

Centrifugal regionalism in the context of political mobilization in Belgium

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Introduction

Belgium is often depicted as a “divided society” with two regions, a Flemish and a Walloon, having a difficult “marriage of convenience”, at the same time bound to each other as well as drifting further away both politically, economically, and culturally. In Belgium the ongoing process of further regionalization has led to several mobilizations where people take to the streets either to defend strong regional claims, either to defend the current federal system and “Belgicist” perspective and confirm interregional solidarity. The process of (centrifugal) regionalism in Flanders has a longstanding history of political mobilization. The Flemish Movement goes back to the late 19th century originally struggling against the political, economic and cultural dominance of the francophone elite, but later on – and still today – also questioning the mere existence of a unitary Belgian state. On the other hand, dynamics of centrifugal regionalism certainly also have an impact on the dynamics of political mobilization itself and the Belgian social movement sector at large. With two separate political and cultural “spaces” in Belgium, also the social movement space is clearly divided in a Flemish part and a Walloon part. The shift from a national social movement industry, using Zald and McCarthy’s (1987) term, towards two regional social movement industries was especially encouraged in the late ‘70s with the regionalization of the grant system for socio-cultural organizations and associations. This was very clear in the peace movement sector where peace organizations like Pax Christi or the BUVV/BUPD created a Flemish and a Walloon chapter so that both parts could claim money in each region.¹ Although it is still common for social movement activists from both Flanders as well as Wallonia to join forces, to mobilize for a common cause, and to organize massive protest demonstrations in the streets of Brussels, capital of Belgium, still dynamics of regionalization somehow seem to divide the protesting public in a Walloon and Flemish part. For instance, after the massive demonstrations against the imminent war in Iraq in 2003 some people stated that the Walloon part of the mobilization was much more radical and left-wing than the

¹ Personal interview with Georges Spriet, Vrede vzw, 2/06/2008

Flemish attendees. And more recently, when Flemish and Walloon environmental groups organized their national demonstration against climate change, a similar sound was raised with the Walloon organizations much more inclined to use more direct forms of protest action while the Flemish groups saw more merit in lobbying strategies or small scale forms of action.

In this contribution we will look at “centrifugal regionalism” in the context of political protest mobilization making a systematic comparison of individual protesters from two different angles. In the context of political mobilization one can look at dynamics of centrifugal regionalism as a political movement or as a process having consequences for social movements that operate in these regions. More specifically we are interested in how dynamics of centrifugal regionalism result in different mobilizing constituencies. A “regional divide” can be present between demonstrating constituencies as regionalism becomes a cause in itself (e.g. a Flemish versus a Belgicist March), or it can be present among a population of demonstrators protesting for the same issue (e.g. Flemish and Walloon peace activists marching together in a national demonstration to protest against an imminent war in Iraq).

In order to test whether dynamics of centrifugal regionalism also have a consequence for mobilization dynamics at the individual level, we will use two sets of individual level data collected among actual protest participants that took part in several demonstrations in Belgium between February 2006 and December 2007.² A first set contains two specific demonstrations with specific “regionalist” claims: a first one was organized in the run-up to the Belgian federal elections in 2007 claiming Flemish independency (the Flemish March). The second one was organized in the aftermath of the difficult governmental negotiations between Flemish and Walloon coalition partners in that same year. Several thousands of people took to the streets to defend the unity and interregional solidarity of the Belgian federal state (March for Unity). A second set contains national demonstrations where activist from Flanders as well as Wallonia joined forces: an antiwar demonstration, a climate change demonstration, two union mobilizations (VW Vorst and Purchasing Power), and a silent march in memory of a youngster that was killed during a mug. With the first set of demonstrations we want to find an answer for the question whether protest mobilization is similar or different for people pursuing further regionalization versus those people who are reluctant to further regionalization. With the second dataset we are interested in the way the Belgian “divided society” is also reflected in a distinct Flemish and Walloon mobilizing constituency pursuing the same cause, but each with its own mobilizing capacities and protest characteristics. Here the question is: Is protest mobilization similar or different for Flemish versus Walloon protest participants in a particular protest demonstration?

