten, 2012).
Sociologically and historically, it is not helpful to conceive of the statistical ‘system of thought’ that both followed from and reinforced the diffusion of the modern ‘quantifying spirit’ as but a textual reality. The concepts, definitions and classifications used in the censuses are not but textual realities; they also embody a *material*, extra-discursive reality. Different forms of practice have been shaped and organized by this discourse (see also Foucault, 1981a). Not only was participation in the Belgian population census obligatory for all residents on the Belgian territory. Different techniques and instruments were also used to count and classify the population. On the basis of the statistical concepts, definitions and classifications, local census-takers moreover distinguished between different population categories or different social entities (family vs. collective households), assigned or reassigned individuals to different habitual places of residence, and so on. On the foregoing pages, I have thus conceived of the Belgian population census as both a discursive and a governmental practice. In a similar way, Hacking has spoken of a *loop effect* (Hacking, 1985). The statistical representations of the social clearly determine “the space of possibilities of personhood” (Hacking, 2004: 107).

Against this background, I have explicitly attempted *not* to reduce the state-istical discourse to a narrative. Rather than sketching a *histoire historisante* by approaching the discourse used in the Belgian census reports as a ‘set of representations’ of a certain social reality, I have focused on the analysis of the interests and forces at play in the production of this kind of statistical knowledge (see also Foucault, 1981a, 1981b; Fairclough, 1993). I have thus neither tried to draw a positivist historiography of ‘pure facts’, nor to present a traditional ‘narrative of events’. Instead I have focused on the ways in which statistics has been invented and exploited as state-istics, as a tool of describing and governing the ‘state of the state’. I have built on the idea that population statistics are quite
yet necessary instruments of governance that spread over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth century. Against this background, I have also tried to show how population statistics is both a cause and a consequence of our predominant views of what is modern society. The statistical tools and instruments not only identify the parts or ‘cornerstones’ of modern society; they also construct and regulate the social reality the state-isticians aim to identify.

The Belgian census reports served as the primary source material for my genealogical analyses. While I have also made use of ‘secondary’ source material (such as the parliamentary papers, legal texts and documents, reports of the International Statistical Congresses), especially in order to be able to grasp the interchange between the statistical discourse and other discourses, the focus of my dissertation has not explicitly been on these processes of interchange, nor on the processes of discursive ‘re-circulation’. The emphasis has rather been on the premises and rationales underlying one type of discourse, viz. the population state-istical discourse (Foucault, 1981a). In this regard, my research obviously is confronted with particular limitations. Additional, complementary research on the basis of other, non-statistical source material is not only possible, but also promising. The same can be said with regard to analysis of other statistical traditions, either at the national or the international level. I hope that in the near future myself and/or others will have the possibility to explore a broader range of sources from this critical, sociological and historical perspective. In this epilogue, however, I will present a brief overview of the arguments developed on the basis of analyses of my primary source material as well as some more general concluding remarks.
6.2. INCLUSION, EXCLUSION

In the preceding chapters, I have attempted to show how the discursive practices in the population censuses led to the production of certain kinds of knowledge – at the cost of other kinds of knowledge. In the second chapter, I have directly looked into the types of exclusions produced in the censuses. This chapter more particularly highlights the intimate relationship between territory and population in the population statistics; it shows how parts of the population are both included and excluded because they are attributed to specific ‘exclusion places’. In spite of the “equivalence agreement” (Desrosières, 2000), the Belgian state-statistics produced and used ‘exclusion places’ in order to distinguish between different population categories. The excluded individuals remained members of the corps social and thus part of the state’s population, but they were also identified as individuals who had to be set apart and subjected to specific interventions. In this regard, I have argued that the discursive formation of the exclusion places in the censuses prelude later forms of welfare-engineering. The statistical ‘system of thought’ was closely linked with the state’s interest in the productivity of its population; the hierarchy of exclusion categories displays the importance of particular social parameters – and the necessity of monitoring and surveying them.

In the following chapters of this Ph.D. dissertation, I have focused on the interplay between the specificity of the tools and techniques used “to count all the people in a country at a given point in time” (Headrick 2000: 76), on the one hand, and the kinds of knowledge production derived from employing such tools and techniques, on the other. In the third, fourth and fifth chapter, too, my analyses have indicated how the processes of inclusion and exclusion are
inseparable in population state-istics. These processes are constitutive of one another; they are different sides of the same coin.

