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BSI synopsis. Education in Brussels: complex crisis management

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Introduction

1. In the framework of the Citizens' Forum of Brussels (November 2008 – April 2009), three researchers from Brussels from different disciplines and institutional horizons wrote a summary of the situation of education in Brussels, which was published by the online journal *Brussels Studies* [Janssens et al., 2009]. These dynamics were prolonged by the implementation of an 'education' working group in the framework of the *Brussels Studies Institute (BSI)* created in 2011. The aim of this synopsis is to provide an up-to-date overview of the questions related to the organisation and functioning of education in Brussels. The concrete educational and didactic aspects are dealt with very little in a direct manner, with the focus being on the structuring and organisation of education systems.

2. The updated information is due in great part to the presentations and debates which took place during the study day '*Vers un enseignement bruxellois ? – Naar een Brussels onderwijs ?*' organised by BSI at the Palais des Académies on 30 May 2012. It was also the result of works published by the *Institut Bruxellois de Statistique et d'Analyse (IBSA)* on school populations and by the *Agence de Développement Territorial (ADT)* on whether the supply meets the demand in terms of school availability and the evaluation of the possibilities to build school facilities, as well as research by Eliz Serhadlioglu, Marie Verhoeven and Bernard Delvaux (Girsef, UCL), supported by *Innovlris*, on the catchment of primary schools.

3. Let us mention that this synopsis focuses only on preschool, primary and secondary education, and that non-compulsory¹ higher education is not considered. The spatial framework is the territory of the bilingual Brussels-Capital Region, which includes the city's 19 municipalities. The relations with the outskirts are also taken into account, but mainly in terms of the commuting movements (in-bound and out-bound).

4. This synopsis has three distinct parts. The first specifies the institutional and political framework of education in Brussels. The second establishes a series of observations, which may be considered relatively divided, based on abundant and convergent academic literature. The third part deals with the major challenges and debates related to the education system in Brussels.

1. The framework: communities and organising authorities

5. In Belgium, in 2009, the expenses related to education represented 6.9% of the gross domestic product (GDP), which is slightly above the average for the European Union (5.8%) and the most economically developed countries (4.6% on average for OECD countries).² These expenses have been increasing over the past decade, once again reaching the same level of education expenses as in the 1970s (i.e. approximately 7%, compared with 3% in 1950). Over the past twenty years, the expenses per student have increased in compulsory education, whereas they have decreased sharply in higher education (universities and colleges of higher education). The share of expenses related to teachers' salaries is among the highest in OECD countries, which greatly limits functioning expenses (teaching material, maintenance, etc.) and investment (school buildings). This leads certain observers to say that the education problems in Belgium are neither caused nor resolved by questions of financing alone [Deschamps, 2008; Deschamps, 2010: 3]. The question of the increase in non-wage flexibility is therefore far from being anecdotal.

6. Historically, in Belgium, education and education policy are subjects of deep political and social disagreement between the Catholic pillar and the socialist and liberal pillars, which led in particular to the two education wars of 1879-1884 and 1950-1958 [Witte et al., 2010] and to the 1959 schools pact, a compromise which established free-

¹ Strictly speaking, preschool education is not part of compulsory education, as compulsory school attendance begins at age six and ends at age 18. But, in practice, there is a true organisational and educational continuity between preschool and primary education, and the rate of attendance of preschool education is higher than 90% in Brussels.

² Eurostat data. See the methodological details of the calculation at http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Educational_expenditure_statistics

dom of choice for parents and the freedom to operate a school (through the state financing of all teachers with the diploma required for the subject they teach) [El Berhoumi, 2013]. These conflicts have grown in importance because the educational project of schools, both private (essentially Catholic) and official, goes beyond pure learning and training.³ Education – at least at secondary level – has for some time been an instrument of national and sociopolitical mobilisation [Hroch, 2006: 29] and a critical factor in the development of cultural identities [Devine & Schubotz, 2011]. The organisation of the Belgian school system is therefore both the result and the ferment of the pillarisation of Belgian society [Delgrange, 2010]. The linguistic divide has become more important in the Belgian post-war political system [Witte e.a., 2010].

1.1. *The institutional and political framework*

7. The coexistence of two political, administrative, budgetary and educational frameworks for education (French and Flemish⁴) is the result of the process of the federalisation of the Belgian unitary state, which began at the end of the 1960s [Draelants, 2011]. Two types of federated entity were created. The Communities gradually became competent in customisable and cultural areas such as culture, education and health, whereas the Regions were competent in areas related to territory, such as employment, public works and public transport.

8. In the area of education, the Communities have therefore been the main stakeholders since 1989 (article 127 of the constitution). Only a few elements remain within the competence of the federal authorities, such as defining the beginning and end of compulsory school attendance, the minimum conditions for issuing diplomas and the teachers' pension scheme, as well as the question of the use of languages.

9. The Brussels-Capital Region has very little competence in the area of education (essentially the equipment for technical and vocational schools, in connection with employment and training), even if its competence in the area of urbanism, environment and employment assistance (subsidised contract agents or employment promotion aid) contributes effectively to the smooth running of schools. This means that every recognised and subsidised school in Brussels is subject to the decrees of the French Community⁵ or the Flemish Community (with the exception of private schools, essentially but not exclusively international schools, and European schools,⁶ which are not subsidised by the Communities).

10. There is, however, asymmetry between the institutions as regards the position and function of the Community Commissions connected with the French Community or the Flemish Community [Witte, 1992]. Thus, the French Community Commission (COCOF) also has the power to issue decrees (since 1994, following the transfer by the French Community), which concern subjects such as student transportation and professional reorientation. This is not the case for the Flemish Community Commission (VGC).

11. The French-language schools and the Dutch-language schools therefore exist and function (for the most part) alongside each other in Brussels. Recently, measures were implemented to establish exchanges between the two systems, but the impact will remain limited. The federal authorities may intervene if the (unilingual) Communities are not competent. This is the case, for example, regarding the verification of compulsory school attendance among children who are not enrolled in a school, as well as the creation and subsidisation of bilingual schools [Vancrayebeck, 2012].

³ See Van Gorp et al.. (2011) and Grootaers (1998) for a historical framework of education in Belgium.

⁴ In order to be complete, German education would have to be added, but it does not concern Brussels.

⁵ In order to be more concise, the term French Community, which appears in the legislation, is used here instead of the new name, *Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles*.

⁶ However, within the framework of the general reception policy of the European institutions, the *Régie des bâtiments*, i.e. the Belgian state, took on the responsibility for building the four (and soon five) European schools in Brussels.

12. As regards students, unlike institutions, the principle of sub-nationality does not apply for the moment [Dumont & Van Drooghenbroeck, 2011]. In 1971, the principle of the 'freedom of the head of household' was reintroduced (following an interruption from 1963 to 1971), which gives parents the choice of sending their child to a school in either of the two systems (also with combination possibilities). In other words, only the school itself belongs to one of the two Communities, not the student him or herself [Jans, 2001].

13. But in addition to the two Communities, the Brussels-Capital Region has developed a certain number of instruments in the sphere of education since its creation in 1989. This includes, for example, funding for additional staff for priority education areas (with a linguistic ratio of 73%-27%). In this process, the municipalities of Brussels, followed by COCOF and VGC were involved as partners [Vaesen, 2008], with projects to fight against school absenteeism⁷ and equipment for technical and vocational secondary education.⁸ In recent years, regional action has been focused on the problem of educational capacity in Brussels, in the form of investments in school buildings. In the latter context, in order to legitimise this action, reference was made to the employment policy, which is a regional competence. This investment was disputed by the Flemish government in the constitutional court, which suspended the decision of the Brussels-Capital Region, but did not annul it.⁹

1.2. Distribution of students according to subsidising authority

14. If we examine the distribution of students between the two education systems in Brussels according to the figures for the 2009-2010 school year, we see that the French Community represents 82% of students in preschool, primary and secondary education in Brussels, whereas 18% are enrolled in a school recognised by the Flemish Community, which is significantly higher than the share of Dutch speakers – strictly speaking – living in Brussels, but approximately equivalent

to the proportion of bilingual households in which Dutch is spoken fluently¹⁰ [Janssens, 2013]. The figures differ, however, according to the level of education, with an increase observed in the share of French-language education from preschool to secondary level. It should also

		Preschool	Primary	Secondary
Schools	number	439	394	224
	% FR	65 %	69 %	77 %
	% NL	35 %	31 %	23 %
Students	number	53,486	80,397	88,897
	% FR	78 %	82 %	85 %
	% NL	22 %	18 %	15 %

Table 1. Distribution of schools located in the territory of the Brussels-Capital Region and students enrolled according to the subsidising authority, 2009-2010. Source: CFWB and VGC, data compiled by ADT - BRAT (2012), breakdown by the authors according to the subsidising authority based on VGC statistics.

be noted that in addition to the 223,000 students subsidised by the Communities in schools in Brussels, there are more than 15,000 students who attend European and international schools in the regional territory.

