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Integration in Flanders (Belgium) – Citizenship as achievement

How intertwined are ‘citizenship’ and ‘integration’
in Flemish language policies?

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In this article we will show, with Flanders (Belgium) as a concrete case, how intertwined integration and citizenship discourses and policies have become in contemporary super-diverse societies. Flanders is a clear example of how integration is gradually being replaced by virtual or moral citizenship. The fact that (moral) citizenship has replaced integration, has as a consequence that the concept of citizenship has shifted, in a subtle way, from a dynamic and contextualized process, which shapes itself in daily practice through social networks, into ‘citizenship as achievement’. This is an achievement that is the sole responsibility of certain groups in society. It is also an impossible achievement, because some are exempt from it and others will always be perceived as not yet belonging to the category of ‘true citizens’.

Keywords: moral citizenship; language ideologies; language and integration policies; super diversity; social networks

1. Introduction

Although we cannot ignore the fact that some countries have already had language requirements for managing immigration and citizenship for a long time – e.g. Australia (McNamara 2009) or the US (Kunnan 2009) – the last three decades have seen a proliferation of compulsory language courses and/or tests for integration or citizenship through policy emulation (Foblets et al. 2008; Leung & Lewkowicz 2006; Extra et al. 2009; Van Avermaet 2009; Van Avermaet 2012). In some countries, language conditions were and still are a very covert part of obtaining citizenship. Belgium (Van Avermaet & Gysen 2009) or Spain (Vigers and Mar-Molinero 2009) are just two examples of contexts in which citizenship policies lack any overt

language tests. Australia, however, in the late colonial period and early years of independence had a very overt exclusion policy of immigrants with the use of the dictation test (McNamara 2009).

Compared to other countries' current language and citizenship policies, Belgium is a very interesting case. Most language and citizenship policies have been developed at the level of the nation-state. As will be explained further later on in this paper, Belgium is a federalized state with a citizenship policy at the national level and integration policies at regional level. Although the Flemish government officially has no voice in the development of Belgium's citizenship policy, we would argue that Flanders is both covertly and overtly pushing its integration policy towards a more (virtual) citizenship policy.

Citizenship is currently very central in the social, political and academic debate, mainly in the context of integration, but in a very diffuse and incoherent way: national, European, global, shared, moral, formal, multicultural, active, social and inclusive citizenship are all variations of citizenship that are often heard in public debates without further clarification or precision. The meaning of citizenship is hardly ever discussed when used in policy discourse or public debate; each interlocutor refers to his or her own definition of citizenship. But what exactly is citizenship? What do politicians mean when they talk about citizenship? What are the ideologies underlying the different adjectives we attach to the concept 'citizenship'? In what contexts are they used? And why is citizenship nowadays so central in the debate?

This article aims to uncover the dynamic interrelations between integration, language and citizenship policies in the particular socio-political and socio-cultural context of Flanders and Belgium. The focus will be on how language is used – consciously and unconsciously – in Flanders as the primary instrument for intertwining integration and citizenship.

The other main region in Belgium is Wallonia. The differences in ideological frameworks underlying the policy choices made in both regions regarding integration and citizenship will be highlighted to gain further insight into the way citizenship has been re-conceptualized and shaped to fit the political and social aspirations of Flanders.

This article is divided into three sections. First, we will conceptualize the notions of citizenship and integration and explore the interrelations between integration, citizenship and language policies. Next, we will address the particular socio-political and socio-cultural situation of Flanders and Belgium. And finally, the first two parts will be linked together by demonstrating how the particular situation in Flanders has led to a highly moral and conditional conceptualization of citizenship in this specific socio-political context.

2. The virtualization of citizenship: Shifting from a formal to a moral concept of citizenship

2.1 Conceptualizing citizenship

The meaning of citizenship has changed throughout history. In Ancient Greece, citizenship referred mainly to the rights to political participation given to an exclusive group of members of the polis. In the Roman Empire, citizenship covered a whole range of legal rights concerning law, property and governance. These rights were attributed on the basis of exclusivity and inequality in a segmented class system. Citizenship in the European city-states of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was reserved for a particular group, namely people born inside the city (thus excluding foreigners born outside the city). The role of the citizen was extended to include a whole range of legal, political, economic, cultural and social rights and duties in the city. With the rise of the nineteenth century nation-state in Europe, citizenship was again expanded to include a larger spatial entity. The nation-states were a combination of a political and economic entity (the state) and a cultural and/or ethnic entity (the nation). Until then, for the most part citizenship had comprised of political and economic rights and duties. In the nineteenth century, new elements were added such as language, culture and norms and values to encompass both dimensions of state and nation. At that time, the 'nation' component of citizenship was at the forefront: citizens as legal members of the nation-state enjoying the same rights and duties. Although the content (comprising an increasing number of rights and duties) and space (covering a larger territory) of citizenship was extended, it must be noted that citizenship remained characterized by exclusivity. It was not equally attributed to all the members of the state.