This contribution is in the first place empirical and explorative. By closely looking at the different dynamics on the individual level we can learn much about the impact of processes of regionalization

² A full description of each demonstration is presented in the methodological section of this article

in civil society. Looking at people that participated in the Flemish March versus those that participated in the March for Unity can learn us a lot about the Flemish Movement and the Belgian Movement (if one can speak of a movement). Which kind of people are committed to these movements? Their claims are diametrically opposing each other, but they still might share similar characteristics in terms of socio-demographics or how they were mobilized. In similar vein we can learn a lot about a possible regional divide present among participants in the same demonstration. Do Flemish and Walloon participants, besides living on a different side of the language border, still share the same characteristics in terms socio-demographics or how and why they were mobilized? In more general terms both comparisons will learn us a lot about the extent to which regional tendencies are indeed dividing Belgian civil society.

Methods and data

In order to analyze activist characteristics across diverse protest demonstrations, we distributed individual-level protest surveys at seven different demonstrations that took place in Belgium between February 2006 and December 2007. For each of these demonstrations a standardized sampling and interview procedure was followed as introduced by Favre and colleagues (1997) and further refined by Van Aelst and Walgrave (2001) and Walgrave and Verhulst (2008): two groups of interviewers, each directed by a fieldwork supervisor, hand out similar questionnaires asking protesters to fill in the survey at home and send it back with the prepaid envelope. The fieldwork supervisor selects the participants to be interviewed in order to reduce possible selection bias. A short face-to-face interview with each respondent makes it possible to check for response bias. Protest participants were picked out according to a carefully designed selection method following a probabilistic logic: a rough estimation of the number of attendants is made, which is then turned into an estimation of demonstration rows. In every n^{th} -row, surveys are handed out to attendants alternatively in the middle of a row and at the left- and right-hand side of it. A first group of interviewers moves from the head of the demonstration towards the tail. A second group carries out the same procedure, but starting from the tail up to the front of the demonstration. This way every protester should have a similar “chance” to participate in the survey. This method proved to generate reliable results and only minimal response bias (the only bias is that older people are somewhat more willing to send the survey back). A more detailed description of this method, difficulties in the actual execution, and reliability tests can be found in Walgrave and Verhulst (2008).

We provide descriptive figures and facts and response rates for each demonstration in Table 1. For our double comparisons we created two subsets of demonstrations. A first set contains two protest demonstrations. First, the Flemish March, a demonstration organized by a coalition of the Flemish nationalist movement and some right-wing nationalist student organizations. The Flemish March

principle claim was Flemish independency and attracted a lot of political far-right militants. Second, the March for Unity, a large mobilization that was organized about half a year later and after government negotiations failed because of regionalist tensions between several coalition partners. On 18 November 2007 more than 35,000 people took to the streets in Brussels. Their principle claim: that political leaders should focus on the “real problems of people” instead of fighting about communitarian issues.

A second set of demonstrations contains five demonstrations that can be further categorized in three distinct groups. First of all we have two demonstrations traditionally labeled as “new social movements” covering issues like peace and antiwar (Antiwar—against the enduring occupation of Iraq), and environmental concerns (Climate Change). A second subset of demonstrations is typically labeled as “old social movements”, staged by long-established movement organizations. These are very typical trade union mobilizations organized around characteristic “bread and butter” issues. VW Vorst is about possible redundancies in a large car factory, and Purchasing Power mobilized against inflation and lowering purchasing power. Finally, we have a rather a-typical subset containing one demonstration and which is often labeled as “new emotional movement” (cf. Walgrave and Manssens 2000; Walgrave and Verhulst 2006). What is distinct about these kind of protest events is they are spontaneous and emotional with no clear movement organizations involved in staging the event, and without a clear-cut cleavage around which participants are mobilized, and hence attract a very diverse and broad group of citizens. They are typically organized following an act of random violence (cf. Million Mom March in the U.S.). The March for Joe was organized after the brutal killing of a youngster named Joe Van Holsbeeck. General response rates for these demonstrations are satisfying, with an average of 37 percent. Both sets, with demonstrations across movement types and demonstration issues, imply a great deal of contextual differences, which allows for an interesting test about centrifugal regionalist tendencies across different activist populations.