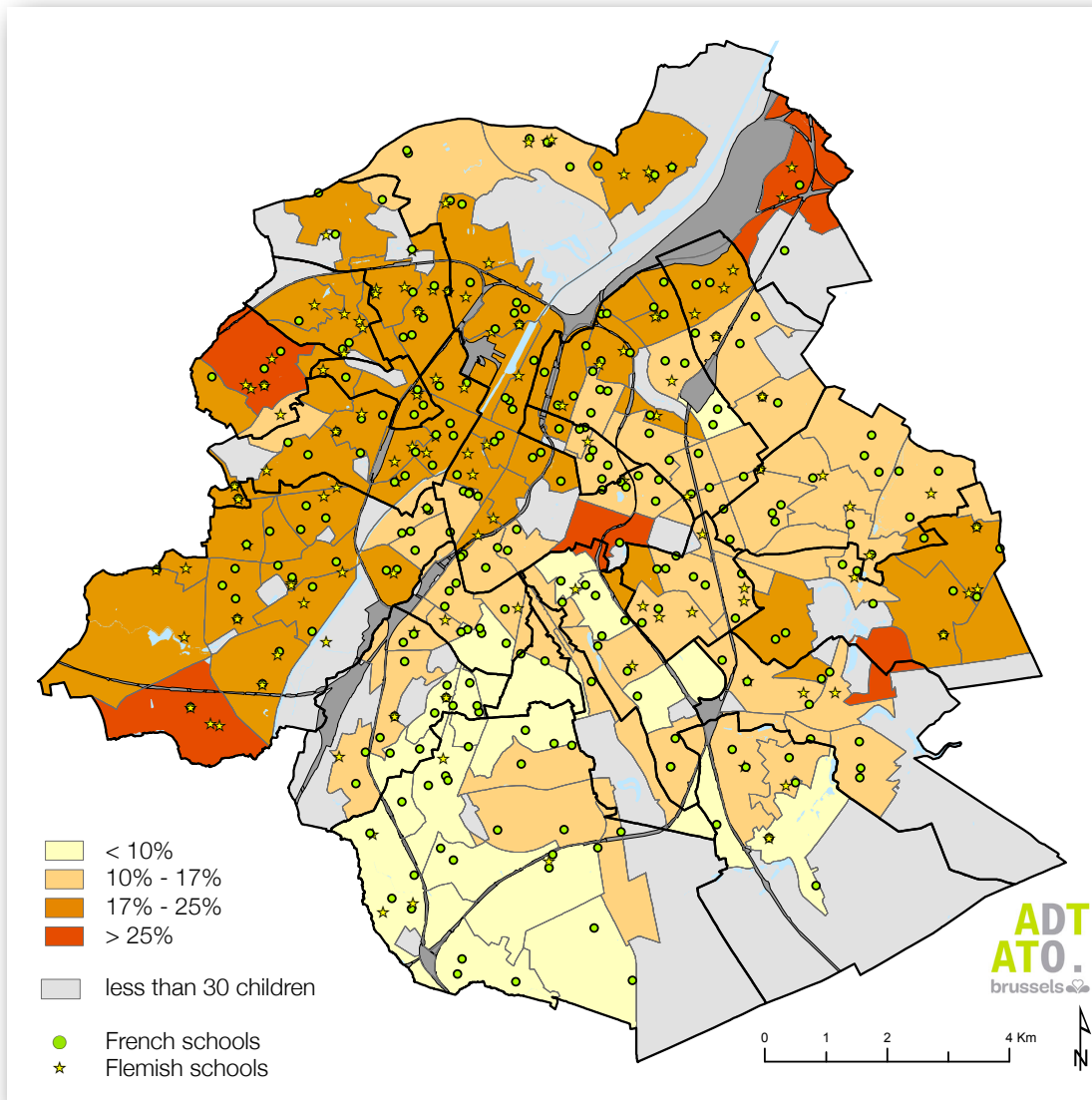
15. There are more schools subsidised by the Flemish Community in the north and west of the Region [ADT and BRAT, 2012], which for a

⁷ See www.das-rbc.irisnet.be

⁸ See ccfee.be/nos-avis/equipements

⁹ Judgement 67/2012, 24 May 2012

¹⁰ The number of people whose 'original' language within the household is Dutch equals 5.4% of the population of Brussels, whereas 14.1% are bilingual (French and Dutch). 23.1% of the inhabitants of Brussels speak Dutch well or very well. But not all children from bilingual households attend Flemish schools in Brussels, which attract an increasing number of allophones.



long time have been characterised by a higher proportion of Dutch speakers in the population [Willaert, 2009: 11]. In this area, 20% of students are enrolled in Flemish primary education. In the southeast of the Region, this share is significantly smaller, rarely going above 10 to 15% [ADT and BRAT, 2012]. In post-war Brussels, the number of students in Flemish schools was on the decline for a long time due to competition from their French counterpart, as well as to demographic reasons. But this decline is now something of the past, also in terms of relative share. Thus, in 1966, Flemish preschool education in Brussels accounted for 6,089 students, a figure which was once again reached in 1985. The same is true for Flemish primary education in Brussels, which accounted for 15,611 students in 1966. This number has almost been reached once again (15,484 in 2012).

16. By changing perspective, in a logic of relative weight within the education systems of the two communities, the 185,000 students enrolled in French schools in Brussels represent 21% of the students subsidised by the French Community, and the 40,000 students in Flemish schools in Brussels represent less than 4% of students in the Flemish Community.¹¹

1.3. The organising authorities

17. The Belgian constitution considers the 'freedom of education' as a right, which the authorities cannot stand in the way of (article 24). This means that the organisation of education and the creation of schools may take place freely, at least in theory, as this freedom is increasingly supervised [El Berhoumi, 2013]. In this context, different types of organising authority may be identified: an authority, an individual and a legal entity (or legal entities). Educational and philosophical opinions, curricula and timetables are open, but in order to be recognised and therefore receive grants from the Community authority, a certain number of condi-

Figure 1. Distribution of primary schools according to the subsidising authority and, in the place of residence, the proportion of children enrolled in Flemish primary schools in Brussels, 2009-2010. Source: ETNIC and Vlaamse Gemeenschap, data compiled by ADT - BRAT (2012).

¹¹ Ethic rapid report, 2008-2009 school year and VGC statistics, 2011-2012 school year.

tions must be met, such as meeting certain standards in terms of teacher training, construction and hygiene, and obtaining the required knowledge at the end of one's studies. The schools which are neither recognised nor subsidised by the Community authority are defined as private non subsidised schools. This is the case with international schools.

18. The different organising authorities are generally classified into three education networks [Delgrange, 2010; Van Haecht, 2010] which operate as coordination structures and have a support and representation function:¹²

1. Community education, either Vlaamse Gemeenschap or Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles. The two Communities subsidise as well as organise education themselves, directly or indirectly¹³ (as heirs of the former state education);
2. Official subsidised education, which includes the schools founded by local authorities (essentially municipalities and provinces¹⁴);

	French education			Flemish education		
	Official	Subsidised official	Subsidied private	Official	Subsidised official	Subsidied private
Preschool	5 %	54 %	40 %	29 %	28 %	43 %
Primary	5 %	48 %	46 %	26 %	26 %	48 %
Secondary	18 %	24 %	57 %	35 %	6 %	59 %
All levels	11 %	40 %	49 %	30 %	20 %	50 %

Table 2. Distribution of students in the territory of the Brussels Region according to the network of the organising authority. Source: ETNIC, 2008-2009 rapid report and VGC 2012 statistics.

3. Subsidised private education, which includes recognised and subsidised schools whose organising authority is an individual or a legal entity, often a non-profit organisation (in general, denominational schools, in addition to schools with a specific educational approach, such as Freinet, Montessori, Steiner, etc).

19. In Brussels, in the French networks, subsidised private education prevails with 49% of students, due to the very large share of secondary school students. At preschool and primary levels, municipal education dominates. The share of schools organised by the French Community is significant only at secondary level. In the Flemish system, the situation is different. Although the share represented by the private network (50%) is very similar to what is seen in the French system, the proportions of education organised by the Community and the municipalities (official subsidised) are more or less equal at preschool and primary levels. At secondary level, the share represented by municipal education is proportionately very small (6%). Flemish education in Brussels is therefore characterised by a much bigger share of the network organised by the Community (30% of students compared to 11% in the French system) and a reduced share of schools organised by the local authorities (20% compared to 40%).

20. One of the specificities of Brussels is the weight of the local authorities which have developed a wide educational offer, in certain cases based on a long tradition [Mabileau, 1994: 10]. The municipal administrations in Brussels devote a significant share of their budget to education: more than 30% of municipal expenses are intended for education in Brussels-City, Anderlecht and Woluwé-St-Lambert, with an average of 26% for the 19 municipalities [Van Driessche, 1998; Verdonck et al., 2011].

¹² Let us mention that there may be different substructures within an education network.

¹³ The Flemish Community does not organise education directly but does so via 'het Gemeenschapsonderwijs - GO' which is a public institution with a legal character [Van Haecht, 2010: 132-133].

¹⁴ With the suppression of the provincial level in Brussels during the fourth state reform, provincial education was taken over essentially (but not exclusively) by COCOF and VGC.

2. Divided observations: saturation, diversity, inequality

21. The growth in the school-age population and the importance of the necessary adaptation of the educational offer in order to accommodate these additional children in the framework of compulsory school attendance constitute an essential element in understanding the current difficulties faced by education in Brussels. But this should not overshadow the fact that, for a long time, education in Brussels has had to face difficulties related to significant performance gaps according to the schools attended by students. This marked educational inequality is not recent, but its significance in the urban environment is now better understood. Empirical studies based on the actual school figures and the socioeconomic characteristics of the students who attend them, have shown that in an identical urban environment, the increase in home-school mobility is linked to the emergence of 'chosen' schools whose population has a higher social level than that at 'default' schools. This phenomenon adds to the effect of residential segregation and that of selection, which is seen quite often within secondary streams, generating highly polarised compulsory education.

2.1. The growth in the school-age population

	School-age population			Growth			
	2009-10	2014-15	2019-20	2014 vs 2009		2019 vs 2009	
Preschool	51,885	59,150	61,206	7,265	14 %	9,321	18 %
Primary	79,344	90,327	100,013	10,983	14 %	20,669	26 %
Secondary	74,142	78,842	86,649	4,700	6 %	12,507	17 %
All levels	205,371	228,319	247,868	22,948	11 %	42,497	21 %

Table 3. School-age population living in the Brussels-Capital Region. Source: IBSA, demographic perspectives published in 2010.

22. Brussels has undergone a spectacular growth in its population, which increased from 951,580 inhabitants in 1996 to 1,132,781 in 2012,¹⁵ i.e. nearly a 19% increase in one and a half decades. A pyramid of young ages as well as the slightly higher birth rate among new immigrant residents explain the significant number of births in the population of Brussels [Deboosere et al., 2009; Grimmeau et al., 2012].

