

Introduction

Quebec and Wallonia in Comparative Perspective

Min Reuchamps

Université catholique de Louvain

Belgium

Among the genus of federal designs, multinational federations stand out because of their very special nature. Their federal dynamics rests indeed on the coexistence of several – at least two – nations within a single polity. Such a multinational dynamics implies specific federal relations within and between the constituent units, its building blocks. Nonetheless, in the comparative study of federalism, while scholars have paid an increasing attention to multinational federations as a whole (for instance, Gagnon and Tully 2001, Keating 2001, McRoberts 2001, Gagnon, Rocher, and Guibernau 2003, Burgess and Pinder 2007), quite less research has been devoted to the “small worlds” inside them (Simeon and Elkins 1974, Elkins and Simeon 1980, Burgess 2013) with some important exceptions especially on the ground of sub-national constitutional politics (Tarr 1998, Burgess and Tarr 2012). When these small worlds are in fact minority nations in a multinational federation, the comparative study of their character is even more relevant to apprehend the federal dynamics in such polities. A few notable cases have received a sheer amount of attention in the past decades: the Basque Country and Catalonia in Spain, Bavaria in Germany, Flanders in Belgium, Quebec in Canada and more recently Scotland in the United Kingdom. Yet the considerable attention paid to these minority nations has mostly been focused on their politics of difference and more specifically on the very question of their breaking away or not, leaving aside a view from within and in particular how these minority nations have transformed into (mini-)states with full-fledged legislative powers within their federation.

This need to study more closely the small worlds follows the “meso” turn in social science as a consequence of the rise of the meso-level or region throughout the world and in Europe in particular (Keating 2013). Too often the focus is on national politics and policies and as such regions are seen as mere consequences of these dynamics. This common approach of regional and federal dynamics suffers however from “methodological nationalism” (Jeffery and Schakel 2012). One typical example is the “second-order election” theory that posits all but national elections to be of second-order nature (Reif and Schmitt 1980). They are subordinate to first-order national elections because there is less at stake in the other elections and this implies for these second-order elections: lower turnout, less votes for government parties, more votes for small, new and opposition parties. But recent scholarship that focuses specifically on regional elections has demonstrated that the issues at stakes are much more complex than this dichotomy assumes (Dandoy and Schakel 2013, Schakel and Jeffery 2013). An effort to understand fully the regional dynamics is therefore highly needed.

This book therefore seeks to study the specific dynamics *within* these small worlds – since they are too often considered as monolithic blocks – and *between* them and the rest of the federation, that is both the federal order and the other constituent units – since both so-called vertical and horizontal interactions deserve a comprehensive grip to understand fully the dynamics of minority nations in multinational federations. In the concert of minority nations within multinational federal systems, Quebec and Wallonia, despite their differences, share specific features that make their comparison insightful and important albeit understudied by the students of federalism across the world, beyond the typical comparison between Belgium and Canada (for instance, Karmis and Gagnon 2001, Poirier 2004, Béland and Lecours 2005, 2007, Erk 2008, Fournier and Reuchamps 2009, Poirier 2009b, Reuchamps 2011, Hambye and Richards 2012).

First of all, Quebec and Wallonia have experienced for several decades a federal dynamics where both regions have had to find their way as a minority nation in a multinational federation. While on this regard the comparison between Quebec and Flanders has often led to an interesting and meaningful comparison because of their similar history of grievance and nationalism (Erk 2002), the latest development of Canadian and Belgian federalism have brought Quebec and Wallonia closer to each other re-emphasizing their minority status. Indeed, in their recent history these two minority nations had a big momentum – a critical juncture – the very same year: in 1995, the second referendum in Quebec and the first direct election of the Walloon Parliament. These two episodes can be considered as the founding moment of contemporary politics in Quebec and Wallonia and fostered their transformation from minority nations to (mini-)states with full-fledged legislative powers.

With the defeat of the “no” camp in the second referendum, Quebec and Quebecois had to find their way back into Canadian federalism despite the grievances of the past and the political turmoil following the referendum and its results. From there, the struggle for recognition took a more legislative powers-oriented path than sovereignty *per se*, and increasingly Quebec reinforced both its internal and external powers within the Canadian federation (Gagnon 2006). In Wallonia, the minority status was not so much felt on political grounds (given the consociational nature of Belgian federalism) but rather on socio-economic grounds (Quévit 1978, 2010) by contrast to an increasingly self-confident politically (with its majority status) and economically (with its ever-flourishing economy) Flanders (Deschouwer 2012). Nonetheless, in the 1990’s the devolution process, which had started in the end of the 1960’s, enabled Wallonia to become a full-fledged region with state-like powers. The last state reform of 2011 allocates even more powers and more fiscal responsibilities to the Belgian Regions and thus to Wallonia (Deschouwer and Reuchamps 2013, Reuchamps 2013). As such, both Quebec and Wallonia put aside their minority status to embrace a state-like status within their own federation.