Table 1. Descriptive Figures and Response Rates for Each Demonstration

Name	Flemish March	March for Unity	Antiwar	Climate Change	VW Vorst	Purchasing Power	March for Joe
Movement type	REGIONAL	REGIONAL	NSM	NSM	OSM	OSM	NEM
Time	6 May 2007	18 Nov 2007	19 Mar 2006	8 Dec 2007	2 Dec 2006	15 Dec 2007	23 Apr 2006
Place	Rode	Brussels	Brussels	Brussels	Brussels	Brussels	Brussels
Aim	More autonomy for Flemish region	Interregional solidarity	Against occupation Iraq	Against global warming and climate change	Against restructuring VW car factory	Against inflation and lowering purchasing power	Against random violence + in memoriam Joe Van Holsbeeck
# participants	1,500	35,000	5,000	3,000	15,000	20,000	80,000
# questionnaires							
Distributed	554	515	915	548	878	398	1018
Completed	235	221	316	189	270	126	437
Response rate (%)	42	43	34	34	31	32	43

Note: NSM = New Social Movement; OSM = Old Social Movement; NEM = New Emotional Movement

Analyses and results

In their classic study on political participation Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995) argue that people participate because they *can*, because they are *asked to*, and because they *want to*. People *can* participate in collective action because, first of all, their present personal and professional demands do not hinder participation (e.g. students are more likely to participate because they generally have fewer demands on their time) (cf. McAdam 1986), and second, they hold certain beliefs and political attitudes that make them more susceptible to participate (Downton and Wehr 1997). Thus pointing to some kind of “attitudinal availability” next to a certain “biographical” availability. People are more likely to be *asked to* participate when they are embedded in a network of interpersonal relations. Network ties, both informal (with friends or family) as well as formal (with co-members in an organization) are consequently found to be a strong and robust predictor of protest participation (Snow *et al.* 1980; Schussman and Soule 2005). Finally, people participate because they *want to*. People participating in collective action, at least, are willing to do so (Klandermans 1997). But their motivation, or the different motives and reasons why they do so, can be very diverse. According to Klandermans (2004: 362-365) people *can*, broadly speaking, be motivated for collective action participation in three ways: for instrumental reasons, out of a sense of collective identity, and out of ideological reasons. Instrumental benefits are based on the rational cost-benefits calculation of future participation on both collective incentives (usually the common goal of a protest demonstration) as well as selective incentives (Olson 1971; Wilson 1973; Verba *et al.* 1995; Klandermans 1997, 2004); the latter sometimes providing material benefits, but often also purposive (a participation-intrinsic gratification by getting a sense of fulfilment of doing the right thing and promoting our beliefs), as well as social (by, e.g. gaining respect and engaging in social interaction with others). Related to these social incentives is the concept of collective identity, which is, in a nutshell, determined by the participants’ feel of group belonging; in-group solidarity, as well as some sort of oppositional consciousness (*‘us’* versus *‘them’*) (Melucci 1988; Gamson 1992; Klandermans 1997). The third participation motive of ideology (Klandermans 2004: 363) is closely related to the concept of purposive incentives, since it refers to people “wanting to express one’s views” (Klandermans 2004: 365), out of a sense of moral indignation, which is to a large degree determined by an emotional response to an aggrieving situation, like feelings of injustice, anger, moral outrage, indignation, or confusion.

It is this classic threefold distinction between *who*, *how*, and *why* that serves as the framework in this article to discuss the differences between first, Flemish versus Belgicist mobilizations, and second, Flemish versus Walloon protest participants. Since, the aim of this article is explorative, we will only use simple crosstables to illustrate the different comparisons.

Comparison 1: Centrifugal regionalism as a political movement³

Who?