23. The statistics gathered and the school-age population forecasts established by the *Institut bruxellois de Statistique et d'Analyse* (IBSA) allow an assessment of the current demand and its evolution [Dehaibe and Laine, 2010; Dehaibe, 2010]. If the school-age population (age 2.5 to 18) increases by almost 23,000 children between 2010 and 2015, the increase will be felt above all at preschool (+7,260) and primary (+10, 983) levels. The number of students in public primary education in Brussels will increase by 14% in 5 years, in a context where the increase was already noticeable in the previous decade. Between 2015 and 2019, the projections point to a slower increase in the preschool age (+2,056, +3%). Growth will remain noticeable at primary level (+9 686, +11%). Due to a shift in the cohorts within the school system, the demand will keep increasing at secondary level, with 4,700 new students in Brussels (+6%) between 2010 and 2014, and 7,807 (+10%) between 2015 and 2019.

2.2. The saturation of school infrastructures

24. Demographic growth is leading to a deficit in the capacity of current schools. This growth in the availability requirements of schools does not strictly reflect the increase in the number of children and young people who are subject to compulsory education and who live in Brussels. There are two reasons for this. The first is that in 2009, saturation affected preschool and primary education more than it affected secondary education. The second more fundamental reason is the fact that schools in Brussels are attended by a large number of students who live in Flanders and, to a lesser extent, in Wallonia. This is of course normal for a city which extends outwards into its hinterland and where many commuters go to work every morning. This is also related to institutional aspects, as many francophones from the Flemish out-

¹⁵ Direction Générale Statistique et Information Economique- DGSIE.

Table 4. Estimation of the school population in Brussels-Capital Region and evaluation of the number of additional places required in schools in Brussels. Source: Dehaibe, 2010 and ADT, 2012.

	School population in BCR schools			Growth				Number of required places	
	2009-10	2014-15	2019-20	2014 vs 2009		2019 vs 2009		2020 vs 2010	
Preschool	54,034	62,743	64,681	8,709	16 %	10,647	20 %	9,500	18 %
Primary	85,143	97,337	107,023	12,194	14 %	21,880	26 %	20,000	23 %
Secondary	89,401	94,380	102,187	4,979	6 %	12,786	14 %	12,500	14 %
All levels	228,578	254,460	273,891	25,882	11 %	45,313	20 %	42,000	18 %

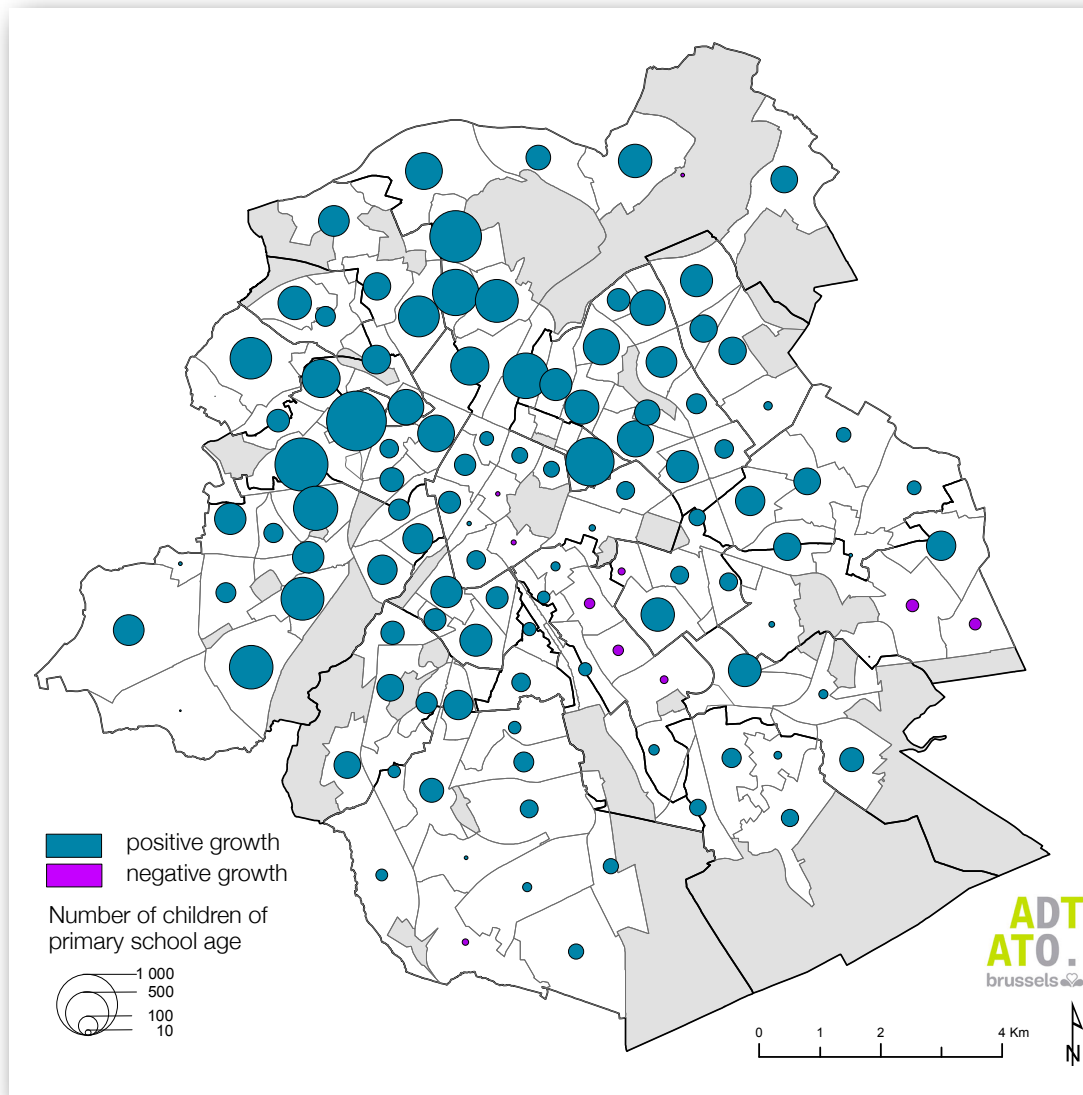
skirts enrol their children in schools in Brussels. It is estimated that in Brussels, 10% of students at preschool level, 14% at primary level and 22% at secondary level do not live in Brussels (8%, 12% and 19% living in Flanders, respectively) [ADT, 2012].

25. According to IBSA estimates [Dehaibe, 2010], there will be approximately 45,000 more students in primary and secondary education between 2010 and 2020, with more than 25,000 arriving before 2015. The most obvious needs will of course be at preschool and primary levels (respectively a 16% and 14% rise in the number of students during the first half of the decade), but with the increase in age, the effect of the demographic boom will also be very noticeable at secondary level (a 20% rise in the number of students in 10 years). While the growth in the number of children is generally widespread and therefore affects the entire regional territory, the increase is and will be more pronounced in the municipalities in the west and the north.

26. In the meantime, these estimates have been refined and translated into the number of places by the *Agence de Développement Territorial* (ADT), which attempts to provide a detailed follow-up of the supply and demand in terms of primary and secondary education. There are many parameters to consider in order to establish a precise inventory: international schools (children who are included in the population registers but not in the number of subsidised places), children of refugee applicants or illegal immigrants (subsidised by the Communities but not in-

cluded in the national population register), students in Brussels who attend a school on the outskirts, etc. The latter element has little impact, as 99% of children in Brussels at primary level and 96% at secondary level attend schools in the Region. The first two factors of incertitude, which are very much related to the internationalisation of Brussels, are probably partially cancelled on the scale of the entire Region, but not locally, as their residential profiles are radically different, with the one group living in the well-to-do neighbourhoods in the southeast, and the others in the working-class neighbourhoods in the centre and west [ADT and BRAT, 2012]. Another major difficulty arises from the fact that the 'physical' capacity of schools is not well known. In other words, while relatively standardised and therefore comparable information exists regarding the number of subsidised students, this is not the case regarding classroom capacity. In the Flemish system, the schools themselves set the numbers and can change them whenever they deem necessary, although they are required by the authorities to establish the limits before the enrolment period and preferably to include them in the school regulations. The authorities, however, do not impose any standards.¹⁶ In the French system, only the number of places in lower secondary is the object of a systematic and centralised follow-up, in the framework of the enrolment procedure. For the rest, there are standards which are negotiated between unions, the Community and the organising authorities. The limit is approximately 23 students per

¹⁶ See <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/gok>



teacher for primary education. Many field observers feel that this standard is disregarded more and more often in Brussels.

27. In order to get around this methodological difficulty, ADT counted on the hypothesis that in 2009-2010, all of the places in the schools were taken, and that therefore the number of students enrolled corresponded to the number of available places, i.e. the offer. More recent population data from the National Register were also considered as well as DGSIE statistics regarding the distribution per neighbourhood of increases projected by the IBSA at municipal level [ADT, 2012; Rouyet and Breton, 2012]. In the end, between 2010 and 2020, there will be a need to accommodate 9,500 children at preschool level (i.e. 475 classes of 20 students), 20,000 at primary level (i.e. 870 classes of 23 students) and 12,500 students at secondary level (i.e. the equivalent of 27 secondary schools of average size). But above all, ADT has begun to take stock of school availability projects which have gradually been implemented by the multiple stakeholders (Communities, municipalities, private network, as well as the Brussels Region via the call for projects in 2011). At the summer 2013¹⁷, the total number of places planned for was 22,123. If these projects are all implemented within a short period of time (in less than two years), they would barely meet the requirements for 2015 and 2016. And there would still be the same number of students to accommodate by 2020 in order to meet the needs, without even having dealt with the question of secondary education.

2.3. Diversity of the school population

28. The diversity of society in Brussels [Willaert, 2010; Janssens, 2013] is also reflected in the make-up of the school population. The figures related to students in Flemish primary education¹⁸ show that

Figure 2. Breakdown of the additional number of children in schools between 2010 and 2020 according to neighbourhood. Source: ADT - BRAT calculations (2012) based on IBSA population forecasts.

¹⁷ ADT, record.