In the twenty-first century, the two dimensions of citizenship related to the nation-state are still present in social and political debate. However, there seems to be an inversion of the relation between these two dimensions. Until the last century, in policy discourse and public debate citizenship was mostly used to refer to the economic and political rights and duties given by the state to its members through (the acquisition of) nationality. The concept of citizenship was not used so much in the discourse and debate on migration and integration (Dispas 2003). Active citizens were seen as citizens who participated in the political domain through activities such as voting, debating, protesting and lobbying. The definition of citizenship provided by Leary reflects this conception of citizenship: "A bundle of rights – primarily, political participation in the life of the community, the right to vote, and the right to receive protection from the community – as well as obligations"

(2000, 247). Over recent decades however, the center of gravity has shifted again from 'state' to 'nation' and, as will be illustrated, it is possible to find similarities with the processes of nation-state building in the nineteenth century. Presently, cultural rights and duties (such as knowledge of the host society) and the willingness to share a particular set of norms and beliefs are increasingly seen as conditions for people to obtain political and economic rights. At the same time, the relationship between the state and the individual has changed, as the duties of the individual towards the state are increasingly emphasized over the rights granted by the state.

Schinkel (2008) distinguished two layers of citizenship and labeled them formal and moral citizenship. Formal citizenship consists of a set of economic and political rights and duties derived from (the acquisition of) nationality: e.g. holding a passport, being protected by the law and having to uphold the law. Moral citizenship refers to a set of values, norms and beliefs – albeit never clearly defined, and open-ended – which members of society are expected to internalize and to act upon.

Over recent years, in Western Europe and especially in Flanders (Belgium) and the Netherlands (Blommaert & Verschueren 1998; Schinkel 2008) the discourse on citizenship has fundamentally changed. Citizenship as a formal and general political and economic concept faded out of the discussions and debates and was steadily replaced by the concept of moral citizenship, mainly within the context of integration and migration. Citizenship, and moral citizenship in particular, continues to be more inclusive of certain social groups within society and exclusive of other groups, predominantly basing this differentiation on the socio-economic and migration background of these groups and individuals. The shift from formal to moral citizenship has been so radical that moral citizenship has become a condition for obtaining formal citizenship and fulfilling imposed duties and a condition for exercising the rights granted. Being an active citizen is no longer defined as participating on the public stage and trying to influence political processes, shaping and reshaping social conditions. But a strong tendency is displayed, focusing on individuals and their responsibilities and duties. The social more, rather than the political dimensions of citizenship, are highlighted and democracy is seen more in terms of consensus and sameness than in terms of contestation and difference (Biesta 2011).

Paradoxically, one could state that being an active citizen today – especially in the context of integration – means being a passive citizen with regard to the political dimensions of citizenship in that the citizen has to comply with a vague set of national norms and values.

2.2 Integration and citizenship policies intertwined

The change in the conceptualization of citizenship – moral citizenship increasingly prevailing over formal citizenship in policy discourse and social debate – can

be situated in the transition of Europe into a “super-diverse” society (Vertovec 2007). European societies are characterized by a dynamic interplay of variables among an increased number of new immigrants who have arrived over the last decade in small and scattered groups. These are immigrants with multiple origins who are connected transnationally, with different socio-economic backgrounds, and legally stratified (Vertovec 2007).

Socio-economic and socio-political developments, such as the fall of the ‘iron curtain’, the extension of the EU, globalization processes and continuing poverty in (mainly) African countries have increased migration into Western European countries. At the same time, Europe is going through a process of economic and political unification. Both of these processes have had an important effect on the different nation-states across Europe (Horner 2009; Van Avermaet 2009). On the one hand, the (illusion of a) mono-cultural society seems to have been lost forever with the influx of languages, cultures and lifestyles from all over the world; on the other hand, the nation-states are giving up ever more powers and competences to the European Union, powers which were previously considered to belong to the sole sovereignty of the nation-state (e.g. the symbolic value of creating a monetary union cannot be overestimated in this respect).

Questions about the meaning of national identity, and how to maintain social cohesion and preserve national, cultural and linguistic heritage are of growing concern for policy makers and society as a whole (Van Avermaet 2009). In response to these challenges, European countries have developed integration policies. Blommaert and Verschueren (1998) define these policies both as the goals of the government’s policies (migrants ultimately becoming ‘integrated’ into the host society) and the crystallization of the philosophy of (Belgian) migrant politics. In other words, according to Blommaert and Verschueren, integration refers both to the political goodwill (of Belgians) to accommodate foreigners, and also to the position which migrants should eventually occupy in society. Although legislation has been passed and countless policy papers are being written in order to implement integration policies, a precise definition of integration has never been formulated, pinpointing the exact criteria for integration, the endpoint of integration and the precise target groups of the integration policies. Horner (2009, 122) calls it the ‘semantic vagueness of integration’. Consequently, the integration process remains under the exclusive control of the majority group: at any time criteria can be altered, target groups can be expanded and endpoints can be moved forward by policy makers as well by wider society. The policy makers are the privileged ones mastering and manipulating the norms used for measuring integration (Silverstein 1996). Migrants play no part in the determination of the conditions and modalities of integration, yet at the same time they are held solely responsible for the success or failure of their process of integration (Blommaert & Verschueren 1998;

Horner 2009). Due to the vagueness of the term and the increasing contestation – especially among the migrant population – of a nonreciprocal concept of integration, the term has become obsolete (Blommaert & Verschueren 1998; Schinkel 2008) and new concepts and frames of reference came into use. However – as will be demonstrated in the analysis below – the underlying ideas and paradigms of integration have been maintained, including aspects such as the arbitrariness of the criteria for integration and the exclusion of the minority group from negotiating the conditions of integration.