For this first comparison we make a distinction between on the hand the Flemish March and on the other hand the “Belgian” March for Unity. Following our threefold distinction we first of all will look at the socio-demographic characteristics of the people participating in each of these events. At the Flemish March we find slightly more male, younger and lower educated demonstrators compared to the March for Unity (see Table 2). The Flemish March was a dominant male demonstration whereas the March for unity contains much more equal proportions men and women. Average age on the Flemish March is slightly younger, although there is much larger cohort of seniors (+65) at the Flemish March compared to the March for Unity. Compared to the other demonstrations (see further), both demonstrations in this dataset contain on average much older people. The Flemish March was an initiative of a right-wing student organization (the KVHV) but they built on a longstanding history of the Flemish Movement, represented most prominently by the Vlaamse Volksbeweging (VVB – *Flemish Popular Movement*), raised in 1956. This is also clearly reflected in the professional profile of the “Flemish” demonstrators amongst which we find relatively more students and retired people. The March for Unity, in fact the initiative of only one person, attracted especially higher educated people between 40 and 50 with a full time job. Yet, also in this demonstration there is a significant amount of retired people that wanted to show their solidarity with the Belgian state.

Table 2. Socio-demographics (in %)

		Flemish March	March for Unity
Sex	Man	72	53
	Woman	28	47
Total		100	100
Age	<30	26	23
	31-40	14	15,5
	41-50	17	20
	51-65	25	29
	65+	18	12,5
Total		100	100
Education	No/primaries	3	4
	Technical secondary	15	8
	General secondary	25	15
	Higher non-university	28	28
	University	29	45
Total		100	100
Occupation	Full time	40	50
	Part time	6	9
	Student	10,5	4
	Unemployed	4	4,5
	Retired	29	25
	Husband/housewife	2,5	4
Other/missing		8	3,5
Total		100	100
<i>N</i>		235	221

Note: missings for ‘occupation’ are mostly people aged 65 or higher.

³ This section is based on previous work that can be found in Walgrave, Van Laer & Verhulst (2008)

One specific socio-demographic characteristic we want to focus a little bit more is language (Table 3). Of course this feature is of very little relevance for the Flemish March, where – unsurprisingly – 100 percent was Dutch-speaking. At the March for Unity, however, some interesting results can be found. We asked our respondents both where they lived as well as which language they speak at home. We find that the majority of “Belgian” demonstrators were French-speaking (65 percent); 21 percent was Dutch-speaking and 15 percent indicated to speak both languages equally well. Furthermore, it appeared that most participants came from Brussels itself, followed by Walloons and Flemings. This means that nearly one third of the participants at the March for Unity were French-speaking inhabitants of Brussels. There was thus only a limited amount of “pure” Flemings—Dutch-speaking and living in Flanders—present at the March for Unity. Yet, also the amount of “pure” Walloons—French-speaking and living in Wallonia—is in fact not that big. The majority of the participants has a more ambivalent statute: they speak a different language than where they live, they live in a dual-speaking area, or they speak two languages themselves (together 64 percent). One might say that these are the “real” Belgians, or, at least, the Belgians that want to take to the streets for Belgium. The low figure of Flemings at the March for Unity was, according to some people, the result of the very little attention for the March in the Flemish mass media. We will return to this in a next section.

Table 3. Language according to region for the March for Unity (in %)

		Dutch	French	Bilingual	Total
Region	Brussels	6	31	7	44
	Wallonia	3,5	24	4	32
	Flanders	11,5	9	4	24
Total		21	64	15	100
<i>N</i>		107	325	74	506

Note: Figures represent total percentages

How?

The way both demonstrations gained momentum differs fundamentally. As mentioned earlier, the Flemish March was principally organized by the KVHV and the VVB, both main organizations of the current Flemish movement. The March for Unity, on the contrary, was the initiative of one single housewife. Here there were no clear organizational connections or links, nor was there any previous experience in organizing a demonstration. In the *De Standaard* of 16 November 2007, one of the main quality papers in Flanders, the following appeared: “The organizers repeat over and over again that this movement is ‘a-political and spontaneous’ ... ‘That is why things can get very confused sometimes here’, says one co-organizer Andy Vermaut, after a very chaotic press conference yesterday afternoon.” An analyses of the media coverage in the run-up to both demonstrations would probably reveal that the Flemish March only got minimal media attention, while the March for Unity was more widely covered, especially in the Walloon press. The question is whether this different organizational background, a structured movement on the one hand and a more informal happening with a lot of media support, is also translated in specific activist characteristics. Well, that certainly seems to be the case. Table 4 clearly illustrates the differences. First of all, we asked our respondents with whom