¹⁸ While French education does not gather centralised data concerning parents, at the moment of enrolment in the Flemish education system, information on educational background and linguistic practices in the household is gathered. See the details of these statistics at <http://www.vgc.be/Onderwijs/Onderwijsbeleid+van+de+VGC/Over+het+Brussels+Nederlandstalig+onderwijs/cijfers.htm>

children who speak Dutch at home only represent one third of the number of students. And, despite the popularity of Flemish education among francophones, the group of students whose mother tongue is neither Flemish nor French dominates. Only the polarising function of secondary education on the outskirts of Brussels results in something different at this level of education. But for the first year of secondary education, a 'Brusselisation' of the school population is already seen. Although such data do not exist for French education in Brussels, cultural and linguistic diversity inevitably increases under the influence of migrations. Due to the current educational make-up, the two structures in Brussels have evolved: the schools for Flemish inhabitants of Brussels and the schools for French inhabitants of Brussels have become schools for all inhabitants of Brussels, with the language of instruction being either Dutch or French, depending on the school.

29. In terms of education, the great linguistic diversity of students in Brussels is of course the source of true problems regarding competence in the language of instruction, which is often different from the mother tongue. Learning is still based on the somewhat artificial presupposition that there is a high level of competence in and usage of the language of instruction, at least orally. Reality shows that French and Dutch are everyday languages (*lingua franca*) rather than mother tongues. More and more, teachers are faced with having to teach French or Dutch as a 'partially' foreign language, and receive little training in such a task.

30. There are, however, institutional answers to diversity in schools, such as *Adaptation à la langue de l'enseignement* (ALE), *Ouverture aux langues et aux cultures* (OLC), as well as the mechanism for the integration and schooling of students who are 'newcomers' (DASPA, the former bridging classes) within *Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles*. But clearly, this measure and the means associated with it are greatly insufficient. The extremely limited number of bridging classes in Brussels (approximately 30), do not cover all newcomers. Furthermore, it is a relatively limited measure in the programme and is not a structural support allowing the inequalities associated with the gap between family culture and school culture to be filled in the long term. Although in many schools in Brussels, the additional means ensured by 'differentiated support' measures often allow a certain follow-up to be main-

tained or a compensation for the absence of a bridging class, some researchers have pointed to an over-representation of socially disadvantaged or foreign students in specialised type 8 French education in Brussels, normally intended for students with instrumental disorders, also referred to as 'learning disorders' [Carlier, 2006; D'Haeyer, 2008; Tremblay, 2009]. This raises the question regarding the availability of places for students with learning disorders as well as that regarding the means of educational support for the most disadvantaged populations.

31. The accommodation of a multicultural population also raises questions regarding the standards conveyed by the school and the cultural, religious or philosophical compromises it is willing to make. Although the media focus on the most visible aspects (wearing of the veil), this involves many areas of school life (parent-teacher relations, gender mix, physical education classes, canteens, school trips, etc). The debates in this area are still open, and there has been very little practical or clear consensus providing standards which could be used by educational stakeholders in Brussels. As regards the philosophical courses per se, the choice of options in official education and the lack of an alternative to the Catholic religion course in private denominational education raise the question as to the legitimacy of a temporary segregation of classes based on religious criteria, as well as that of the institutional presence of a single religious conviction in a plural and often predominantly Muslim environment. This is the legacy of the pillarisation of Belgian society and the rifts associated with the schools pact [Delmée, 2013]. Let us mention, however, that the Islamic religion class is taken by 24% of students in French schools in Brussels, all networks considered [Sagesser, 2012]. But if we consider only students in official education, where this class is offered, this represents one out of two children.

2.4. The dualisation of educational pathways: social and cultural factors

32. Brussels, like all of Belgium, has seen a significant increase in training levels over the past decades. In recent generations, nearly one out of two people have had a higher education diploma [Luyten et al., 2012: 51-53]. The strong evolution in qualifications is due to a replacement of generations, with the ageing of the least qualified generations, and the continued increase in training for identical age groups. The Brussels-Capital Region is different, however. If we consider only the

young generations, the proportion of people with a low level of qualification (with no more than a lower secondary diploma) has decreased less than in the country as a whole. The concentration of more disadvantaged populations, whose parents have low levels of education, partly accounts for this situation. A dualisation of qualifications is there-

fore observed in Brussels-Capital Region, where there is a high proportion of highly qualified people as well as poorly qualified people [Roesems et al., 2006: 83-90].

33. Compulsory education is of course at the heart of this selection process. There are still very clear social gaps in the educational pathways. Within the poorest fringe of the population whose cultural capital is lowest, selection is particularly harsh regarding access to university and the possibility of obtaining a degree. The probability of obtaining an upper secondary diploma providing access to university – often wrongly presented as being the 'royal road' – in the right conditions is lower in this fringe. Within the different municipalities of Brussels, the distribution of young people in the last four years of secondary education according to the stream (general, technical or vocational) above all reflects a socioeconomic gradient: students in the most disadvantaged municipalities are much less likely to be in the general stream [Wayens et al., 2010: 34; Luyten et al., 2012: 50]. After repeating a year, they are often reoriented towards technical or vocational streams, where there is a high concentration of students in difficulty. We see clearly that the number of students who are behind at school decreases in the third year in the general stream in secondary education due to a relegation effect, as soon as the pathways follow different streams [Roesems and Feyaerts, 2009: 65]. After obtaining a secondary school diploma, the socioeconomic determining factors still exist: the *survivors* (according to Pierre Bourdieu) are more likely to choose higher education institutions than university.

34. The analysis of educational pathways and performance confirms that school is still a place where inequalities are reproduced [Jacobs et al., 2009; Jacobs & Rea, 2011; Jacobs 2012]. Compulsory education almost automatically translates social inequality into educational inequality [Bourdieu, 1993]. In Belgium, the educational stream chosen in secondary school – general or technical/vocational – plays an important role in this process. International studies such as PISA¹⁹ show that the results of students in technical and above all vocational education tend to be lower than those of students in general education. And students

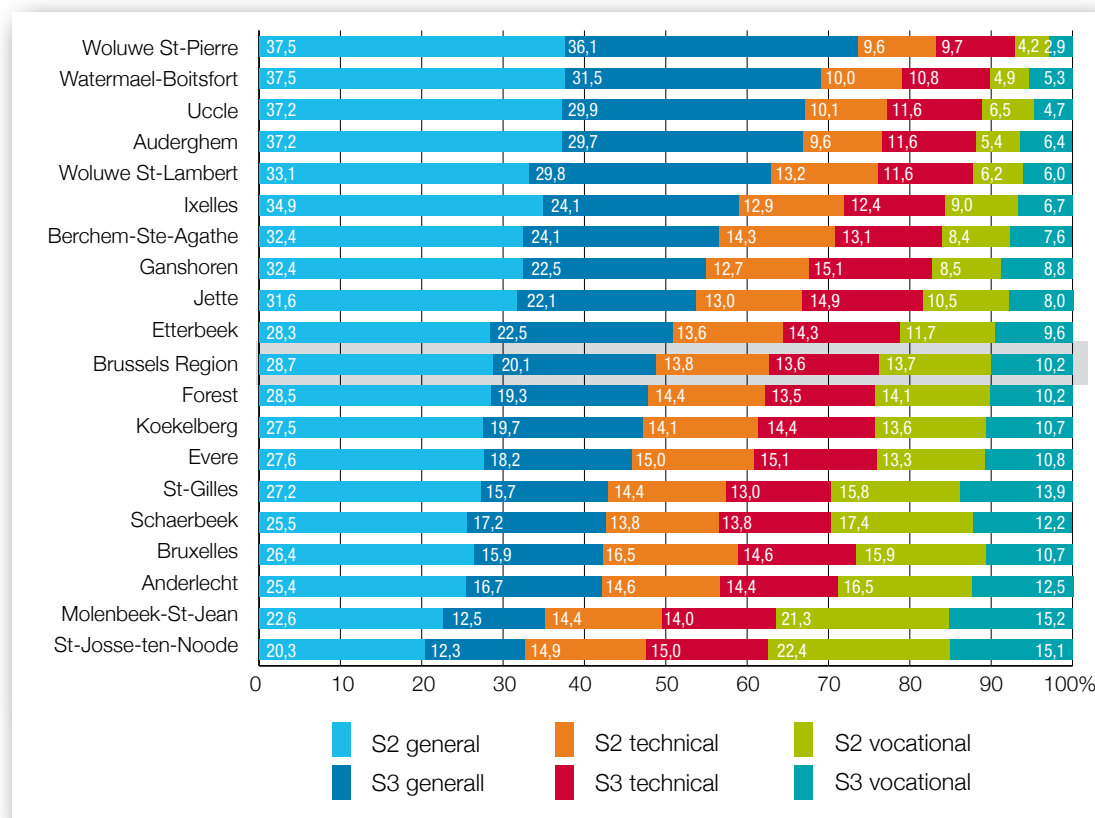


Figure 3. School population according to place of residence (second –S2– and third –S3– year of secondary education) and stream, for the 19 municipalities and the Brussels Region, 2008. Source: Wayens et al. [2010] based on ETNIC and VG data.