This led to a re-conceptualization of citizenship based on the interplay between moral citizenship, that is seen as a condition for obtaining formal citizenship. Such moral citizenship is being crystallized through the knowledge of the language and moral values of the nation-state. An increasingly larger number of European countries have passed legislation making language proficiency and knowledge of the host society conditions for obtaining nationality, residency or even entrance to the territory (Van Avermaet 2012). Yet on the other hand, moral citizenship continues to play a role even after the acquisition of formal citizenship. After becoming a formal citizen with political and economic rights and duties, migrants have to continue demonstrating their proficiency in the national language and their adherence to the norms, values and beliefs of the host society. Hence, full moral citizenship is achieved through a long process of integration in the host society. According to Schinkel (2008), moral citizenship will never be achieved by some immigrants; they can never become and/or will never be perceived as ‘full’ citizens. The process of becoming a citizen of their host country is never ending. The following comment often made to descendants of migrants, born in Belgium, is a clear example: “For a migrant, your Dutch isn’t bad at all”.

In the current social and political discourse, the concepts of integration and citizenship have become interchangeable. This is neither a neutral nor just a semantic evolution susceptible to modes or trends in public debate; rather it has significant consequences. Immigrants coming to Western European countries not only have to integrate in the host societies, but they have to do so by going through a compulsory and formalized trajectory, adopting the language, values, norms and beliefs of the new society – or in other words becoming a moral citizen.

In the Netherlands and in Flanders (Belgium), new immigrants have to take an integration course that is called ‘*in-burgering*’ and consists of a language course and a course in societal knowledge referred to as the norms and values of the host society. ‘Inburgering’ literally means ‘becoming a citizen’. This implies that immigrants are not seen as citizens before migration, or at least not citizens of the ‘right kind’ living by moral standards reconcilable with the host society. As we saw earlier, citizenship was historically a general concept referring to the predominantly political and economic rights and duties given by a state to *all* of its nationals. By

contrast, moral citizenship is almost exclusively used in the context of integration and refers to *specific* groups of members of society of immigrant descent. This moral scrutiny is applied to migrants – new and old – who come to European host societies via labor migration, family unification, matrimonial migration and as asylum seekers from Turkey, Morocco, the South of the world and Eastern-European countries (see Section 3.3 below).

However, it is not only first-generation migrants who have to demonstrate unremittingly and continually how good their linguistic and societal knowledge is. The requirement to achieve and continuously demonstrate moral citizenship is passed on to the second and third (and even fourth...) generations of people of immigrant descent. Members of the majority are exempted of this kind of moral scrutiny. Schinkel (2008) called this the virtualization of citizenship. As he puts it

The situation arises, at least for a part of the population, that people are citizens in the formal sense, but their integration and consequently their citizenship is considered to be defective. Thus, their citizenship is still questioned.

(Schinkel 2008, 55)

Moral – more than formal – citizenship is now depicted as the endpoint of integration, but this endpoint will always remain out of reach for (new) immigrants; it will never be fully achieved. In recent years, attempts have been made by policy makers in Western European countries to define and describe the peculiarities particularities of national identity. This has led to social and political debates, e.g. in the Netherlands and in France, resulting mostly in a list of rights and duties which largely resembled the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, mainly underlining the separation between church and state, equality between men and women and freedom of speech. Of course, the real specificity of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is its universal relevance as opposed to national (or cultural and ethnic) peculiarities. So, the norms, values and beliefs that immigrants, as part of ‘their’ integration process, are supposed to acquire and meet, are not made explicit since it is in the interest of the majority group (the privileged) to keep these norms implicit and easy to manipulate. And the question is whether the norms can be made explicit and presented as common values for the nation, given the fact that diversity is a unique and distinguishing feature of every society.

2.3 Citizenship and language policies

We have highlighted earlier that both policy makers and society at wide consider the national language and knowledge of society to be essential and definable elements of moral citizenship. Under the same assumption, proficiency in the national language and knowledge of society can thus be used as ‘objective’ measures for moral citizenship.

The national language is viewed as intrinsic part of national identity; language is considered an indicator of loyalty, patriotism, belonging, inclusion, and membership (Shohamy 2006). The construction of language ideologies does not happen abruptly or accidentally but is always situated in specific social, historic and political contexts – e.g. the socio-economic and the socio-political developments in Europe combined with a rapid transformation into a multicultural and multilingual society. Furthermore, language ideologies are not only socially and politically situated, but are also connected to instances of identity construction, and power relations in societies (Blommaert & Verschueren 1998; Blackledge & Pavlenko 2002).

The language ideologies that currently dominate the integration and citizenship discourse consist largely of the following elements (Silverstein 1996; Piller 2001; Blackledge 2005; Shohamy 2006; Milani 2008; Horner 2009): (1) the use of one common language by all members of society is a prerequisite for achieving social cohesion; (2) social cohesion can only be guaranteed by acquiring the standard variety of that national language; (3) language proficiency is a condition for social participation and must therefore be acquired before participating; (4) language proficiency is seen as a marker for knowledge of the culture and social norms and values; and (5) unwillingness or refusal to learn and use the dominant language is regarded as a sign of disloyalty and defective integration and a threat to social cohesion. These ideologies are propagated and repeated continuously by policy makers, unaffected by academic or empirical repudiation. They become common sense, or in the words of Bourdieu, they become “doxa”, that is, experiences through which “the natural and social world appears as self-evident” (1977, 167). This encompasses what falls within the limits of the thinkable and sayable (“the universe of possible discourse”), a limit which “goes without saying because it comes without saying” (Bourdieu 1977, 167).

Finally, in many of the European countries that have language requirements as main part of their integration policies, language tests play a central role in the integration machinery and function as gatekeepers of the national order. They are powerful tools, and are perceived as objective and beyond discussion, despite the fact that language tests are social constructs and reflect the norms and values of those who have the power to develop the language test.