they attended the demonstration. The Flemish March was for the largest part attended by people who were accompanied by co-members of an organization (53 percent). The Flemish March very much is a typical well-organized demonstration, comparable to the more frequent protest actions organized by trade unions. The March for Unity is almost the exact mirror image: people participating in this event were there with informal relations, family or friends (together 76 percent). Moreover, a lot of people were there alone (20 percent). In fact the March for Unity much resembles the White March of 1996 or the recent Silent March in 2006, both “new emotional events” (cf. Walgrave and Verhulst 2006). Finally, both demonstrations are not rooted in a professional sphere: the amount of colleagues or co-students negligible.

A second indicator about the way the demonstration was organized and how the social movement behind operates, is the information channel through which the participants heard about the event. Again we find very different patterns in both demonstrations (Table 5). Participants at the Flemish March principally heard about the demonstration via other members of an organization, while participants at the March for Unity were mostly informed via classic mass media (TV, newspapers, radio). Similar to both demonstrations is the relative importance of informal relations (friends, family) and especially new communication technologies (websites, email) to be informed about the demonstration. The Flemish March can be termed as a typical “closed” mobilization, that strongly benefited of a robust network of organizations, while the March for Unity has diametrically opposed “open” mobilization pattern where mass media play a crucial role and organizations are almost completely absent or passed-by (cf. Walgrave and Klandermans 2010).

Table 4. Protest company (in %)

Are you at this demonstration...?	Flemish March	March for Unity
Alone	10	20
With partner and/or family	19	45,5
With friends and/or acquaintances	17,5	31
With colleagues and/or co-students	0,5	1,5
With fellow members of an organization	53	2
Total	100	100
<i>N</i>	232	219

Note: originally respondents could check multiple answers. Here only the most formal category was used. Thus, if a respondent indicated both ‘partner’ and ‘members’, only the latter category was used.

Table 5. Information channel (multiple response) (in %)

	Flemish March	March for Unity
TV, newspapers, radio	6	64
Family, friends, colleagues	36	39
Websites, e-mail	59	56
Posters/flyers, ads	54	18
Members (magazines) of an organization	69	3
<i>N</i>	230	220

Note: Percentages are based on respondents.

Finally, we find out whether these different mobilization patterns is also translated in different protest experiences. We expect that especially the Flemish protesters are, as a result of their strong organizational embeddedment, much more experienced with protesting than the “Belgian” demonstrators. Table 6 contains the results and confirms this expectation. Typical for the March for Unity is the large amount of first-times: 26 percent of the respondents reported that they participated in a collective action event for the very first time. The difference with the Flemish March is huge. Flemish marchers clearly have a lot more experience: almost half of them report that they previously participated more than 10 times in other demonstrations. At the March for Unity this is only 6 percent. In sum, in terms of mobilization and protest experience, thus the kind of social movement, there are fundamental difference between the Flemish March and the March for Unity.

Table 6. Protest experience (in %)

	Flemish March	March for Unity
First time	6	26
2 - 5 times	31	54
6 - 10 times	16,5	14
More than 10 times	46,5	6
Total	100	100
<i>N</i>	231	218

Why?

Why did both “Flemish” and “Belgian” demonstrators participated in a collective event? As mentioned, we can broadly speak of three general motivations: people participate for instrumental reasons, because of a collective identity, or because of expressive ideological reasons (Klandermans 2004). In order to measure instrumentality we asked our respondents to what extent they believed the demonstration would be effective in attaining its goals. In both demonstrations opinions are divided. Participants of the Flemish March are mostly pessimistic: 52 percent reports that the demonstration will not help to reach its goals. Participants of the March for Unity are much more optimistic: more than a third believes the demonstration will help to change things. Yet, an equal proportion believes the opposite or is undecided on this matter. If so much Flemish protesters do not believe that their demonstration will lead to any instrumental changes, why do they protest than? Part of the answer can be found if we look at the next type of motivation: collective identity. A stunning 73 percent of the Flemish participants reports to identify strongly and even very strongly with the people present at the demonstration. Figures for the March for Unity are comparable, although slightly lower. This means that a lot of the people present at both demonstrations are there having strong feelings of in-group solidarity, of belongingness to a group of like-minded citizens. Participating in a demonstration for these people becomes a goal in itself: being together with other fellow members of an organization. In similar vein, we see that a lot of people, both on the Flemish March and the March for Unity report strong emotional feelings (indignation, militancy, concern) towards the demonstrations. This too is an indication that both Flemish and Belgian demonstrators are in the first place there because they first of all want to show something, express their feelings and

opinions, rather than effectively change something. The interesting thing is that, although the Flemish March and the March for Unity have diametrically opposing claims, the underlying motivational rationale for both protesting constituencies seems to be much alike.