¹⁹ PISA is a study conducted every three years among young people aged 15 in the 34 OECD countries and in many partner countries. It evaluates the acquisition of knowledge and skills essential to daily life at the end of compulsory education. The tests focus on reading, mathematics and science.

from more socially disadvantaged families, as we have seen, are clearly over-represented in technical/vocational education. But the analysis of the results of the study also point clearly to the discriminatory character of education systems, both French and Flemish, which maintains the performance gap between natives and non-natives, in addition to the effects which may be attributed specifically to socioeconomic aspects. Although these analyses are statistically representative at Community level but not at Regional level, the indications and observations allow

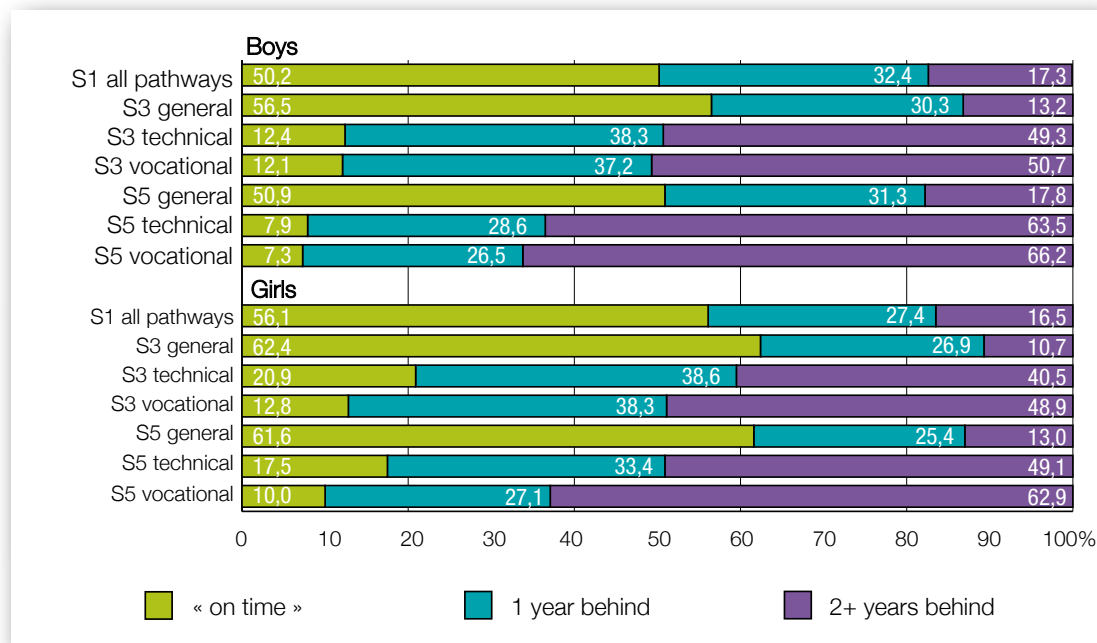


Figure 4. Educational rhythms of students in secondary education (in first, third and fifth year) who live in the Brussels Region, according to gender and stream, for the 2007-2008 school year. Source: Roesems and Feyaerts, 2009.

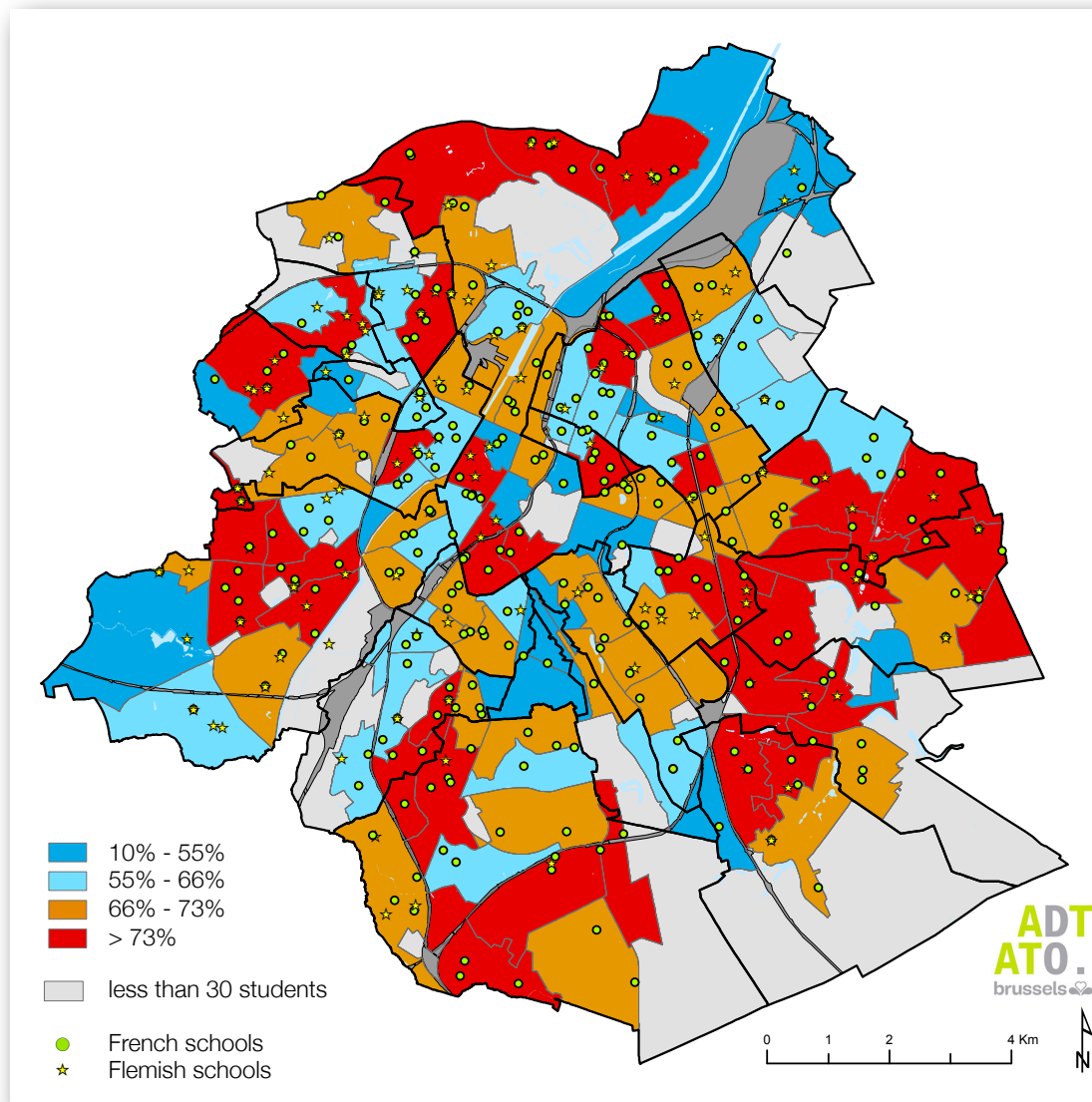
them to be transposed to the situation in Brussels [Jacobs and Rea, 2007; Rea et al., 2009].

2.5. The dualisation of educational pathways: the effect of the differentiated recruitment of schools

35. The in-depth analysis of the results of PISA studies for Belgium shows that the profile of the school population (the average socioeconomic status of the families of enrolled students) has a significant impact on performance. The effect of this official indicator at school level would have a discriminating effect in the same way as the student's individual family situation. This observation confirms the results of extensive international research which indicate that the variables related to students (social origin, ethnic or national origin, etc.) do not explain the gaps in performance. In Belgian school systems, and all the more so in Brussels, the institutional factors related to the organisation and functioning of education play a crucial role, in particular because the streams and parents' free choice of school lead to a model of segregation in the framework of an education 'market' [Hindriks et al., 2009; Jacobs & Rea, 2011: 85; Jacobs, 2012]. Many things come into play at school level as well.

36. 'The school effect' which emerged from the analysis of PISA studies indicates that students' poor performance may be partly explained by the fact that students with the most difficulties are found mostly in a certain concentration of schools instead of being equally distributed throughout all of the schools. This reflects a highly unequal model, with very wide performance gaps observed not only between students, but also between schools. In the regional context, it is what leads Janssens et al. [2009] to say that *'Brussels is not only characterised by great diversity, but also by its high level of spatial segregation. Approximately 30% of students enrolled in compulsory education in Brussels live in a disadvantaged neighbourhood. Furthermore, the segregation in education leads to a polarisation between an over-representation of ghetto schools and 'problem schools' on the one hand, and elitist schools on the other hand (...). To this is added the European and international schools which also attract a specially selected public.'*

37. The school segregation may be seen at first glance as the reflection of socio-residential segregation which is characteristic of many urban spaces and is very strong in Brussels. This spatial dualisation obviously has effects on the composition of classes. But the analyses