3. Socio-political and socio-cultural context in Belgium and Flanders

In order to deconstruct and make apparent the dynamic processes between language policies, integration and citizenship, we can apply the conceptualization of citizenship, as elucidated in the first part of this article, to the particular

socio-political and socio-cultural situation of Flanders as part of the Belgian state structure. To fully understand these mechanisms, the second part of this article will therefore explain the Belgian state structure, the differences in the ideological frames of reference between Flanders and Wallonia and the migration history of Belgium.

3.1 The Belgian state structure

Although Belgium is a relatively small country – with a little over 30,000 square kilometers and 11 million inhabitants – it is characterized by a complex state structure. Since the 1970s, Belgium evolved from a unitary state with one central government to a federal state with three different policy levels. Even now after forty years, the constitutional state reform of Belgium is still an incomplete and ongoing process, consisting mainly of a centrifugal redistribution of powers, transferring authority from the federal to the regional level.

As a federal state, Belgium consists of different policy levels: the federal policy level and the regional policy level, itself differentiated between the regions and the communities. Each policy level has its own parliament and government. Based on the principle of ‘*one community, one language*’, the legislator has attempted to create linguistically homogeneous regions (Van Avermaet & Gysen 2009). Dutch is the official language in Flanders, French in Wallonia, and German in the German-speaking part, while the Brussels-Capital Region is officially bilingually Dutch and French.

Unlike in most other countries, in Belgium the different authorities related to citizenship are not connected to one policy level but are distributed between the federal and the regional levels. Authority for formal citizenship matters belongs to the federal level: (1) migration policy, voting rights for foreigners, anti-discrimination and anti-racism policies; (2) entrance to the country; (3) permanent residency and (4) acquisition of nationality. The regional level has authority for the implementation of integration and languages policies for migrants.

This division of authorities between the levels of government has considerable consequences. For example, an immigrant who doesn’t meet Flemish integration requirements cannot be sanctioned with a denial of federal rights. Or in the reverse situation, Flanders does not have the authority to impose an integration policy as a condition for entrance to the territory, permanent residence and acquisition of nationality. At the same time, at the federal level, unlike in most other European countries, language proficiency and knowledge about the host society are not requirements for obtaining formal citizenship.

Regardless of the motive for immigration (e.g. seeking asylum, permanent or temporary residence), prior to entering the Belgian territory there are no language

or other integration conditions. Since 2000, the procedure for acquiring Belgian nationality has been seen as one of the most lenient procedures in Europe, for the moment at least. The legislator aimed to promote integration by granting Belgian nationality based on elementary demands such as years of residence and presenting a number of legal documents. The procedure itself is free of charge. However, conditions regarding language proficiency, adherence to norms and values and social participation are slowly and quietly being introduced into the formal citizenship policies.

Due to the particular socio-political context, the Belgian society is characterized by a high level of linguistic sensitivity. Language and politics are strongly intertwined – this is called the ‘communitisation’ of the social and political debate. Almost every economic, social and political discussion is, to a large extent, reduced to cultural differences between the two main (linguistic) communities of Flanders and Wallonia. In this context, the public and political discourses on language, the use of other languages or language varieties, the multilingual reality in education or language and integration in society at large are highly ideological (Van Avermaet & Gysen 2009).

3.2 Different frames of reference regarding integration and citizenship in Flanders and Wallonia

As mentioned above, in Belgium the legislative powers in terms of formal and moral citizenship belong, respectively, to the federal and the regional level. This implies that, unlike in most other European countries, elements of moral citizenship such as language proficiency and knowledge of the host society officially cannot (currently) be made conditional for obtaining formal citizenship. This also implies that each region could develop an integration policy based on different ideological traditions and views on migration, multiculturalism and multilingualism (Van Avermaet & Gysen 2009). The ideological paradigms which underpin the Flemish and Walloon integration policies are often described by policy makers, public opinion and scholars as fundamentally different from each other.

Martiniello (1995) outlined the differences in Flemish and Walloon integration policies by contrasting civic nationalism and cultural nationalism. Nationalism in Wallonia is described as a (French) republican approach defining the nation as a political community based on a constitution, laws and citizenship. Newcomers can become part of the community, irrespective of their ethnic or cultural background, if they are willing to respect the political rules and adopt the civic and national culture (Martiniello 1995; Loobuyck & Jacobs 2010). Flanders regards itself more as a cultural community (in the German sense of ‘Volk’, nation), emphasizing the importance of a common history, language and

religion. A cultural community is therefore less open to newcomers, because only those who belong to a particular cultural and national identity can obtain citizenship (Loobuyck & Jacobs 2010).

This makes it clear why integration and citizenship policies are more politicized in Flanders than in Wallonia. Differences in culture, ethnicity and language are at the very heart of the Flemish ideological framework, whereas in Wallonia the civic and political perspectives on community almost necessitate a negation of these very differences.

However, while these explanatory models depict dichotomous representations of socio-political situations, reality of course is always more complex and continuous. Loobuyck and Jacobs (2010) define Flemish nationalism as democratic cultural nationalism which aims to protect a common identity, language, culture and territory especially from Francophone influences, due to the French linguistic and cultural domination of Flanders in the past. This kind of cultural nationalism is open to newcomers, as long as they learn the language and history and adopt the culture – in the sense of the norms and values – of the Flemish community (but not forgetting, as pointed out earlier, that these norms and values are never completely made explicit).