Quebec and Wallonia provide thus a very fertile ground to reflect on minority nations in multinational federations. In fact, their comparative study sheds light on federalism (in terms of both politics and policies), but also on territorial, identity and party politics in two regions which have politically changed in the last twenty years and which are likely to experience further transformations. Nonetheless, the research on comparative federalism has hitherto largely ignored the comparison between these two interesting cases. When students of federalism have devoted some attention to the comparison of Quebec and Wallonia, they have focused on specific topics and issues mainly related to sub-state nationalism (Erk 2002), intergovernmental (Poirier 2002, 2009a) and international (Massart-Piérard 2008, Paquin 2009) relations or specific public policies like language (De Coster 2007).

To fill up this gap, the aim of this book is to offer a comprehensive appraisal of the comparison between Quebec and Wallonia. This endeavour brings about three important questions for the study of minority nations in multinational federations. First, what are the nature and the role of these two minority nations within their multinational federation? This relates to nationalism, sub-state nationalism and sub-region nationalism as well as to federalism and intergovernmental relations. Second, what is their political dynamics? Or more specifically what is specific with their politics? Third, what kind of policies are designed and implemented in Quebec and in Wallonia? That is the very question of their political, economic, social and cultural development.

The nature and the role of minority nations in multinational federations is a key – albeit understudied – question in the comparative study of federalism. This is even more so when minority nations form federated entities of a federation. Such federated entities are then often “viewed as recipients and receptacles of national-state loyalties, national political priorities and national policy preferences”, but as Michael Burgess continues “they are hugely significant both

individually and *collectively* as distinct diverse political communities in their own right” (2013, 8, emphasis in the original). It is therefore important to analyse minority nations through the lenses of nationalism, sub-state nationalism but also sub-region nationalism because this threefold dynamics has to be captured in order to understand the nature of the minority nations. That is, in short, their political identity or as a question: are they nations *per se* or just linguistic communities? Above all, what’s behind their name? Indeed, minority nations are not monolithic blocks facing the majority block, but are shaped by internal and external dynamics that define what they are. What’s more, federalism and intergovernmental relations also shape these two types of dynamics and thus the specific role and place of minority nations within the bigger whole that the federal system is.

In fact, provinces, cantons, lander, regions and other federated entities are not only constituent units or “building blocks” as they are often referred to in the mainstream literature (Watts 2008, 71) of a given federation, but also they are own political actors, with their individual destiny and above all with their own politics. The second encompassing question that this book brings about calls for the investigation of the political dynamics in Quebec and in Wallonia. Indeed, it is often studied how the small worlds operate in the whole federal system but not so much how they operate themselves as a political entity in its own right. In other words, political actors and actions should be analysed for themselves. Such endeavour enables an insightful comparative approach which can be divided into two parts, namely the *within* and the *between* perspectives. The former calls for a close examination of the political dynamics within one single case, of its sub-national policy and politics. The latter brings a comparative perspective of the two small worlds under investigation and draws from such exercise insights about their cultural-ideological differences as well as their socio-economic differences and above all political differences.

The third question derives from the first two questions: what kind of policies are designed and implemented? A bridge between the study of politics and of policies is often neglected in the mainstream literature on comparative federalism. Yet, politics and policies are closely interrelated and even more so when minority nations form a federated entity. Indeed, because of this minority position, it might be felt that policies are adopted by and for the majority groups. Therefore, the policies designed and implemented in the territory of the entity might be more suited for its specific public. Above all, policies can also be instruments of politics through some forms of nationalism or sub-state nationalism. Thus, a comprehensive study of Quebec and Wallonia implies a close attention to the political, economic, social and cultural development of these two small worlds and how they use their development in the construction of their state within the larger federation.