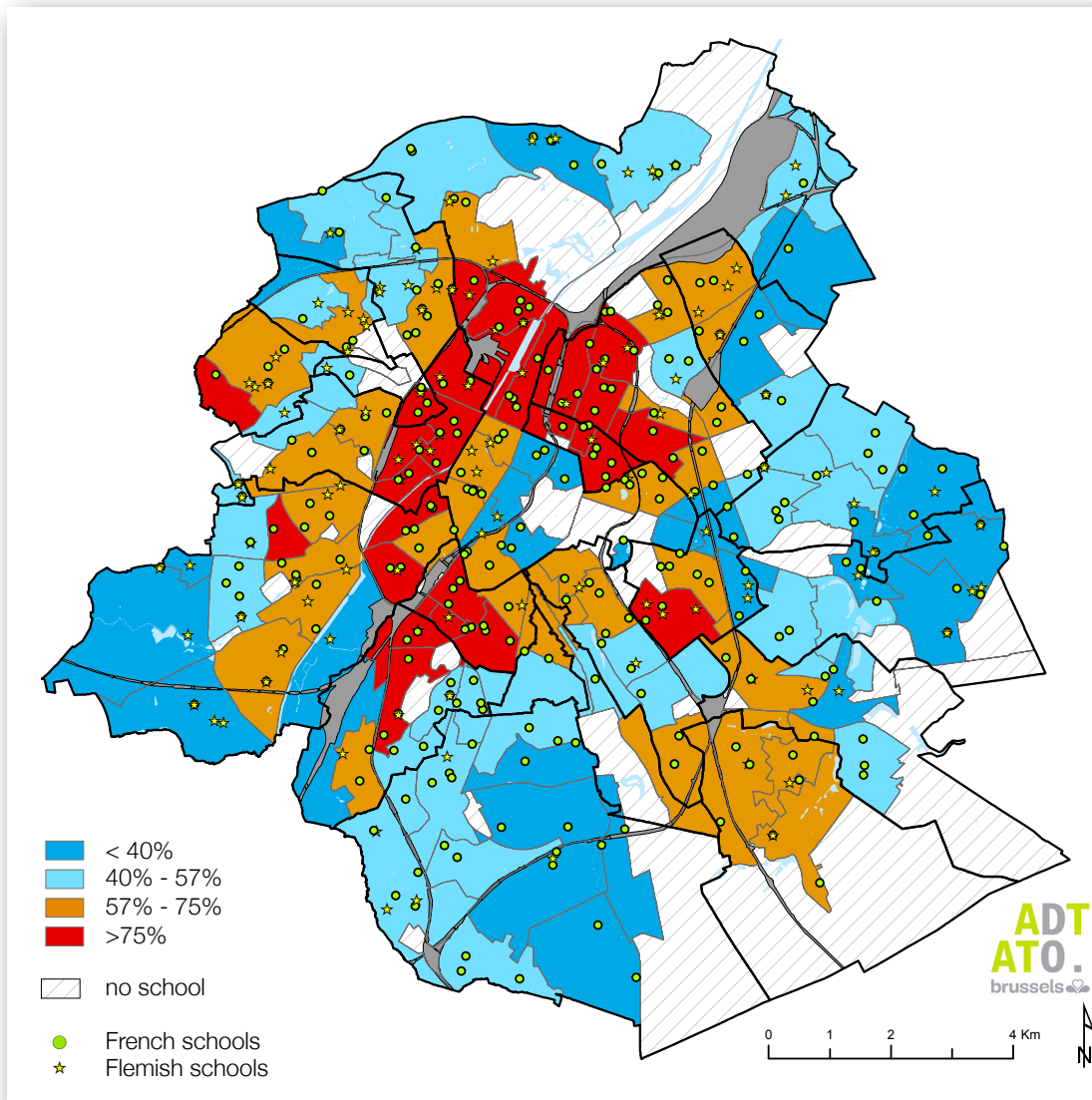


of school recruitment in Brussels show complex relations between residential segregation and school segregation [Kesteloot et al., 1990; Delvaux and Serhadlioglu, 2012; Marissal et al., 2013]. The polarisation of school populations is not the simple reflection of residential segregation, as a high level of student mobility is seen even in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. At all levels, a significant share of students attend a school outside their neighbourhood of residence:²⁰ 28% at preschool level, 43% at primary level and 65% at secondary level [ADT, 2012]. The reasons for this mobility may be very diverse, such as the parents' place of work, the secondary school attended by other family members, philosophical choices, and the search for a school with a specific teaching approach or a particular stream. This significant home-school mobility conveys the density and the diversity of the offer in Brussels and parents' free choice of school, which is a widespread practice. The situation is therefore far from being one in which all students in a neighbourhood go to the same school, in a logic of proximity. In an urban context, most students have potential access to quite a wide range of schools.

38. In primary education, the empirical data show that the distance between the place of residence and school varies significantly according to the profile of students, with the success rate positively correlated to the distance covered [Delvaux and Serhadlioglu, 2012; Wayens et al., 2013]. One may object that this difference is simply related to the fact that students who travel long distances more often come from the well-to-do residential outskirts, with a lower population density, a more spread out network of schools, and therefore higher average distances to travel. But this explanation is insufficient, as the increase in the success rate with the distance from school is seen in all types of neighbourhood, in well-to-do neighbourhoods on the outskirts as well as in the poor central neighbourhoods.

Figure 5. The mobility of primary school students measured at place of residence: proportion of primary school students who live in the neighbourhood and who go to a school in the Brussels Region, and who are enrolled in a school in the neighbourhood or in a bordering neighbourhood, 2009-2010. Source: ETNIC and Vlaamse Gemeenschap, data compiled by ADT - BRAT (2012).

²⁰ Neighbourhood of residence or bordering neighbourhoods, according to the definition of neighbourhoods available at www.monitoringsdesquartiers.irisnet.be.



39. This school-related mobility is partly in keeping with a logic of adaptation for a significant proportion of families who are forced to live in disadvantaged neighbourhoods due to real estate prices, but who wish to send their children to socially mixed schools outside the poor area, or to better schools within the area. This process reinforces the effect of residential segregation, as schools emerge within the disadvantaged neighbourhoods, with local recruitment as well as with a concentration of the 'immobile' students in the neighbourhood. The strategies for upward social mobility associated with leaving the neighbourhood at least for schooling, are clearly not the work of the most disadvantaged inhabitants of these neighbourhoods. Thus, schools accumulate handicaps, resulting from the exclusively local recruitment limited to the 'residual' school population. These schools often have a very high turnover of students due to the arrival of newcomers, are very heterogeneous (from a linguistic and cultural point of view) and also employ inexperienced teachers with no teaching qualifications [Delvaux and Serhadlioglu, 2012].

40. These analyses abolish the myth according to which 'ghetto' schools emerge because parents give first choice to a school in their own neighbourhood. On the contrary, beginning in primary education, parents' strategies and selective practices – deliberate or not – by schools combine to give rise to the concentration of the least mobile and most disadvantaged students in 'ghetto' schools and thus amplify the negative effects of residential segregation.

2.6. Shortfalls in the teaching staff

41. For several years, there has been a chronic shortage of qualified teaching staff in Brussels. Brussels is not only struggling against a shortage of teachers, but also against a major turnover in teaching

Figure 6.: Measurement of the local character of school recruitment: proportion of primary school students who go to school in the neighbourhood and live in the neighbourhood or in a bordering neighbourhood, 2009-2010. Source: ET-NIC and Vlaamse Gemeenschap, data compiled by ADT - BRAT (2012).

staff. In the Flemish system, 54% of primary school teachers and 62% of secondary school teachers leave the profession during the first five years.²¹

42. This turnover is also well known in the French education system, where the departure figure for the first five years is estimated at 35% for the entire *Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles*. More than half of these novices who leave the profession do so already during the first year. The problem appears to affect secondary school teachers in particular, as primary school teachers have a much lower departure rate for the first five years (14%). Contrary to received ideas, in the French schools, Brussels does not have a higher departure rate than in Wallonia, which may probably be linked to the fact that demographic growth generates more availability, allowing the situation to be stabilised more quickly for young teachers [Delvaux et al., 2013].

43. In any case, the regular loss of more than a third of newly trained teachers in addition to the retirement of experienced teachers, will only increase needs in a context of demographic growth, above all when the biggest cohorts reach secondary level. Needs will obviously keep increasing and reinforce the existing shortages. At the end of October 2009, Actiris listed 293 employment offers in all of compulsory education, both Flemish and French.²² And with respect to French primary education and lower secondary education, the four teachers' training colleges in Brussels issue diplomas to a maximum of 500 new teachers each year, less than 150 at preschool level and 200 at primary level,²³ which is far too little to meet the needs. These are teachers who, for lack of specific training, are at least conscious of the realities in Brussels thanks to their work placements in local schools. This raises the question as to the initial training of teachers and its adaptation to the realities in the field, carried out at Community level [Degraef, 2012; Degraef et al., 2012].

3. Unresolved issues and debates: educational urbanism, regulation and coordination

44. The challenges faced by education in Brussels are not limited to the management of the effects of demographic evolution and the fight against the many mechanisms which contribute to school segregation [CCFEE, 2010]. The 'unresolved issues and debates' section of this synopsis could therefore deal with these subjects, as well as the primary-secondary transition, the proficiency in basic skills, early school leaving, the situation and promotion of technical and vocational education and, alternately, the equipment in technical schools, and schools' connections with professional training and the job market.

45. The Brussels perspective regarding education also prompts reflection on the question of multilingualism and language teaching [Janssens, 2008; Janssens, 2013]. But in this area, the debate has only begun.²⁴ The question of 'simple' bilingualism is far from being resolved in Brussels, as the hours of second national language instruction imposed by the law of 30 July 1963 are not given and/or financed properly in most French primary schools in Brussels [CCFEE, 2010: 6]. But this subject requires a summary of its own, not limited to the sector of compulsory education. It is therefore not dealt with here.

46. There are however at least three unresolved issues centred on education, which have been the subject of major debates in recent years and which have emerged as being specific to Brussels. The first is indisputably the question of taking demographic growth into consideration. The second is that of enrolment regulation, where the impact of a shortage, the density of the school fabric and the intensity of residential and school segregation have caused local tensions, when in fact the measures are managed at community level. The third unresolved issue is a result of the first two, as both the lack of capacity as well as the

²¹ Figures cited by De Standaard, 4/04/2011.

²² Figures cited by the Commission for Education and Equal Opportunities of the Flemish parliament, session of 25/05/2010.

²³ Estimate (probably very optimistic) by the authors based on Ethnic data, higher education observatory.

²⁴ See in this respect the declarations by Minister-President Rudy Vervoort in favour of bilingual education in May 2013 as well as the recent 'Marnix plan for a multilingual Brussels' supported by Philippe Van Parijs.

regulation issues have raised the question regarding the local and cross-cutting coordination of stakeholders in education.

3.1. Increasing the capacity of the education system by (re)developing educational urbanism

‘A saturated school is one in which all classes are full and where it is no longer possible to open new classes. Saturated schools in 2009-2010 are often schools which have undergone modifications in order to meet a growing demand, and whose buildings are no longer liable to be extended. The modifications already made often have an impact on educational quality: the space required for the well-being of children (toilets and dining halls) and different educational situations (play-time, psychomotricity, etc) have disappeared.’ [Humblet, 2011]

47. This excerpt describing the preschool situation may now be broadly transposed to primary education and underlines how the first phase in absorbing the demographic growth took place hastily and with little means. The later phase, which is still under way, consists in increasing capacity with new buildings, either provisional (containers) or more lasting (new buildings, possibly prefabricated), on existing sites or on sites quickly made into viable annexes to existing sites. The third stage involves the building of new schools.

48. The extension of existing sites as well as new buildings raise the question of the availability of land, which has been dealt with in a study requested by the ADT. Based on 10m² created for each new student (Community standards) and a detached building style, 24.5 ha of land would be required in order to meet the needs. The 138 plots identified in collaboration with the organising authorities for official education could suffice, in theory, and are already being put to use in part. Let us note that half of these plots have already been allocated to subsidised primary and secondary schools. The logic of the extension is indeed limited, but case studies show that it is not insignificant. There is also a potential for extension on plots which are not currently used by schools [ADT and URBA11, 2013: 16].