The analyses in the third chapter show how the observation and classification tools of statistics not merely ‘represent’ social realities. They mobilize specific norms or evaluative standards; they depict the ‘normal’ household in very specific hierarchical terms, thereby reinvigorating a view of the social order based on hierarchically structured family households with male heads of household. Although other forms of depicting the household structures could also have been probed, the Belgian statisticians remained inclined to focus on hierarchical structures. With a number of variations, they continued to use these structures to define and distinguish between different categories of people. In the fourth chapter, I have indicated how the articulation of the notion of habitual residence is linked with the development of distinctions between those who regularly reside on Belgian territory and those who do so only temporarily or momentarily, between those who are considered to be ‘real habitants’ and those who are not, and between those who ‘belong’ to the nation-state and those who do not (or only partially). Both in the third and the fourth chapter, it becomes clear how, despite of the ‘official’ emphasis on the de facto population and the task “to count all the people in a country at a given point in time” (Headrick, 200076), the emphasis shifts towards defining and numbering the de jure population of the Belgian nation-state.

In a similar way, the findings presented in the fifth chapter of this dissertation show how the articulation of citizenship ideals is dependent on exclusion mechanisms. The ways in which foreigners are distinguished from nationals cannot be disconnected from the ‘phenomena’ the Belgian statisticians wanted to ‘grasp’ and classify. The principles they used to count actively contributed to defining both citizens and non-citizens. The questions they asked
articulated the distinction between people who ‘really’ belonged to the nation-state and people who did not or only in particular ways and regards but not in others. In this regard, too, the distinction between inclusion and exclusion thus allows us to shed light on the ways in which our statistical categories have come to organize our observations of the social world.

6.3. Continuities, discontinuities

Time and again, historical and sociological research which makes use of census data is confronted with the historical variability of the concepts and definitions that were used in the population censuses. Although the core of the census technology remained relatively stable over time within Belgium, the state-istical categories and categorizations used to ‘represent’ the social body were constantly ‘under construction’. But the historical variability in the census methodologies and nomenclatures does not only need to be regarded as a source of difficulty (e.g., when the objective is to construct longitudinal or comparative tables). As I have shown, it may also be regarded as a source of information on the genesis of the categories that organize predominant observations and representations of the social world.

My analyses of the history of statistical forms and classifications has brought out the fact that they arise and evolve in a way that involves constant interaction between practical and cognitive concerns. While the censuses and population statistics are of course constructed to meet administrative objectives and conform to learned representations of society, they must also, in order to produce ‘printed numbers’ and be truly usable, come to terms with common, ordinary practices and representations (Simon, 1999). The statistical concepts and
definitions thus need to be understood by both the census-takers and the population members who needed to complete the questionnaires. Seen in this light, the variability of statistical conventions may cease to be a mere obstacle to establishing longitudinal data series or comparative tables. In this dissertation, it has become a kind of clue: it informs us in specific ways about the interactions between science, administration, and society.

More in particular, I have pointed to a number of ways in which the interaction between practical and cognitive concerns worked out in the Belgian censuses. In this regard, the particular Eigenlogik of these population statistics also becomes manifest. For example, as is shown in the fifth chapter, the statistical ‘invention’ of the categories of Belgians by birth and naturalized Belgians illustrates how categories used in the population statistics can transcend or bypass civic or legal status categories. In this regard, these state-istics not only reinforced dominant views on nationality and belonging, but also actively contributed to the institutionalization of new definitions and boundaries of citizenship. Also, as shown in the third and fourth chapter, the implementation of the de jure view in the censuses indicates how the statistics both made use of legal notions and defined them in their own state-istical way. In many regards, it may indeed be argued that the state-istical discourse was a discourse of its own; it possessed its own systemic qualities. While particular legal concepts or definitions were put to use, others were not. While specific scientifically ‘approved’ concepts or classifications became part of the discourse at a particular moment in time, the same concepts and classifications could be changed, abandoned or ‘re-translated’ at later moments in time.

Altogether, my analyses have indicated how much of the changes in statistical definitions and classifications were introduced in the latter half of the nineteenth century. However, my analyses have also shown how most of the
changes in the state-istical discourse took but their definite shape at the very end of the nineteenth century or the beginning of the twentieth century. It may be argued that some of these changes relate to the way in which statistics tried to come to terms with changing social realities, with shifting common-sense representations of residence or co-residence in modern society, with new expectations regarding the role of individuals in national societies. But, even more characteristic of the statistical discourse of that time is the underlying trend towards a ‘governmentalization’ of the social body. The quest for governmental control transformed the Belgian nation-state and its state-istics by placing a premium on the articulation of the relation between population and territory, between individual and household, between citizen and nation-state.