Adam (2010, 2011a, 2011b) developed a conceptual framework for describing the integration and citizenship policies in Flanders and Wallonia, based on two continuums: (1) the degree of state intervention (interventionist versus *laissez-faire*) and (2) the degree of assimilation (multiculturalist versus assimilationist). Within this new framework, Flemish integration policies are defined as predominantly interventionist–assimilationist and Walloon integration policies as predominantly *laissez-faire* – multiculturalist.

3.3 Transition into a super-diverse society

The recent migration history of Belgium can be subdivided into four periods leading up to a rapid transition into a multicultural and super-diverse society: (1) a period of (predominantly low-skilled) labour migration during the 1960's and the first half of the 1970's; (2) labour migration was ended with the so-called migration-stop in 1974 and limiting migration to family reunification, matrimonial migration, asylum claims and EU-migration; (3) a period of continued family reunification and matrimonial migration in the 1980's and 1990's and (4) since the decade following 2000, continued family reunification and matrimonial migration has been complemented by increasing asylum migration and migration from the new European Union member states such as Poland and Bulgaria and Romania following the consecutive EU-enlargements (Martiniello et al. 2010).

This transition into a super-diverse society, as it is in other parts of Western-Europe, (Vertovec 2007) has increased feelings of uncertainty and destabilization, and hence led to questions of identity, the reinforced need for a common language and shared norms and beliefs as well as the advantage or necessity of implementing civic integration programs in the different regions. However, this process occurred at very different paces in Wallonia and Flanders.

4. Language policies in Flanders: Citizenship and integration intertwined

The dynamics described in part two regarding the Belgian state structure; the ideological differences in Flanders and Wallonia and the migration history of Belgium are instrumental for us to understand the development of a highly moral and conditional interpretation of citizenship in Flanders and the reactionary inward-orientated attempts made by the Flemish government to achieve this throughout integration and language policies. First, the Flemish policy context will be discussed in 4.1 and 4.2. By way of comparison, in 4.3 the language policy context of Wallonia will be presented.

4.1 Sub-state nation-building in Flanders

Since the second half of the twentieth century, and in accordance with its ideological framework of democratic cultural nationalism on the one hand (Loobuyck & Jacobs 2010) and an interventionist-assimilationist policy approach on the other (Adam 2010), Flanders has continuously worked to gain more cultural, political and financial autonomy. The process of sub-state nation-building became even more manifest from the 1990s onward, shaped by the electoral success of (extreme) right-wing parties; the rise of a minority nationalism and the ongoing politicization of migration and integration issues (Adam 2010). By minority nationalism we mean ethno-cultural groups who think of themselves as nations within a larger state and have mobilized to form their own self-governing political communities, either as an independent state or as an autonomous region within a larger state (Kymlicka 1999). The current processes of sub-state nation-building and minority nationalism in Flanders cannot be seen in isolation from the rapid transition of Flanders into a multicultural society since World War II, as mentioned above. Adam (2011a) describes the sub-state nation-building process in Flanders as follows:

The gained self-confidence due to devolution seems to have been translated into an interventionist-assimilationist integration policy, obliging new migrants and Belgians with an immigrant background to 'take' Dutch language courses and civic integration courses since 2003. (Adam 2011a, 5)

The development of integration policies in many European countries partly has to be seen as a token of the revival of the nation-state, with its traditional paradigm of one language, one identity, and one uniform set of shared societal norms and cultural values. This is supposed to instill people with a feeling of security, order and confidence. This revival of the nation-state contrasts to the processes of globalization, the unification and enlargement of the EU, on the one hand, and the increasing importance attached to the regions and the localities, the city, the neighborhood, on the other hand (Van Avermaet 2009). With respect to these processes, Flanders is an intriguing case. As a region, Flanders exerts pressure on Belgium; it attempts to erode Belgium's role as nation-state, challenging the idea that Belgium as a whole shares a uniform set of societal norms and cultural values. But at the same time, while it attempts to construct its own nation-state, with a shared set of societal norms and cultural values, Flanders, like elsewhere in Europe, is becoming more culturally diverse. This super-diversity, however, is perceived as a threat to the creation of the culturally homogeneous nation-state of Flanders. To counteract this perceived threat, Flanders attempts to use the same recipes as other traditional nation-states in Europe: developing an integration policy.

The pursuit of sub-state nation-building becomes apparent through the (often explicit) discourse of Flemish policy makers. The current President of the Flemish Parliament, giving a speech entitled “Identity and Autonomy”, stated that:

(...) The paradox remains: although the Flemings do not – as other nations – like to exhibit their identity, Flanders has become without a doubt more self-confident. The Flemish sub-state aspires to counter this lack of identity and to support a Flemish identity that should lead to nation-building. But this awareness of common interests has not yet sunk in to convince the entire population of it.¹

Besides the fact that the Flemings are referred to as “a nation”, this is a clear example of the social construction of a national identity, and the vagueness that continues to be present in such a social construct. In his speech, referred to in the above quote, the President of the Flemish Parliament, who belongs to a political party using the Flemish identity as a trademark, however, seems to be puzzled by the precise nature of this Flemish identity. In this short excerpt, he states firstly that Flemings do not like to show their identity (implying that they do have one), but then finds that the Flemings do lack a proper identity and continues by saying that they are not aware of their own identity (again assuming that such an identity exists). So, what precisely is the problem addressed in the speech? Is it the absence of a Flemish identity and thus the need to construct such an identity? Is it the lack

1. Speech ‘Identity and Autonomy’, Jan Peumans, President of the Flemish Parliament 11 July 2011, Flemish holiday.

of cognizance of this identity and thus the need to raise awareness of it? Or is it the proposal of modesty as a characteristic of the Flemish nature? The speaker does not offer an answer to these questions as he does not clarify further exactly what such Flemish identity consists of.