49. Yet the land reserve must still be put to use. The clearly identified difficulties are in particular related to real estate (purchase or transfer of plots between stakeholders) and technical aspects. They are also related to the necessary financial set-ups, bearing in mind that in the end, operations cannot be subsidised fully and that there may therefore still be a significant financial expense for the organising authorities [ADT and URBA11, 2013: 30-37]. The latter point is especially problematic for private education, whose organising authorities are made up of many different associations with varying financial means, with much less support, coordination and solidarity coming from congregations [Van Haecht, 2010: 128]. It is therefore no surprise that until now, most of the new availability has been created by the official education system, with an overwhelming majority of projects run by the municipalities [ADT and URBA11, 2013: 39-39]. The municipalities guarantee the enforcement of compulsory school attendance and have therefore taken their responsibilities in the Brussels Region, with the possible risk of worsening their already delicate financial situation.

50. The new buildings also raise the question regarding programming which takes local needs into account²⁵ as well as the logic of the territorial rebalancing of the educational offer at regional level and its link with other functions. It is therefore the occasion to create schools in the most poorly equipped neighbourhoods which have been identified [ADT, 2012], or even to establish new educational poles with a supra-local reach in neighbourhoods which are well served by public transport, on the boundary of sociologically different areas. This could contribute to a certain mix while generating economies of scale on related facilities (sports facilities and swimming pools, as well as dining halls, psychomotricity rooms, libraries, psychological/medical/social centres, nurseries for teachers, etc.). The question of necessary facilities is pertinent today, as the densification of existing sites is such that sports facilities and dining halls, for example, are often saturated, like the long-standing problem with swimming pools and toilets [Liebman, 2009], although they contribute in a fundamental way to the quality of life at school as well as to good working conditions for teachers. This is a true

²⁵ The case of the school *La Brise* in Watermael-Boitsfort, which may be shut down, shows the incapacity of certain organising authorities (in this case the French Community) at times when it comes to anticipating major changes in a neighbourhood (in this case the new housing as part of the ‘Ernotte’ project of the SDRB).

challenge when we consider the renovation work already required for the existing architectural heritage, which bears witness to a past when schools were at the heart of the architectural concerns of the public authorities. Most of this heritage is now more than fifty years old, and even more than one hundred years old in certain municipalities [Brussels-Capital Region, 2006; Libois et al., 2012].

51. It is perhaps also the occasion to place schools back at the centre of social support, in an urban environment where many families live in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and many young people leave school before obtaining a diploma. In the 1980s in the United States, the idea emerged whereby schools could not be the only source of support for children in difficulty. The ideal for these children would be for this service to be available at school. This is how the concept of 'full-service schooling' came into being [Dryfoos, 1994], which made its way to the United Kingdom under the name of 'extended schools'. These schools offer a range of activities, also outside classroom time, oriented towards children's needs as well as towards their families and the wider community [Dyson et al., 2002].

52. These experiments are at the origin of the '*brede school*' project of the Flemish Ministry of Education.²⁶ The current situation in which the need to build new schools seems inevitable provides an occasion to think about the future role of schools in an urban environment. Currently, in its implementation at Community level (in the Belgian sense of the term), this involves offering services and leisure activities to students in the language of the school, which is a delicate issue above all in Flemish education where schools are still too often isolated islands. But in the end, schools may also play a role in community life (in the Anglo-Saxon sense of the term) through a collaboration with social and cultural associations and the organisation of cultural and sports activities which may contribute to reinforcing social cohesion in the neighbourhood. Schools would thus become the favoured places of neighbourhood life, outside classroom hours as well. The concept in itself seems very promising, but its realisation inevitably comes up against the com-

plexity of Brussels. Are French and Flemish islands being created in neighbourhoods, each with its own programme of activities, functioning as little centres in a subdivided community, or can the concept become concrete in a bilingual or multilingual manner? The availability of new spaces may be the occasion to re-examine the collaboration between stakeholders.

3.2. *Regulating enrolment to cope with difficulties*

53. In Brussels, the regulation procedures for preschool enrolment are explicitly related to a problem of capacity. Although they receive little media coverage, they are multiplying, are essentially local and are established in a scattered order according to the organising authority [Humblet, 2011]. They run the risk of amplifying inequality as soon as students enter the education system. The most well-informed parents, who are therefore the best equipped to cope with the problem, are those who are active in the work force and have had experience with the nursery school system, which is also saturated (the rate of regional coverage is one out of three children). These children are the most well prepared for the requirements of the preschool system. The lack of availability in preschool education and of continuity in child care therefore makes access difficult for children who are not already familiar with the language of instruction or places them in very poor conditions (crowded classes, etc.).

54. Thus, the following question is raised: Is it not necessary to ensure that these regulations for entry into preschool level take into account the question of social inequality? Or, better yet, to guarantee access to preschool for all children? Today, in order to solve the problem of capacity, certain educational stakeholders do not hesitate to question the age of entry into preschool which is set at two and a half, putting forward the fact that it is not compulsory. This would thus pass the problem on to the nurseries.

55. The regulations concerning access to secondary school receive much more media attention and are not specific to Brussels (see the

²⁶ According to the Flemish government's agreement of 2009-2014, '*A brede school is an active network of organisations from different sectors around one or several schools united in a common goal: the development of children and adolescents at school and during their free time. These networks increase the chances of making good use of extracurricular care*'.

'enrolment' decree in the French Community and the GOK decree in the Flemish Community²⁷). But it is in Brussels (and in Walloon Brabant as well as in some other big cities), in the framework of a relative lack of availability which has occurred earlier in certain schools, that these regulations cause the most frustrations among certain parents who are faced with a limited choice. These regulations are above all aimed at ensuring the transparency of enrolment and that priority is respected by school management. But, in the Flemish and French systems, the will of the Communities is to bring together the standardisation of procedures and principles of equity ('give more to those who have less'), by integrating mechanisms which give certain priorities to students in socially difficult situations. This model of social mix within schools is associated with an ideal of social cohesion, whereby schools must be places for learning, benefiting the weakest without holding back the strongest, with the understanding that the countries with the biggest social mix in schools usually have the best scores on PISA tests.

56. The two Communities elaborate their own rules regarding priority, which are very similar (priority to brothers and sisters, staff members, socially disadvantaged groups, etc), but there are also important differences. The Flemish system endeavours to guarantee education for its own linguistic group: 55% of available places are reserved for children who speak Dutch at home. In the French system, the latest version of the procedure²⁸ is aimed at opposing the homogeneity of the school population (via the obligation to include a proportion of students from a school with a low socioeconomic rating) and places the accent on geographic proximity.

57. The most controversial enrolment regulation is the one which was implemented for the first year of secondary education subsidised by the French Community. Contrary to Flemish schools, equivalent measures have not been implemented in French primary education.

58. The first level of protest in the French system consists in opposing all types of regulation based on the principle of the freedom of choice. The second level of protest is not centred on the principle but rather on the methods. The points which deserve special attention for Brussels are home-school and primary-secondary school distances, given the density of the offer as well as the weight of this criterion in the calculation method, as well as the calculation method for the average socioeconomic rating of schools and students [de Villers and de Thier, 2013]. The latter suffers from an 'average' effect which probably no longer accurately reflects the socio-residential reality in Brussels. The student index is calculated based on socioeconomic data from the student's neighbourhood of residence (statistical sectors) and not on the characteristics of the child's household. It therefore barely considers the internal diversity of these neighbourhoods, which are less and less socially homogeneous in Brussels following the evolutions in the past twenty years, be it in the poor area, in its extension area to the west or in the municipalities of the east inner ring [Vandermotten et al., 2006; Stoleriu and Vandermotten, 2006; Van Crielingen, 2006; Romainville, 2009; Wayens et al., 2009]. Why not base this index on the true characteristics of the student's household as is done by the GOK, and thus take the residential diversity of Brussels into account?

59. The challenges of educational regulation, in the absence of a consensus at political level,²⁹ have been summarised clearly [Cantillon, 2009a; Cantillon, 2009b]. Are we limiting the regulation to excess demands, thus restricting the number of parents concerned, as well as public intervention only to saturated schools, which are destined to multiply in Brussels? Are we working in a centralised manner or is decentralisation preferred at the level of school catchment areas, including the criteria and their weight, in a way which is probably more efficient for Brussels? Are the criteria altered according to educational level? How do the political criteria affect the different categories of student? How can all of the stakeholders involved be convinced to participate,

²⁷ Gelijke Onderwijskansen (equal opportunity in education): see www.ond.vlaanderen.be/wetwijs/thema.asp?id=54

²⁸ The decree (September 2010) of Minister Simonet currently in force is the third one of its kind. It follows the decrees of Minister Arena based on the principle of 'first come, first enrolled' and of Minister Dupont (drawing lots).

²⁹ See for example the report '*Les effets pervers du décret inscriptions*' and the respective positions of Marc Elsen (CDH) and Françoise Bertieaux (MR) in *La libre Belgique*, 23 March 2013.

including those from the other Community in Brussels, as the education systems are obviously not impenetrable? Which practical procedure should be implemented in order to avoid favouring the initiated and limiting the incertitude which is difficult for children and their parents to bear?

60. All of these questions will be more difficult to answer as schools become more saturated and there is less room for manoeuvre. This brings us back to our first major unresolved issue. And both that of enrolment regulation and that of educational urbanism bring us to a third unresolved issue, namely that of the coordination of education in Brussels-Capital Region.

3.3. Coordination in Brussels

61. Although it is not necessarily obvious, the coordination of educational urbanism at municipal level has led to a quick solution to problems in the short term. The capacity to combine the means and competence of different levels of authority at local level [Lagasse, 2012], which is relatively specific to the municipalities, has constituted a decisive asset. This may solve problems in a logic of proximity, but the scope of the work and the mobility of students clearly involves management at metropolitan level, or at least at regional level.