Table 7. Motivations (in %)

		Flemish March	March for Unity
Instrumentality	Little success	52	32
	Moderate	22	33
	Very successful	26	35
Total		100	100
Collective identity	Weak	4	10
	Moderate	23	27
	Strong	73	63
Total		100	100
Emotions (means on a scale of 1 to 7)	Anger	4.6	2.7
	Concern	4.9	5.2
	Fear	2.1	3.5
	Sadness	2.4	3.8
	Indignation	5.3	4.3
	Militancy	6.2	4.7
<i>N</i>		235	221

Comparison 2: Centrifugal regionalism having an impact on social movements

Just like for the previous comparison, we will now discuss the “who”, “how” and “why” of several different national demonstrations each time comparing Flemings with Walloons. The division between Flemings and Walloons we make here is however imperfect as we only can make a difference in terms of the language they speak. Unlike the previous two demonstrations we cannot make a distinction according to the place where one lives. However, language is probably the best proxy to distinguish between the two regions and the corresponding public, economic and political spheres. The general question we want to address in this section is whether the Flemings and Walloons, walking together in the same demonstration, also share similar features in terms of who they are, how they got to the demonstration, and why they participated. We will compare across three kinds of issues to increase the generalizability of the results: new social movement issues (e.g. antiwar and climate change), old social movement issues (e.g. massive redundancies and purchasing power), and new emotional issues (e.g. random violence). Before we turn to the results, we first present a Table with an overview of the distribution of Flemings and Walloons across the different demonstrations under study.

Table 8. Language across five demonstrations (in %)

	Antiwar	Climate Change	VW Vorst	Purchasing Power	March for Joe	Total
	NSM	NSM	OSM	OSM	NEM	
Dutch	67	58	50	62	42	54
French	33	42	50	38	58	46
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>N</i>	316	189	272	124	437	1338

As Table 8 reveals, there is slight dominance of Dutch-speaking activists at the different national demonstrations we studied, except for the March for Joe (which was about a youngster killed in Brussels Central Station, hence probably mobilizing much in the capital itself) and the union mobilization VW Vorst, where equal proportions French-speaking and Dutch-speaking activists were present.

Who?

First we will discuss some general socio-demographic features of Flemings and Walloons participating in various demonstrations. Generally, the demonstrations we covered are dominantly male, except for the March for Joe where on average slightly more women did participate. Union mobilizations are far most occupied by male activists, which seems logically regarding the specific mobilization potential unions draw from. Differences between the Dutch-speaking and French-speaking community at these demonstrations are small, except for the Antiwar demonstration where significant more female French-speaking activist were present. In terms of age, education, and occupational status there are no significant differences between the Flemings and Walloons.

Table 9. Socio-demographics (in %)

		Antiwar		Climate Change		VW Vorst		Purchasing Power		March for Joe	
		NL	FR	NL	FR	NL	FR	NL	FR	NL	FR
Sex	% male	61	47	56	58	66	65	64	77	41	43
Age	mean	39.4	39.0	39.2	42.8	45.4	45.4	49.9	50.0	43.9	44.5
Education	mean	6.9	6.9	7.0	7.1	5.4	5.9	5.8	5.7	6.4	6.2
Occupation	Full time	36	32	46	47	74	69	68	66	42	49
	Part time	18	12	16	20	10	4	8	6	14	9
	Unemployed	6	9	8	9	4	10	7	4	8	8
	Retired	15	16	8	11	8	10	7	19	15	15
	Husband/housewife	1	1	2	1	1	2	4	2	6	6
	Student	21	28	16	8	2	2	0	0	14	10
	Other/missing	3	2	4	4	1	3	6	3	1	3
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
	<i>N</i>										

How?