To appraise these three questions, which is a challenging exercise in comparative politics, the book is articulated in three self-reinforcing parts of two to three chapters each covering both cases. The first part sets the stage of the comparison with two chapters that show the similarities and the differences between Quebec and Wallonia and endeavour to explain them in light of history, sociology and politics. The second part digs into the politics of Quebec and Wallonia with three chapters on respectively their political parties, their MPs and their local politics. The third and last part deals with the public policies realm in Quebec and Wallonia with, on the one hand, one chapter discussing their public administration and, on the other hand, two chapters reflecting on two prominent public policy areas: language and international relations. The conclusion brings the analysis of Quebec and Wallonia back in comparative federalism perspective and explains why their comparison sheds light on current trends in federalism throughout the world and in particular on minority nations in multinational federations.

The first chapter by Luc Turgeon investigates intergovernmental relations and constitutional reforms in Canada and in Belgium. Over the past forty years, they have been at the forefront of the political life of both countries, impacting directly Quebec and Wallonia respectively. But there is a difference in the ability of these two political entities to ensure the enactment of constitutional or quasi-constitutional measures to protect or further their interests. While some of the difference may be explained by difference in political weight, this chapter argues that two other factors are of crucial importance: institutions and critical junctures. In order to assess these two factors, a conceptual framework inspired by neo-institutionalist works on policy feedbacks is presented and applied in the analysis of the evolution of constitutional politics of both case since the 1960's. So doing, the chapter deciphers the political implications of the different approaches to constitutional politics and intergovernmental relations in Canada/Quebec and Belgium/Wallonia and thus sets the stage for the rest of the book.

As a starting point of the second chapter, Jean-François Caron observes that it may seem irrelevant to compare the challenges associated with the Quebec and Walloon identities, since both societies are facing different historical and institutional realities. Indeed, as a national minority within the Canadian federation, Quebec identity is affirmed and further claimed than in the Walloon case that was historically associated with the Belgian government itself. However, the changes of identity that Quebec has experienced in the 1960's during the Quiet Revolution have several elements in common with Wallonia, which has long been torn by a tension between an ethnic identity that would be characterised by the use of French and civic identity that is primarily territorial. The aim of this chapter is to show the similarities between the cases of Quebec and Wallonia, but also to discuss the pitfalls of identity that can occur when a society seeks to define itself through an identity that is more political.

The second part on politics in Quebec and Wallonia begins with an examination of political parties manifestos by Heidi Mercenier, Julien Perrez and Min Reuchamps. Political parties are indeed one of the main political actors in both Quebec and Wallonia. As their main ambition is to govern their region, they definitely contribute to shape Quebec and Wallonia. Therefore, this chapter aims at exploring their vision of their region. To do so, the more standardized (and thus comparable) source of information is their electoral manifesto. For the last twenty years, this chapter analyses the electoral manifesto for each main political parties in Quebec (ADQ and then CAQ, PLQ, PQ) and in Wallonia (CDH, Ecolo, MR, PS) for every election. Through a quantitative and qualitative politico-linguistic approach, the analysis of this massive load of information sheds light on the political parties' views of their region and its future, and how it has evolved over time in their recent history. So doing, this chapter links the first part of the book to the second part and introduces the reader into the study of politics in Quebec and Wallonia.

In the fourth chapter, Jérémy Dodeigne investigates political representatives and brings to the fore their different opportunity structures but their similar political class. In Western advanced democracies, where parliaments are at the centre of politics, studying the representatives – “the nucleus of a political class” – has always fascinated political scientists. Who are the representatives? How are they recruited? And, why do they decide to enter Parliaments? Those are core questions for students of legislative recruitment. The aim of this chapter is to offer a picture of representatives in Quebec and Wallonia along these three lines of research. Based on an original dataset of all the individual political careers since the 1990's, the chapter comes back briefly on the sociological profiles of representatives while it extends on representatives circulation. Career maintenance and career advancement of representatives are specifically examined in the two federations. Overall, despite large differences in the Canadian and Belgian opportunity structures, it concludes that Quebecois and Walloon representatives share more than they differ in terms of political class.

The analysis of the local elections through the figure of the mayors by Sandra Breux and Vincent Jacquet is the next step of this comparative endeavour. In the years 2000's, local electoral systems have experienced deep changes, notably with the strengthening of the mayor's role within municipalities. These changes also occurred in Quebec and Wallonia. Nonetheless, despite this strengthening of the mayor's role, its function and its position remain quite ambivalent within an increasingly multi-level environment. To explore the local political dynamics in Quebec and Wallonia, this chapter studies the careers of mayors in both regions. To do so, it relies on new empirical data from the 2005 local elections in Quebec and the 2006 local elections in Wallonia. On this background, the aim of this chapter is to understand more finely the specific nature of local political dynamics within the two federations.