6.4. Power-Knowledge in State-Istics

The many changes in the statistical methodologies and nomenclatures were not only the result of technical or ‘material’ improvements in the state bureaucracies. The changes in the items included in the census questionnaires also reflected changes in the kind of information that was of interest to the state and changes in the way in which the state defined its own function or position vis-à-vis its population. The historical variability in statistical nomenclatures and methodologies thus does not just refer to changes in statistical tools and techniques, but also in statistical systems of thought and governmental practices.

In the third and fourth chapter, for example, I have argued that the definition of the population in de jure terms, which became dominant in the latter part of the nineteenth century, highlights some of the ways in which the state became much more active in controlling and regulating membership within the
nation-state and within the ‘natural’ institution of the household. On the foregoing pages, I have also argued that the state-istical ‘invention’ of the collective household reflects the shifting self-conceptions of the state and sheds light on the premises on the basis of which the welfare state would later develop alternatives to kinship and household dependence. Moreover, as the fifth chapter has made clear, the changes in the ways in which statisticians distinguished between citizens and non-citizens are obviously related with the development of regulatory, bureaucratic systems that control the attribution of membership rights to individuals. In this regard, the instructions to the census-takers and the interpretation of the data also clearly show how the state-istical discourse used in the census reports incorporates normative expectations regarding solidarity within, or belonging to the nation-state.

The organization of the censuses does not only ‘reflect’ existing power-relations within the Belgian state. The statistical armamentarium also facilitates specific power-relations – at the cost of other ones (see also Foucault, 1977a). In the second chapter, I have thus been able to show how the differentiation and specialization of state-controlled organizations for excluded individuals reflects the expanding reach of the modern state as a ‘rational’ bureaucracy. The state used and imposed its own instruments in order to distinguish between individuals who were fully included and individuals who were not (see also Scott 1998: 82-83). Moreover, the different designations for excluded populations not only reflected, but also legitimated and reproduced different modes of monitoring and treatment, different regimes of surveillance and regulation, different degrees of exclusion from and within society. In a similar way, the analyses presented in the fifth chapter of this dissertation show how the census started to distinguish between ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’ forms of belonging. The census questionnaires themselves did become political, governmental instruments. By including
declarations of ‘intention’ and detailed passport information, the censuses became themselves an instrument of control and surveillance.

In many regards, my research has indicated how the concepts and classifications that are endorsed by the statisticians are a function of discourse rather than a ‘reflection’ of the reality, or, to put it differently: what counts as ‘true’ is more correlated with a ‘will-to-power’ than with a ‘will-to-truth’ (see Foucault, 1981a). There are no ‘true’ or ‘false’ statements – but there are specific conditions of possibility under which statements become meaningful, become either true or false. On the foregoing pages, I have tried to clarify some of the fundamental assumptions that underlie the practices of contemporary social inquiry, assumptions that are so basic as to become almost invisible to people operating on their basis.

The methodological imperative stemming from these findings is a strong skepticism towards state-istical state-ments that legitimate and validate themselves on the grounds of their ‘natural’ or ‘scientific’ qualities. My analyses rather call for an awareness of the all-pervasiveness of the power-knowledge complex (see also Porter, 2000: 489; Hook, 2001: 524). Although the history of social science has usually been written as a history of ideas, of theoretical innovations, of ‘paradigm shifts’, social science was from the beginning also bound up with systematic empirical and ‘governmental’ interventions. Statistics, too, has been a way of understanding and reforming social reality, of defining le corps social.
6.5. Bibliography

6.5.1. Belgian census reports


6.5.2 Other references


SUMMARY IN ENGLISH

The main part of this ‘cumulative’ dissertation consists of four articles and thus of four case studies, which use Belgian administrative statistics to analyse different aspects of the state- and nation-building processes and governmental techniques that were developed and used between the mid-nineteenth and the mid-twentieth century. Each case-study has theoretical ambitions, which reach beyond the case-study itself. Each time, an attempt is made to articulate the complex interactions between science, government, and society in the modern era in new ways.