Looking at how Flemings and Walloons were mobilized for the various demonstrations in our dataset, some more interesting results come up. Just like in the first comparison we make a difference between the company during the march, the information channel about the demonstration, and the experience one has with previous mobilizations. In terms of company, one interesting finding is that French-speaking activists are in most demonstrations more likely to show up alone, and far less in company with co-members of an organization. Also in terms of information channel, French-speaking activists less likely did hear about the demonstration through organizational channels. An exception is of course the March for Joe where organizations in general are completely absent. But, for the other

demonstration, and especially the most organizationally embedded union mobilizations, these figures might indicate that mobilization dynamics in both regions slightly differ from each other. It seems that Walloon activists are less formally and organizationally embedded than Flemish activists. This might also explain why much more Flemings are present than Walloons (see Table 8), as networks and especially formal networks are crucial elements for successful mobilization attempts.

Table 10. Protest company (in %)

Are you at this demonstration...?	Antiwar		Climate Change		VW Vorst		Purchasing Power		March for Joe	
	NL	FR	NL	FR	NL	FR	NL	FR	NL	FR
Alone	7	28	7	13	4	17	0	13	24	21
With partner and/or family	16	16	13	22	5	13	10	13	46	49
With friends and/or acquaintances	19	23	17	27	2	6	4	6	24	22
With colleagues and/or co-students	3	4	6	6	5	21	5	13	3	4
With fellow members of an organization	55	29	57	32	84	43	81	55	3	4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	211	102	108	79	135	136	77	47	182	252

Note: originally respondents could check multiple answers. Here only the most formal category was used. Thus, if a respondent indicated both 'partner' and 'members', only the latter category was used.

Table 11. Information channel (multiple response) (in %)

	Antiwar		Climate Change		VW Vorst		Purchasing Power		March for Joe	
	NL	FR	NL	FR	NL	FR	NL	FR	NL	FR
TV, newspapers, radio	21	28	27	29	72	79	61	36	97	94
Family, friends, colleagues	39	40	45	35	31	31	44	21	21	24
Websites, e-mail	65	41	62	63	55	35	68	38	7	10
Posters/flyers, ads	44	40	50	25	33	28	60	23	2	2
Members (magazines) of an organization	61	39	71	59	74	43	81	83	3	6
N	207	100	109	78	134	136	77	47	183	250

Note: Percentages are based on respondents.

Finally, in terms of protest experience we do not find very large differences. We would expect, regarding the previous results, that French-speaking activists are less experienced than Flemings, but this is not the case, on the contrary. In all demonstrations, except for the March for Joe, most activists are very experienced.

Table 12. Protest experience (multiple response) (in %)

	Antiwar		Climate Change		VW Vorst		Purchasing Power		March for Joe	
	NL	FR	NL	FR	NL	FR	NL	FR	NL	FR
First time	2	4	17	9	13	12	1	9	29	21
2 - 5 times	23	18	32	31	26	28	27	17	44	57
6 - 10 times	18	17	21	19	18	18	33	13	14	10
More than 10 times	57	61	30	41	43	42	39	61	13	12
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	211	103	108	79	133	137	77	47	182	253

Why?

Finally we look at three motivational aspects that might differ for Flemish or Walloon activists. Both Dutch- as well as French speaking activists at new social movement demonstrations (antiwar and climate change), are not very instrumentally motivated: the majority believes that the demonstration will not help in changing something. At the old social movement demonstrations and the March for Joe, people are a bit more optimistic. Flemish activists at the two union mobilizations are the most optimistic, while this is the other way around at the March for Joe. In terms of collective identity, we only have data for three demonstrations. Just like we found among the people participating at the Flemish March and the March for Unity (Table 7), we see that most respondents moderately and even strongly identify with the other people present at the demonstration. In-group solidarity is an important motivator for people to participate in massive protest demonstrations. Finally, we have a list of several emotions. Generally, these figures point out that emotions play an important role. There is only limited differences between Dutch-speaking and French-speaking activists. At the new social movement demonstrations Flemish activists seem to be a little more concerned, while French-speaking activists at the two union demonstrations experience a little more fear. In sum, there are no fundamental different patterns to be found in terms of motivations between Flemings and Walloon at various demonstrations.