Building on the first two parts, the third part on policies starts with a chapter by Maxime Petit Jean on public administration. More specifically, this chapter tackles recent public management reforms that are mainly related to the central administration in Quebec and Wallonia. Therefore, it respectively and diachronically covers the evolution of their administration, with a particular focus on the last fifteen years, with reforms such as the Public Administration Act in Quebec, and the creation of a unique central ministry in Wallonia, the *Service Public de Wallonie*. These two reforms are emblematic of a change in the orientation given by their own government to the public management of these sub-state administrations towards a more efficient and more responsive public action. The chapter gives also comparative insights on the trajectories of reform, notably on factors supporting or not the administrative reforms. Finally, it assesses how these reforms could contribute or not to the strengthening of the autonomy of Quebec and Wallonia.

This comparative book had to cover the – often hotly debated – field of language policy. Philippe Hambye reminds that the aims of language policy are in general non-directly linguistic: through the regulation of a language and of its uses, such policies mostly try to organize the access to other resources or public goods. As a consequence, languages policies are related to several domains of public policy: education, immigration, culture, international relations, to name but a few. Within these different domains, political measures taken in Quebec and Wallonia, since their emergence as major political entities within their respective countries, present some similarities due to their common situation of peripheral French-speaking communities, but also deep divergences. To understand them, this chapter analyses the main orientations of language policy in Quebec and Wallonia and tries to relate them to their founding principles in terms of political philosophy.

In the eight chapter, Stéphane Paquin, Marine Kravagna and Min Reuchamps tackle the key issue of Quebec' and Wallonia's international relations. While both nations are minority nations, they are very active on the international scene. In this chapter, the authors assess how these two minority nations – that will have to be qualified, especially in the case of Belgium – try to consolidate their position through their international relations. More specifically, they assess their treaty-making capacity and its underlying dynamics both internally – notably their relation with the federal government – and externally – with the other international actors. This chapter is therefore less about parallel diplomacy and more about the growing influence of substate governments in foreign policy making.

Finally the conclusion of the book by Michael Burgess will assess the overall significance of what this comparative study of Quebec and Wallonia tell us about minority nations in multinational federations in terms of politics, policies and polities. As he draws the book to a close it will become more obvious how far this specific comparison sheds light on current trends in

federalism and contributes to our understanding of regional and federal dynamics throughout the world.

References

- Béland, Daniel, and André Lecours. 2005. "The Politics of Territorial Solidarity: Nationalism and Social Policy Reform in Canada, the United Kingdom, and Belgium." *Comparative Political Studies* no. 38 (6):676-703.
- Béland, Daniel, and André Lecours. 2007. "Federalism, Nationalism and Social Policy Decentralization in Canada and Belgium." *Regional & Federal Studies* no. 17 (4):405-419.
- Burgess, Michael. 2013. "The Character, Role and Significance of Constituent Units in Federations and Federal Political Systems." *L'Europe en Formation* (3):7-19.
- Burgess, Michael, and John Pinder. 2007. *Multinational federations*. New York: Routledge.
- Burgess, Michael, and G. Alan Tarr. 2012. *Constitutional Dynamics in Federal Systems: Subnational Perspectives*. London & Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Dandoy, Régis, and Arjan H. Schakel. 2013. *Regional and National Elections in Western Europe. Territoriality of the Vote in Thirteen Countries, Comparative Territorial Politics*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.
- De Coster, Michel. 2007. *Les enjeux des conflits linguistiques : le français à l'épreuve des modèles belge, suisse et canadien*. Paris: L'Harmattan.
- Deschouwer, Kris. 2012. *The Politics of Belgium: Governing a Divided Society*. 2nd ed, *Comparative Government and Politics Series*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Deschouwer, Kris, and Min Reuchamps. 2013. "The Belgian Federation at a Crossroad." *Regional & Federal Studies* no. 23.
- Elkins, David J., and Richard Simeon. 1980. *Small Worlds: Provinces and Parties in Canadian Political Life*. London & Toronto: Methuen Publications.