In the first case-study, the point of departure is the ‘modern’ ambition to include the entire population into the nation-state and into the population censuses. But in spite of this strong emphasis on social inclusion, censuses also legitimate and reinforce several kinds of exclusion. In this chapter, attention is drawn to the range of exclusions and exclusion places that appeared in the Belgian population censuses. It is shown how statistics identify ‘residual’ categories such as the poor and indigent, the disabled of body or mind, the elderly and invalids, beggars and vagabonds. It is also shown how the Belgian statisticians used exclusion places –asylums, barracks, colonies, madhouses, mental hospitals, monasteries, prisons, and so on – to distinguish between different categories of population members. The analysis presented here highlights the intimate relationship between population and territory in the ‘search engines’ of the Belgian statisticians. The discursive constitution of territorial exclusions allows me to analyse the articulation of inclusion ideals – in the period before such ideals became firmly institutionalised in the so-called welfare state of the post-war period.
The main unit of observation of the Belgian population census was the household in its place of residence. The second case-study focuses attention on the re-articulation of this time-honoured institution of the household within modern statistical discourse. The household was the proverbial cornerstone of society, to which individuals were attributed but to which they were also considered to ‘belong’. In this chapter of my dissertation, I focus on the representation and definition of the household in the censuses. Also, I pay attention to the implications following from more ‘technical improvements’, i.e. changes in data collection techniques, introduced by the statisticians to count the population. The changes in the notion of ‘belonging’ to a household show how the state (re-)articulated its expectations regarding the cornerstones of society. It is also shown how the representation of the household in state-istics not only reflected new ways of managing the population, but also mobilized specific norms and evaluative standards about the individuals who constitute the household.

The third case-study focuses on another aspect of belongingness in the nation-state, viz. that expressed by the notion of the habitual place of residence. In this chapter, I use the history of Belgian state-istics more particularly in order to shed light on the politics of membership in the modern state. Each territorial state is expected to embrace the social lives of the people contained in it; each claims the right to monitor the condition, to promote the welfare, and to protect the rights of ‘its’ people. In the modern world, individuals have become conceived as incorporated into the political order as exclusive subjects of a single state. In this chapter of my dissertation, I try to illuminate this politics of membership and belonging by studying the instruments that states have used to embrace their populations. Changes in the articulation of the notion of ‘habitual residence’ in the Belgian population censuses show how the history of statistics is also a history
of the struggles over belonging in and to the territorial state. Here again it becomes clear that the census not only generates facts about the population; it also creates facts that may form the basis of social interventions.

Nowadays conceptions of citizens and non-citizens, of ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ and their respective rights and obligations in a nation-state, highly depend on the historical trajectory of the nation-state itself. The final case-study addresses this historical trajectory by focusing on the socio-cultural aspects of ‘belonging’ to or citizenship in the nation-state. These socio-cultural aspects of citizenship involve mechanisms of exclusion and inclusion. In this final chapter of my dissertation, I examine the evolution of the socio-cultural boundaries of citizenship as conceptualized in the state-istics of the Belgian state, more particularly in terms of each individual’s place of birth, nationality and language. My analyses show how the statistical constructs did not merely reproduce existing concepts of citizens and non-citizens, of foreigners and nationals, but also actively contributed to the installation of new citizenship boundaries by changing the census questionnaires and putting forward new categories and classifications. By examining the modifications in these state-istical constructs, I hope to elucidate the more complex history of the construction of citizenship identities in the contemporary Belgian nation-state.

The epilogue, finally, presents a brief summary of the main findings of my research and presents some more general reflections.
**NEDERLANDSTALIGE SAMENVATTING**

Deze doctoraatsdissertatie bestaat uit vier artikelen of gevalsstudies. In elk van de hoofdstukken werd de Belgische bevolkingsstatistiek geanalyseerd om staats- en natievormingsprocessen alsook beleidstechnieken in de periode van het midden van de negentiende eeuw tot het midden van de twintigste eeuw te belichten. Telkens werd er gepoogd een nieuw licht te werpen op het complexe samenspel tussen wetenschap, beleid en samenleving in de moderne tijd. In dit hoofdstuk werd aandacht geschonken aan de exclusies en ‘exclusieplaatsen’ in de Belgische volkstellingen.