Another well-known feature of the process of constructing nation-states is language. As Bauman and Briggs (2003) state, the ideology of one national language (i.e. the standard variety) becomes a powerful trigger of group belonging. Mastery of that language is sold as a central pillar of the well-being of the national order. The use of one common language in Flanders is considered an indispensable element in this process of sub-state nation-building. The current Flemish Minister of Integration expressed this as follows:

Participation and involvement in the Flemish society starts with knowing our language. Without a common language there is no solid society. Dutch language proficiency is the entry ticket for education and employment.²

4.2 Citizenship as achievement in Flanders

In the first part of this article we deconstructed the virtualization of citizenship as the complex interdependence between formal and moral citizenship. Moral citizenship, through integration, is made a condition of formal citizenship and participation in the society. However, after acquiring formal citizenship, the process of moral citizenship persists through a daily proof of willingness to integrate. Every verbal and non-verbal act of an immigrant is judged on an undefined and ever-changing integration scale (Schinkel 2008). The conditions that have to be met for someone to become fully integrated or achieve full moral citizenship remain unattainable or virtual. The intertwining of citizenship and integration, of formal and moral citizenship, is becoming even more obvious in the context of Flanders and Belgium. Flanders and Wallonia, as regional political entities, do not have legal authority regarding formal citizenship (migration policies and acquisition of nationality). Although Flanders vigorously aspires to become a sub-state nation within the Belgian framework, it has not yet succeeded in acquiring the legal powers accompanying these aspirations. In striving towards this goal, Flanders seeks to implement a pervasive citizenship policy by stretching the boundaries of the attributed authorities and creating a moral citizenship through integration and language policies. Some of the most telling examples of these processes will now be presented, together with the consequences for migrants in particular and the Flemish society as a whole.

2. Speech, Geert Bourgois, Flemish Minister of Integration, 13 October 2009.

Year 2004 can be considered as a turning point regarding Flemish integration policies. Until 2003, the integration policy in Flanders was characterized as a policy of reception (*onthaalbeleid*) aimed at familiarizing newcomers with Flemish society and promoting their (economic) participation (Van Avermaet & Gysen 2009). In 2003, the Flemish parliament approved the Act on the Flemish Integration Policy (*inburgeringsbeleid*), which was then implemented as of April 2004. The new integration policy is mainly built around the provision of an integration program comprising (1) a Dutch language course at CEFR level A1 (Council of Europe 2001); (2) an introduction to the Flemish and Belgian society; (3) careers guidance on education, training or employment opportunities and (4) personal coaching. New migrants taking up long-term residence in Flanders and ministers of recognized religions and confessions were required to participate in the integration program. Newcomers to the Brussels Capital Regions and citizens of European Union Member states, the European Economic Area and Switzerland were not obliged but encouraged to do so.

Since being adopted in 2003, the Integration Act has been amended many times, invariably restricting the modalities of implementation. The most revealing change made to the Integration Act was to extend the target group from newly-arrived immigrants to all first and second generation migrants. Migrants who had already resided for a longer period of time in Flanders or had been born in Flanders were suddenly labeled as eligible for integration. They were no longer considered to be sufficiently integrated, and their moral citizenship was questioned, although in most cases they had already acquired formal citizenship and many of them had already been living in Belgium for more than 30 years. Within the larger target groups, certain sub-groups were prioritized such as the recently immigrated, the unemployed and parents of school-age children. New categories of people required to participate in an integration program were added, e.g. Belgians born abroad and having at least one parent not born abroad. The integration program was free of charge when first implemented in 2003, but a few years later participants started having to pay for an integration course. A sanction system of administrative fines between 50 and 5000 euro was put into effect in case of non-participation when required, irregular participation or not accomplishing the integration course without a valid reason.

When the new legislation first came into force in 2004, a Flemish minister was appointed for the first time with the specific authority to implement an integration policy. At the same time, the Flemish government introduced the notion of “active and shared” citizenship. “Active and shared” citizenship was explicitly linked to the integration policy. In addition, the responsibility for social cohesion was shifted to the individual citizens (Schinkel 2008). Under the heading “Living together in diversity”, the Flemish government clarified its

understanding of “active and shared citizenship” (Flemish Government 2004, own translation):

Flemish society has changed profoundly in recent decades. Diversity has become an irreversible reality. This evolution not only implies an enrichment of our society, but also a challenge for its social cohesion. If we want to address this challenge efficiently and effectively, everyone has to be conscious of his or her individual responsibility. This means that everyone has to demonstrate ‘an active and shared citizenship’, comprising: (1) participating in our society with respect for others; (2) contributing to prosperity by work and personal effort; (3) respecting the fundamental rights and liberties and the norms stipulated in the Constitution and legislation; (4) not excluding or discriminating against others based on their ethnic, religious or cultural background. Living together is a responsibility of everyone: the government, enterprises, schools and associations, but above all, of the individual citizen. The Flemish government cannot solve all the problems of society. It can define the framework, [and] determine the conditions permitting to live together in diversity.