- Erk, Jan. 2002. "Le Québec entre la Flandre et la Wallonie: Une comparaison des nationalismes sous-étatiques belges et du nationalisme québécois." *Recherches sociographiques* no. 48 (3):499-516.
- Erk, Jan. 2008. *Explaining Federalism. State, society and congruence in Austria, Belgium, Canada, Germany and Switzerland*, *Routledge series in federal studies*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Fournier, Bernard, and Min Reuchamps. 2009. *Le fédéralisme en Belgique et au Canada. Comparaison sociopolitique, Ouvertures sociologiques*. Bruxelles: De Boeck Université.
- Gagnon, Alain-G. 2006. *Le fédéralisme canadien contemporain : fondements, traditions, institutions, Paramètres*. Montréal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal.
- Gagnon, Alain-G., François Rocher, and Montserrat Guibernau. 2003. *The conditions of diversity in multinational democracies*. Montréal: Institute for Research on Public Policy.
- Gagnon, Alain-G., and James Tully. 2001. *Multinational Democracies*. Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hambye, Philippe, and Mary Richards. 2012. "The paradoxical visions of multilingualism in education: the ideological dimension of discourses on multilingualism in Belgium and Canada." *International Journal of Multilingualism* no. 9 (2):165-188.
- Jeffery, Charlie, and Arjan H. Schakel. 2012. "Editorial: Towards a Regional Political Science." *Regional Studies* no. 47 (3):299-302.
- Karmis, Dimitrios, and Alain- G. Gagnon. 2001. "Federalism, Federation and Collective Identities in Canada and Belgium: Different Routes, Similar Fragmentation." In *Multinational Democracies*, edited by Alain-G. Gagnon and James Tully, 137-175. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Keating, Michael. 2001. *Plurinational Democracy : Stateless Nations in a Post-Sovereignty Era*. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press.
- Keating, Michael. 2013. *Rescaling the European State: The Making of Territory and the Rise of the Meso*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Massart-Piérard, Françoise. 2008. *L'action extérieure des entités subétatiques. Approche comparée Europe Amérique du Nord*. Louvain-la-Neuve: Presses universitaires de Louvain.
- McRoberts, Kenneth. 2001. "Canada and the multinational state." *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique* no. 34 (4):683-713.
- Paquin, Stéphane. 2009. "Fédéralisme et système de gouvernance à paliers multiples en matière de politique étrangère : une comparaison entre le Canada et la Belgique." In *Le fédéralisme en Belgique et au Canada. Comparaison sociopolitique*, edited by Bernard Fournier and Min Reuchamps, 197-205. Bruxelles: De Boeck Université.
- Poirier, Johanne. 2002. "Formal Mechanisms of Intergovernmental Relations in Belgium." *Regional & Federal Studies* no. 12 (3):24-54.
- Poirier, Johanne. 2004. "Fédéralisme en Belgique et au Canada : parallèles, dissonances et paradoxes." *Septentrion : arts, lettre et culture de Flandre et des Pays-Bas*:26-32.
- Poirier, Johanne. 2009a. "Le partage des compétences et les relations intergouvernementales : la situation au Canada." In *Le fédéralisme en Belgique et au Canada. Comparaison sociopolitique*, edited by Bernard Fournier and Min Reuchamps, 107-122. Bruxelles: De Boeck Université.
- Poirier, Johanne. 2009b. "Les fédérations belge et canadienne : essai de comparaison synthétique et systématique." *Revue de droit de l'ULB* (1-2):13-32.
- Quévit, Michel. 1978. *Les causes du déclin wallon*. Bruxelles: Vie ouvrière.
- Quévit, Michel. 2010. *Flandre - Wallonie : Quelle solidarité ? De la création de l'Etat belge à l'Europe des Régions*. Charleroi: Couleurs livres.
- Reif, Karlheinz, and Hermann Schmitt. 1980. "Nine second-order national elections: a conceptual framework for the analysis of European election results." *European Journal of Political Research* no. 8 (1):3-44.
- Reuchamps, Min. 2011. *L'avenir du fédéralisme en Belgique et au Canada. Quand les citoyens en parlent, Diversitas*. Bruxelles: P.I.E.-Peter Lang.

- Reuchamps, Min. 2013. "The Current Challenges on the Belgian Federalism and the Sixth Reform of the State." In *The Ways of Federalism in Western Countries and the Horizons of Territorial Autonomy in Spain*, edited by Alberto Lopez Basaguren and Leire Escajedo San-Epifanio, 375-392. Berlin: Springer-Verlag.
- Schakel, Arjan H., and Charlie Jeffery. 2013. "Are Regional Elections really 'Second-Order' Elections?" *Regional Studies* no. 47 (3):323-341.
- Simeon, Richard, and David J. Elkins. 1974. "Regional Political Cultures in Canada." *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique* no. 7 (3):397-437.
- Tarr, G. Alan. 1998. *Understanding State Constitutions*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Watts, Ronald L. 2008. *Comparing Federal Systems*. 3rd ed. Montreal ; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.