De eerste gevalsstudie vertrekt van de idee dat elk individu telt en dus ook geteld moet worden bij de volkstellingen. Ondanks de sterke klemtoon op sociale inclusie, legitimeren en versterken volkstellingen echter ook vormen van exclusie. In dit hoofdstuk werd aandacht geschonken aan de exclusies en ‘exclusieplaatsen’ in de Belgische volkstellingen. Er wordt hierbij aangetoond hoe de statistiek ‘residuele categorieën’ identificeert, zoals de armen en de behoeftigen, de gehandicapten, de geesteszieken, de ouderen en invaliden, de landlopers en bedelaars. Er wordt ook aangetoond hoe de Belgische statistici gebruik maakten van exclusieplaatsen – asijlen, barakken, kolonies, instellingen, kloosters, gevangenissen, enzovoort – om een onderscheid te maken tussen verschillende bevolkingscategorieën. De analyse die in dit hoofdstuk wordt gepresenteerd, belicht de nauwe relatie tussen bevolking en territorium in de ‘zoekmachines’ van de Belgische statistici. De discursieve bepaling van territoriale exclusies werpt ook een licht op de vorming van inclusie-idealen in de periode voorafgaand aan de institutionele verankering van deze idealen in de welvaartstaat.
De voornaamste observatie-eenheid van de Belgische volkstelling was het *huishouden* in zijn verblijfsplaats. In de tweede gevalsstudie wordt de aandacht gericht op de herformulering van deze aloude instelling in het moderne statistische discours. Het huishouden was de spreekwoordelijke hoeksteen van de samenleving. Mensen werden niet alleen toegewezen aan een huishouden, zij werden ook verondersteld tot een huishouden te ‘*behoren*’. In dit deel van mijn proefschrift richt ik mijn aandacht op de presentatie en representatie van het huishouden in de volkstellingen. Ik kijk hierbij ook naar de implicaties die volgen uit zogenaamde ‘technische verbeteringen’, zoals veranderingen in datacollectietechnieken. Wijzigingen in de betekenis van de idee van ‘behoren tot een huishouden’ tonen hoe de staat in de loop der tijd zijn verwachtingen ten aanzien van de hoekstenen van de samenleving herformuleert. Daarnaast wordt ook aangetoond hoe de representatie van het huishouden in de statistiek niet alleen een nieuwe vorm van bevolkingsmanagement weerspiegelt, maar ook specifieke *normen* en *criteria* mobiliseert met betrekking tot de individuen die deel uitmaken van het huishouden.

In de derde gevalsstudie wordt ingegaan op de notie van het *gewoonlijk verblijf*. De betekenisverschuiving van de inhoud van die notie in de Belgische bevolkingsstatistiek laat toe om licht te werpen op de ontwikkeling van de *politiek van lidmaatschap* in de moderne natiestaat. Elke territoriale staat wordt verondersteld om zijn bevolking te beschermen en te omvatten; iedere territoriale staat claimt het recht om de toestand van zijn bevolking te monitoren, zijn welvaart te vergroten alsook zijn rechten te beschermen. Individuen worden beschouwd als behorend tot *één enkele natiestaat*. In dit deel van mijn doctoraat poog ik de politiek van lidmaatschap en ‘behoren tot’ te belichten door de studie van de instrumenten die staten hebben gehanteerd om hun bevolking te omvatten. De betekenisverschuiving van de inhoud van de
notie van ‘gewoonlijk verblijf’ in de Belgische volkstellingen toont hoe de geschiedenis van de statistiek ook een geschiedenis is van conflicten rond het verblijven in en het behoren tot de territoriale staat. Opnieuw wordt het duidelijk dat de volkstelling niet alleen feiten over de bevolking representeert, maar ook feiten genereert die aan de basis kunnen liggen van sociale interventies.

Hedendaagse conceptualisaties van burgers en niet-burgers, ‘insiders’ en ‘outsiders’ en hun respectievelijke rechten en plichten in de natiestaat worden in grote mate bepaald door het historische traject van de natiestaat zelf. De laatste gevalsstudie richt zich op dit historische traject door de socio-culturele aspecten van het ‘behoren tot’ de natiestaat onder de loep te nemen. Bij de socio-culturele aspecten van burgerschap zijn mechanismen van exclusie en inclusie betrokken. In dit laatste deel van mijn proefschrift onderzoek ik de evolutie van de socio-culturele begrenzingen van burgerschap zoals die tot uitdrukking komen in de statistiek van de Belgische staat, en, in het bijzonder, via de vragen naar eenieders geboorteplaats, nationaliteit en taal. Mijn analyses tonen hoe de statistische constructen niet alleen bestaande concepten van burgers en niet-burgers, vreemdelingen en Belgen reproduceerden, maar ook actief hebben bijgedragen tot de bepaling van nieuwe grenzen van burgerschap. Door de veranderingen in deze statistische bouwstenen te onderzoeken hoop ik licht te werpen op de meer complexe geschiedenis van de constructie van burgerschapsidentiteiten in de huidige Belgische natiestaat.

In de epiloog wordt tot slot een beknopt overzicht gegeven van de voornaamste bevindingen uit mijn onderzoek. Ook worden hier een aantal algemene bedenkingen geformuleerd.