



Brussels Informatie-, Documentatie- en
Onderzoekscentrum

Brussel

18 Brussel

Brussels and Europe

20th meeting of the Task Force EU Belgium

26th May 2009, Berlaymont Building

Thank you very much!

- Research centres from Flemish & French Communities, USA & UK
- Support from:
 - Flemisch Community – structural funding
 - Brussels Capital-Region
 - King Baudouin Foundation
 - European Commission

General goal & research agenda

- Analysis of the position of Brussels as ‘capital’ of Europe and as seat of countless international institutions, organisations & companies in the ‘world city network’; growth of a political world city
- Complex interaction between European institutional presence and Brussels Capital-Region
- Pressure points & areas of tension



Brussels Informatie-, Documentatie- en
Onderzoekscentrum

Brussel

18 Brussel

Brussels: a Political World City

Brussels: a Political World City

- 50 years after Treaties of Rome EEC/Euratom
- Brussels has become a first-rate political world city with a global impact (Washington, Geneva,...)
- Not because of its demographic dimensions
- Global legal services
- Most important centre of decision-making in EU
- Central junction in international government networks & related NGO networks

Brussels: a Political World City

- Advanced & specialised service economy
- Global connections (Europe, North America, Pacific Asia)
- Brussels exceeds its European political influence & scores highest in connectivity rankings in sector of legal services and law firms
- Top 20 of world cities & Top 10 of European cities
- Brussels outperforms Paris & London in terms of political network makers

Polycentric Headquarters & Capital System

- Brussels – Strasbourg – Luxembourg
- 1992: Edinburgh confirmed 3 permanent seats
- Brussels:
 - Main EU centres of power
 - Council, Commission, daily activities of European Parliament, Economic and Social Committee, Committee of the Regions)
- Decentralised agencies in over 20 cities
- Intercity competition: economic advantages & symbolic capital

No unique 'capital' but long internationalist tradition

- Initial veto Belgian government Van Houtte (Van Zeeland) against Brussels candidacy for the seat of ECSC (1952): pro Liège
- Long lasting consequences & Expo 58 to relaunch campaign in favour of Brussels
- # long internationalist tradition/global ambitions:
 - Palais Mondial/Mundaneum (Otlet)
 - Federal World District/World Confederation (Frank)
 - World Centre of Communication (Andersen & Hébrard)
 - Seat of League of Nations

Not a constitutional status

- Analysis of exact legal status as European 'capital'
- No explicit European legal/constitutional rule
- Political & sociological fact: actual concentration of power/public activity EU
- 1992: decision on official seats after more than 30 years (Treaties of Rome)
- Ruling of Court of Justice of the European Com. Since 1983: shared jurisdiction between member states & European Parliament

Brussels, District of Europe?

- a concept in the frame of an exclusively internal Belgian debate on state reform since 1990's
- Not a European desideratum/request at all: EU has no jurisdiction whatsoever
- Existing federal districts: national capitals (Washington, Brasilia, Canberra)
- No such federal districts in Europe
- Belgian state/Brussels have to guarantee smooth operation

BCR & Europe with Regions

- Analysis of BCR – Europe of Regions
- Role of regional governments in multilevel governance
- Limited direct impact of BCR (Com. Of Regions = consultative)
- More than 300 regional & local representations in Brussels – supraregional network & common interests

City of Intelligence & Capital of Pragmatic Accomodation

- The place to be for lobbyists
- Beneficial to integration and democracy in Europe
- Analysis on a political technical level of all legal forms of lobbying
- Public affairs management/establishment
- High level of transparency & openness
- 3.000 lobbying groups & 15.000 make Brussels a centre of knowledge



Brussels Informatie-, Documentatie- en
Onderzoekscentrum

Brussel

18 Brussel

Interactions between the European Institutional Presence and the Brussels Capital Region

Economic impact

- Attraction of investors and companies
- Internationalisation of the regional economy
- EU generated a direct cash flow (direct & indirect effects) of 7,518.1 million € (2001)
- direct & indirect employment: 92,000 or 12.7%
- Direct: 25.000 (2004)
 - Commission: 19,764
 - Council: 2,619
 - EP: 2,309
 - NATO: 14,131

Socio-demographic impact

- Growing number of foreigners working for international institutions & immigration of migrant workers
- Reinforcing socio-economic dynamics and position of Brussels in world/European city network

Socio-demographic impact

- Risk of reinforcing social duality
 - Int. Institutions offer only a small contribution in employment of semi- and unskilled workers (only 9,000)
 - 40,000 of 95,000 imported workers
- High foreign presence has increased the Brussels population with 77,000 (1999-2007)

Impact on housing market & real estate

- Large impact on housing market (rental & property prices)
- EU & satellite organisations personnel & family: 105,000 or 10% with significant buying power
- Brussels is still one of the cheapest capitals
- Price increases caused by local speculators
- “Eurocrats” are targeted as scapegoat but well-paid foreigners are exploited as target group
- Risk of gentrification of certain districts & need of social construction policy BCR

Local participation of EU citizens

- October 2000-2006 (voter or candidate)
 - Very low degree of participation/registration
 - in despite of infocampaign
 - EU citizens could exercise considerable political influence on coalition formation
 - Potential EU voters: 136,482 (only 18,682 registered in 2006)
 - Potential impact: 18.31%
 - Actual impact: 3.16%

Political interactions

- Implantation of international organisations is complex field of cooperation
- Recent evolution towards structured & institutionalised 'multilogue' between Belgian authorities & EU
- From Beliris to Euriris? (+ European inst.)
- To continue pragmatic approach of structured multilateral debate (Brussels-Europe Task Force)

Political interactions

- BCR & European structure funds (urban renewal)
 - Financial support from European funds is limited but important
 - 1994: 2006
 - ✓ 133 million
 - ✓ 88 projects
 - ✓ 7 municipalities
- Complex decision process: EU – BCR - municipalities

The rise of a multilingual region

- Language usage of European officials & EU-citizens
- “Language Barometer”
- BCR + Halle-Vilvoorde + Nivelles: 200,000 EU citizens from (then) 15 member states (before EU enlargement 2004 & 2007)
- 2005: 154,693 of 15.37% BCR
- English: increased importance
- Identification: limited integration in social life & aversion of language struggle/extremism



PRESSURE POINTS & AREAS OF TENSION

'Imagining' Brussels as capital of Europe

- Representation of Brussels as European centre of power is dogged by negative connotations (Brussels = “European Moloch”)
- Discursive strategies & representation as Eur. Capital
 - Lack of a strong positive image of Brussels
 - International media (1,000 reporters) strongly contributed to create a deep-rooted anti-Brussels image
 - National(ist) media & lack of strong European press

Urban planning & European Quarter

- Laborious evolution towards a visionary pragmatism & public-private partnership
 - Master plan via Schéma Directeur (2001), Ombudsplan (2003) & general coordinator BCR

Impact on urban safety

- No specific safety policy
 - EU internal safety service & external safety: strictly separated
 - Quantitative, not qualitative effect
 - Additional means via Beliris but general safety effect on BCR
 - No ideological instrumentalisation towards more social control
- Pragmatic mobilisation

Dr. Roel De Groof

general coordinator

roel.de.groof@briobrusssel.be