By incorporating the notion of “active and shared” citizenship into the chapter of the policy document enumerating the policy measures regarding integration and intercultural cohesion, the Flemish government made clear that citizenship has to be achieved exclusively by people who migrate(d) to Flanders or people who are considered to be migrants by affiliation (second generation immigrants) – citizenship does not apply to all members (all citizens) of Flemish society. Moreover, “active and shared” citizenship is no longer seen as something that is spatially and temporally contextualized, which becomes evident in practical ways. It has become an achievement and its success or failure depends on the responsibility of a specific group in society. The conditions and criteria for processes of integration and citizenship are controlled by the policy makers and the majority population group. The Flemish government states clearly that individual citizens are responsible for the social cohesion and quality of living together and by doing so the government denies its own responsibility for implementing anti-discrimination policies and guaranteeing equal access to e.g. social services, labor market, and education. It is also interesting to read in this policy document that diversity has now become an irreversibly reality, as if the Flemish government did once consider diversity as reversible (but that this point in time has regrettably now passed).

As demonstrated above, the Flemish government has no authority when it comes to migration policies and the acquisition of Belgian nationality. The Flemish government cannot stipulate conditions for migrants prior to arrival or for migrants who want to apply for permanent residency. These limitations, resulting from the Belgian constitutional framework, do not, however moderate the Flemish government’s attempts to implement a comprehensive and compulsory

integration policy and to push the legal boundaries of what Flanders can do with regard to integration by installing policies with stricter conditions and sanctions. To illustrate this area of tension, two short examples will be given of attempts made by the Flemish government to influence the migration flows to Flanders. First, a special integration course, consisting of an introduction to the Flemish society and the Dutch language has been developed for candidate migrants in their countries of origin. This introductory package will be made available free of charge in a certain number of countries characterized by high migration rates to Flanders – of course without the slightest impact on the formal migration policies implemented by the federal policy level. Secondly, the Flemish government is currently developing strategies to raise the awareness of transnational marriage, and discourage second and third generation immigrants from entering into it.

Although the areas in which the Flemish government can develop integration policies are limited to social welfare, employment and language related policy issues, the following examples demonstrate the eagerness of the Flemish government to make its integration policies as conditional and restrictive as possible and by doing so to gradually displace integration by virtual or moral citizenship.

In recent years, increasing emphasis has been put on language proficiency in Dutch or the person's willingness to learn the Dutch language as a prerequisite for having access to social services. To benefit from social housing programs, a candidate has to prove his/her proficiency in the Dutch language at CEFR level A1 or has to be prepared to take a Dutch language course. Someone who receives social security benefits and is seen as lacking the necessary language competences (often based on the arbitrary criteria of social service assistants) can be obliged to take a Dutch language course. The attendance of Dutch language classes is monitored by the social services, and non-attendance or insufficient attendance can lead to a discontinuation of social security. In the same way, social services can turn Dutch language courses into a requirement for receiving unemployment benefits. Although Flanders is not authorized to develop policies to exclude people from entering the country; for permanent residency or for formal citizenship, it has developed policies that can exclude people from those societal domains for which they have the legal authority. And, needless to say, the most vulnerable of the intended groups (e.g. unemployed or low skilled, illiterate and/or low educated immigrants) are affected by these kinds of conditional policies.

Unsurprisingly, on more than one occasion the integration policy of the Flemish government has been the object of official contestation, in some cases being taken to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. The policy has also received criticism from international organizations such as the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination of the United Nations.

In spite of all the efforts made by the Flemish government to implement restrictive and compulsory integration policies, the social impact of these policies remains very limited. Based on social impact studies (Van Avermaet 2012) it can be demonstrated that the concrete integration and citizenship policy measures implemented by the Flemish government do not achieve their objectives of advancing reciprocal mechanisms and dynamics of social participation between all members of society, as set out in legislation, policy documents and policy discourse. The real goals of the integration and citizenship policies seem to be much more implicit and rather aimed at assimilation than integration because they are nonreciprocal, nonnegotiable and use the norms and values of the majority group as single frame of reference (Blommaert & Verschueren 1998).

Paradoxically, the implicit goals of these policies appear to be aimed at the majority group rather than the migrant population as they demonstrate the conditions and demands migrants have to fulfill in order to be allowed to participate in Flemish society.

Every person obliged or entitled to enroll in an integration program has to sign a contract committing him/herself to attend the different courses comprised in the integration program on a regular basis. People can be sanctioned if they do not meet these conditions. Strangely enough, although the language courses that participants are obliged to take are set at certain proficiency levels (i.e. CEFR level A1), they never have to demonstrate (e.g. by taking a test) that the prescribed proficiency level has actually been achieved. The integration attestations are awarded merely on the basis of course *attendance*. No standardized tests are used to evaluate the participants' output level at the end of the integration program. Consequently, the value of the integration attestation is unclear and also comes under question (and is consequently not recognized) by different socio-economic actors and the wider society.

After a decade of implementing a compulsory integration policy, the Flemish government is still – openly and actively – looking for ways to accord social appreciation and formal rights to the accomplishment of an integration program. This can be seen in the policy paper of the current Flemish Minister of Integration (Beleidsnota Inburgering 2009–2014):

Both as government and society, we expect new Flemings to do the necessary things to gain their place in our society as soon as possible. Participating in an integration program is for many of the new Flemings the first step in this process. On the other hand, new Flemings making an effort to integrate should get the necessary appreciation.