Table 13. Motivations (in %)

		Antiwar		Climate Change		VW Vorst		Purchasing Power		March for Joe	
		NL	FR	NL	FR	NL	FR	NL	FR	NL	FR
Instrumentality	Little success	64	72	53	59	46	47	34	41	42	30
	Moderate	26	22	32	25	18	36	29	26	25	31
	Very successful	10	6	15	16	36	17	37	33	33	39
Total		100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Collective identity	Weak	5	11			12	21			33	21
	Moderate	44	49			39	32			45	40
	Strong	51	40			49	47			22	39
Total		100	100			100	100			100	100
Emotions (means on a scale of 1 to 7)	Anger	5.2	5.2	3.6	4.1	5.1	5.0	4.5	4.7	4.6	4.8
	Concern	5.6	4.7	6.2	5.4	6.2	6.1	6.3	5.8	5.7	5.6
	Fear	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.7	4.1	5.2	3.3	4.6	3.8	4.6
	Sadness	3.7	4.4	3.6	4.2	3.9	5.2	4.6	5.0	5.0	6.3
	Indignation	6.0	5.7	5.1	5.2	5.7	5.7	4.0	4.6	5.8	6.0
	Militancy	5.0	4.9	5.6	5.7	5.7	5.7	6.1	6.5	4.3	4.9
N		208	100	107	76	131	135	76	46	182	251

Conclusion

Now let us return to the general question we started this contribution with: do dynamics of centrifugal regionalism have an impact on civil society? If we look at dynamics of centrifugal regionalism as a political movement, what kind of movements do we have and how do they differ from each other? For this question we systematically compared participants at a Flemish March, demanding more autonomy for the Flemish region, with participants at the March for Unity, a more spontaneous movement struggling for more interregional solidarity. Second, we wondered whether dynamics of centrifugal regionalism also had an effect on civil society itself. Therefore we systematically compared Flemish with Walloon activists in various national protest demonstrations. We explored whether the existing regionalization has also led to different mobilization dynamics and protesting constituencies in either the Flemish or the Walloon region.

Regarding the first comparison between Flemish March and March for Unity, we find important differences. The most compelling difference is probably the organizational embeddedness of the activists: the “Flemish” activists were mobilized via organizations and were also in company of co-members of an organization during the march. They had a lot of protest experience. Participants at the March for Unity on the other hand had no experience at all, were at the march with family and friends, and heard about the demonstration via mass media channels. The Flemish March therefore is very much alike to traditional trade union mobilizations, while the March for Unity has more similarities with the White Marches of 1996 and the March for Joe. In sum, we have two nice examples of, on the one hand, a typical “old” social movement—organized by strong organizations and mobilizing an experienced, male, more homogenous public—and a more “new” movement, floating on spontaneous emotions and engagements, benefiting a lot of the mass media attention and with a much smaller organizational backbone. Both events are of course only a snapshot of the efforts and events that are organized by the Flemish Movement and “Belgian” movement (if we can speak indeed of a movement), but it seems that there is along this communitarian cleavage also a clear social distinction between both movements.

Regarding the second comparison we generally found little differences between the Dutch-speaking and the French-speaking community. When social movements in Belgium mobilize nation-wide, thus when Flemish and Walloon organizations join forces and take to streets for a common goal or a set of common goals, both the Flemish as the Walloon participants in these demonstrations are very much alike: they share similar socio-demographic features and they are motivated by the same motivational dynamics (collective identity, emotions). However, one important difference that was systematically found across the different demonstrations, is that French-speaking activists are much less organizationally embedded than their Dutch-speaking counterparts. The results suggest that at the French-speaking side of the language border in Belgium, social movements seem to operate in a less formal and organizational manner than at the Dutch-speaking side. Also French-speaking activists,

much more than their Dutch-speaking comrades, seem to join demonstrations alone. All this suggest that mobilization dynamics in Wallonia are indeed slightly different than in Flanders. In terms of mobilization dynamics we thus might speak—cautiously—of two different cultures.

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