62. The Region has been involved in financing [Van de Putte et al., 2012]. In 2011, the government of the Brussels-Capital Region issued a call for projects among the different French and Flemish organising authorities for official education in order to increase the capacity of primary schools. The Region thus contributed directly or indirectly to the creation of more than 4,000 additional places. Regional weight is therefore important as well as controversial at community legal level.³⁰ If the places financed by the French Community, the Flemish Community, the VGC and the *Secrétariat général de l'enseignement catholique* (SeGEC) are added, there were plans to create nearly 22,000 places at the summer of 2013.³¹

63. The effective creation of these places will depend on a true coordination between (and within) local stakeholders (municipalities and organising authorities in the private network) for the supervision of projects, community stakeholders as regards financing, and regional (as well as community) for questions of urban planning and heritage management (a significant constraint in Brussels where the respect for heritage and current needs must be reconciled). Since 2011, an 'Educational Task Force' – a rather military term denoting the urgency of the situation and the tardiness of the reaction – groups representatives of the Brussels Region, the French and Flemish Communities and Community Commissions responsible for coordinating the projects for building new schools. And on the French side, joint governments – Brussels-Capital Region, French Community, Walloon Region and Co-cof – have united. The questions of educational urbanism and monitoring the supply and demand are now being structured on a regional basis, as the *Agence de Développement Territorial* joined the 'Educational Task Force' in June 2013 with the mission of the regional government to coordinate the needs in school availability with the different local contexts (socioeconomic situation, real estate projects which will accentuate demographic growth in certain neighbourhoods, available plots for building schools, etc). However, the decisions related to the increase in capacity are not purely technical. They involve political choices which ultimately proceed from the two Communities which decide how and with which financial means the educational offer will be developed. The Task Force therefore remains dependent on this dual decision-making process and at this time can only help coordinate decisions without intervening directly in the respective education policies.

64. While the work carried out by the Task Force remains centred on real estate concerns – which is understandable given the regional initiative in this matter – let us note that openings to other areas of education management have emerged. The Task Force could also coordinate the means to fight against early school leaving, within the competence

³⁰ Judgement 67/2012 of 24 May 2012 of the Constitutional Court.

³¹ www.adt-ato.irisnet.be/fr/enjeux-urbains/

of the Region and Community Commissions. Let us also note that the future '*Bassin de vie Enseignement – Formation – Emploi*' should also deal with the challenges of language learning, staying in school, demographic growth, etc.³² Furthermore, the *Pacte de croissance urbaine durable* (New Deal)³³ provides for the enlargement of the *Comité bruxellois de concertation économique et sociale* (tripartite: regional government – employers – workers) to include Community and Community Commission executives to deal with educational issues in particular.

65. Perhaps here we have the beginnings of a systematic coordination of education in Brussels, implementing, timidly, the recommendations presented in the synopsis on education of the Citizens' Forum of Brussels [Janssens et al., 2009]. It still well and truly involves implementing '(...) an administrative collaboration envisaged in a structural manner between the Flemish and French education systems (...). Problems such as absenteeism or capacity issues must be resolved at this level. This also involves a coordination of data gathering (...) All educational stakeholders in Brussels must be involved through this collaboration (...) This does not mean that a common structure must be created, but that according to the problem at hand, the biggest stakeholders can be involved in a structural manner (...) This involves applying the principle of subsidiarity, which may involve a regionalisation of certain aspects of the education policy, such as the creation of schools, infrastructure, etc'.

66. The complete regionalisation of education is probably a utopian idea at this time, and has not been requested by the Brussels public administration. It is politically difficult on both the Flemish and French sides where education is the main link between Wallonia and Brussels, as it represents 75% of the budget of the French Community, and is complicated from a practical point of view [Deschamps, 2008: 18]. The

most realistic compromise in order to ensure the emergence of a specific coordination of education in Brussels is without a doubt, within the Communities, partially autonomous management delegated to a local inter-network coordination body. On the Flemish side, this regional coordination already exists with respect to the problem of enrolment. This is done by *lokale overlegplatforms* (LOP, local coordination platforms). On the French side, the effective and in-depth implementation of 'school catchment areas', at least in Brussels, could meet the needs in terms of the institutionalisation of cross-cutting coordination [Delvaux, 2010: 60], as long as the Brussels 'catchment area' collaborates efficiently with the LOP and the respective powers are not too asymmetrical. In the perspective of the researchers who initiated this concept, the school catchment areas are a regulation mechanism which concerns all of the schools in an infra-community territory. They were defined while observing the interactions between schools and the flow of students. These areas of interdependence – with Brussels being one – constitute potential levels in the decentralisation of education policies, forcing a dialogue between schools if given the capacity to allocate means [Delvaux et al., 2005]. But for the moment, their political implementation is limited to technical/vocational education (IPIEQs, *Instances de pilotage inter-réseaux de l'enseignement qualifiant*³⁴), in a perspective of territorial development, which, in a marginal way, focuses essentially on the allocation of means and the opening of streams. This competence is quite different from that of the Flemish LOPs and is limited to secondary level. It does not seem as though the implementation of the future '*Bassins de vie Enseignement-Formation-Emploi*' will allow an immediate correspondence of the missions of French and Flemish structures in Brussels.³⁵ But does this have to prevent collaborations and connections?

³² See statement 103 of the CCFFEE available at ccfee.be/nos-avis/articulations-enseignement-formation-emploi

³³ See www.esr.irisnet.be/site13/plone/cbces/documents/PCUD-FR-signé.pdf

³⁴ For more information, see: <http://ccfee.be/ipieq>

³⁵ See statement 103 by the *Commission consultative formation emploi enseignement* related to the draft agreement for cooperation related to the implementation of *Bassins de vie Enseignement – Formation – Emploi*, adopted on 28 May 2013, pp. 4 and 5, and in particular point 1.3.3. May be downloaded at: <http://ccfee.be/nos-avis/articulations-enseignement-formation-emploi/pilotage-des-articulations>

67. While the coordination of the building of schools continues, the path towards a more global coordination of education in Brussels still seems very long. However, there are many areas of work at this level: planning of buildings and distribution of new places in schools, harmonisation of enrolment procedures, support for staying in school, allocation of educational and extracurricular means (in particular extracurricular care and mechanisms for social cohesion, including homework centres), teacher training and adaptation of the programme to the realities of Brussels, not to mention the implementation of bilingual or even multilingual education. The establishment of coordination and a common point of view for Brussels may also allow a fight against other linguistic or philosophical splits, which sometimes discourage the claims of stakeholders in the Region, even if they are legitimate.

Conclusion

68. At institutional level, education in Brussels does not exist. The Region, a bilingual institution, has very little competence in this area, as the terms for the federalisation of Belgium result in the coexistence of an education system structured separately by the French and Flemish Communities. The historical legacy of struggles and balance between socio-political pillars is translated by the presence of networks within each community system: education organised by the Community, education organised by the municipalities and Community Commissions (official subsidised) and private education. In Brussels, education is therefore managed by a multitude of structures (the organising authorities) which often function in an autonomous manner and consult each other at different levels (network and Community). The 19 municipalities, which act as separate official subsidised organising authorities, often in both linguistic frameworks, obviously do not simplify matters. The same is true regarding the many international schools.

69. This complex organisation of education must cope with the realities of a (small) world city whose population has grown and become younger and more international, and where the wealth of some coexists with the unemployment and poverty of others.

70. Demographic growth has led to large-scale needs. There will be 42,000 additional students to accommodate between 2010 and 2020, 29,500 of whom will be at preschool and primary level. This represents 1,343 additional classes at primary level alone, with the same number of teachers required.

71. But the challenge is not only quantitative. Failure and underachievement, like the logic of relegation between streams in secondary education, reach very high levels, which exceed those in other major Belgian cities. There are many young people who leave compulsory education without the diploma required to continue their studies or to enter the workforce in the right conditions. The acquired educational skills are very unequal between individuals, as well as at school level, thus revealing a logic of differentiated recruitment between schools. In a dense urban environment, this greatly accentuates the effect of residential segregation, creating 'chosen' schools and 'default' schools, if not 'ghetto' schools. Students in difficulty or who may potentially leave school early are therefore very unevenly distributed between schools, which does not facilitate the work for a proportion of the teaching staff or a true remediation of inequality by the school, in particular for the increasing number of students who do not have a firm grasp of the language of instruction.

72. These challenges are often dealt with in a scattered order or within a community framework, without taking the urban specificities of Brussels into account. The demographic growth forecasts were clearly deficient, in particular on behalf of the Communities, which are responsible for the coordination of education, including the financing of infrastructures. It is true that the multitude of organising authorities and intermediate networks, which lack structure on a territorial basis, complicate and influence the understanding of local realities.

73. The coordination (studies, calls for projects, land registry of usable space) was finally taken on for the most part by the Brussels Region, which even provided concrete financing for modular infrastructures in order to cope with the shortage in the beginning. The municipalities also reacted quickly, making use of true intersectoral competence, calling on the different levels of authority and taking financial risks. These

financial risks probably could not be taken by many organising authorities from the private network, at least not individually.

74. But over time, it will only be possible to face the challenges jointly and in a structured manner. The Community means and above all the margins of investment must be redirected as much as possible towards the places where there is an obvious need, bearing in mind that the outskirts of Brussels and other big cities are also subject to demographic growth. The programming must be adapted to local specificities and integrate all aspects of the problem (classes, collective infrastructures, recruitment of teachers). This involves going beyond the institutional splits and putting the Task Force to work, which was recently set up by the Region and the Communities. The Region must ensure the continued existence of its new role as strategic planner in terms of infrastructures related to youth, including education.

75. Other aspects also deserve to be discussed and even organised in a Brussels framework, in addition to the Community level: the fight against academic failure and early school leaving, the nature and allocation of means related to positive discrimination measures, extracurricular activities, enrolment support, school bus service, management of multilingualism, additional training for (future) teachers in Brussels, and even inter-school coordination, solidarity and responsibility. Even in an unchanged institutional framework, this coordination is not just a utopian idea, with cross-cutting tools to reinforce and coordinate existing at regional level (the enlargement of the future *Comité bruxellois de concertation économique et sociale* to include Community executives) and within both Community systems, for example the 'school catchment areas and 'lokale overlegplatforms'.

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