Besides the fact that this clearly demonstrates that citizenship is something an immigrant has to achieve, it also shows that the current Flemish Minister of

Integration is concerned about the lack of social impact and reciprocity regarding the integration efforts demanded from migrants.

While the integration policy in Flanders is of a conditional nature and strongly linked to a discourse of ‘nation building’ and (sub)national identity, the Walloon context is completely different and follows a slower pace. This will be discussed in the next section.

4.3 Wallonia, integration policies at a slower but more and more steady pace

The electoral success of extreme right-wing parties (or even the existence of such political parties) claiming regional independence and characterizing the political context of Flanders has not been mirrored in the south of Belgium (Adam 2010). The Walloon region remained strongly attached to the federal level, although the first steps towards regional awareness have been taken. The Walloon Minister-President stated that:

Wallonia still needs a unifying and mobilizing project that will support a collective Walloon consciousness without complexes. 2010, the year of the thirtieth anniversary of the Walloon Region, offers the occasion to deal with this question.³

To start this new initiative, the Walloon region has been renamed *Wallonia*, as the Minister-President explained:

(The name) Walloon Region only described our region as a part of a whole and we gave it a new motto ‘La Wallonnie, Terre d’Accueil – Wallonia, the welcoming land’.⁴

Even without sub-state nation-building processes, for example in Flanders, these new labeling practices of the Walloon region demonstrate the same ambiguity and vagueness as the quest to grasp the Flemish identity we find in the northern part of Belgium. Wallonia clearly wants to position itself in relation to Flanders as a region of its own (and not only as a part of Belgium), but at the same time it wants to emphasize its openness to others – implicitly opposing the integration and citizenship policies of Flanders.

In the national election campaigns of 2007 and 2010 as well as during the highly-strained period forming a government in 2010 and 2011 (the longest government formation in Belgian history), the Flemish political parties made integration and citizenship one of the most important points on the Belgian political

3. La Libre Belgique, 12 March 2010: “Wallonie, Terre d’accueil”.

4. La Libre Belgique, 12 March 2010: “Wallonie, Terre d’accueil”.

agenda and in doing so, raising regional consciousness in the north and the south of Belgium. Since then, there has been an increased political will on both sides of the linguistic border to restrict the nationality procedure. In the coalition agreement of 1 December 2011, a reform of the procedure for nationality acquisition was announced, comprising principally of the following elements: (1) uninterrupted residence and integration will lead to obtaining the nationality and not the other way around; (2) conditions regarding language and integration of the applicants will be formally implemented; (3) the economic participation of the applicant may be an element of appreciation of integration; and (4) the possibilities to deprive Belgian nationality of someone will be expanded. These reforms, announced in the coalition agreement, clearly reflect the Flemish perspective on language, integration and citizenship, but also leave much margin for interpretation and negotiation. The concrete realization of the planned policy measures will unquestionably be subject of fierce debate between the different political parties in the time to come.

Until recently, integration as an aspect of moral citizenship was absent from the political and social debate in Wallonia. However, influenced by the Flemish language and integration policies, and undoubtedly also by the examples of citizenship policies implemented in neighboring countries such as Germany and the Netherlands, the government of the Walloon region has recently announced plans to initiate integration programs for newly arrived immigrants. These will comprise French language courses, a course on knowledge about the society and an orientation course to promote social participation and employment. Even though the specific details of these policy measures still need to be clarified, it is apparent that the ideological framework of the Walloon government regarding integration and citizenship is gradually emulating the Flemish model.

Recent developments – the introduction of language and other integration measures as conditions for the acquisition of the Belgian nationality and the intention to provide integration courses for newly arrived migrants in Wallonia – demonstrate the progressive acceptance of the conceptualization of moral citizenship at the federal and regional policy levels in Belgium.

5. Conclusion

The specific structure of the Belgian state entails that Flanders has a limited impact on migration policies and the policy for obtaining formal citizenship in Belgium. One of the strategies adopted by the Flemish government to deal with these limitations is to stretch the boundaries of the attributed authority and implement a moral citizenship policy through integration and language policies. A second

strategy consists of influencing the federal policy level through a peremptory process of devolving powers of migration and formal citizenship policies from central to regional government. This is substantiated by the move to frame these issues as cultural differences between the two main linguistic communities Flanders and Wallonia.

In this article we have used the concrete case of Flanders to try and show how intertwined integration and citizenship discourses and policies have become in contemporary super-diverse societies. Flanders is a clear example of how integration is gradually becoming interchangeable with the concept of virtual or moral citizenship. The fact that (moral) citizenship has become ever more intertwined with integration has as a consequence that the concept of citizenship has shifted, in a subtle way, from a dynamic and contextualized process, which shapes itself in daily practice through social networks, into “citizenship as achievement”. This is a process that is the sole responsibility of certain groups in society, and even more the responsibility of the individuals within these groups. However, it is an impossible achievement, because some are exempt from it and others will always be perceived as not yet belonging to the category of ‘true citizens’.

Citizenship as social practice is often perceived by wider society as passive, underlining the authoritative aspects of citizenship such as respecting the law and accepting the *status quo* regarding social and economic positions of different social groups. However, citizenship is neither neutral nor passive. It implies and presupposes the acceptance of the rights and duties that stem from the universal concepts around which a society organizes itself; and above all, citizenship can only be realized if every form of discrimination and exclusion that disables the social participation of some members of that society comes to an end. Citizenship as practice is only possible if we start to accept the idea of a diverse, multicultural and a multilingual society, and consequently the concept of multicultural citizenship (Van Avermaet 2009).

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