

Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society

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Journal:	<i>Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society</i>
Manuscript ID	BSTS-18-0016.R1
Manuscript Type:	Original Manuscript
Keywords:	Flanders, Identity, Knowledge-based economy, Science and technology policy, Wallonia, Nationbuilding
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Abstract

Drawing on a documentary analysis of two socio-economic policy programs, one Flemish (“Vlaanderen In Actie”), the other Walloon (“Marshall Plans”), and a discourse analysis of how these programs are received in one Flemish and one Francophone quality newspaper, this article illustrates how Flanders and Wallonia both seek to become top-performing knowledge-based economies (KBEs). The paper discerns a number of discursive repertoires, such as “Catching up,” which policy actors draw on to legitimize or question the transformation of Flanders and Wallonia into KBEs. The “Catching up” repertoire places Flanders resolutely ahead of Wallonia in the global race towards knowledge, excellence, and growth, but suggests that Wallonia may, in due course, overtake Flanders as a top competitive region. Given the expectations and fears that “Catching up” evokes among Flemish and Walloon policy actors, the repertoire serves these actors as a flexible discursive resource to make sense of, and shape, their collective futures and their regional identities. The article’s findings underline the simultaneity of, and the interplay between, globalizing forces and particularizing tendencies, as Flanders and Wallonia develop with a global KBE in region-specific ways.

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I. Introduction

What holds Belgium together as a nation? Or rather, what keeps it from falling apart into multiple cultural and regional entities? Lately, these questions have been the topic of much public debate in Belgium, due to new constitutional reforms and the intensification of a militant Flemish nationalism, among other factors. Often, such issues are perceived in excessively positive or negative terms, depending on one’s regional affiliations, politics, and loyalties to the monarchy, Belgian beer, and the national football team. What is often missing in these debates is an appreciation of how various loyalties and identities come about and how these identities are collectively rehearsed and articulated.

Acknowledging the routine and communal character of identity construction, this article explores contemporary, ongoing articulations of collective identity in Belgium. It specifically considers how collective identities (whether national, regional, or subregional) are crafted through science, technology, and innovation (STI) policies and through mainstream media reporting on these policies. Following Anderson (1991) and building on research on the relationship between science

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3 and national identity, science and technology can actively contribute to nation building (Hecht
4 1998; Jasanoff & Kim 2009; Lim 2001; Felt 2013). In Belgium, STI have been, and continue to
5 be, at the forefront of Flemish and Walloon regional development. Following constitutional
6 reforms in the late 1970s, which relegated STI policy from the federal level to the regions and
7 communities, Flemish policymakers mobilized STI as a lever for economic development and as a
8 means of boosting Flemish self-awareness and pride. Flemish policymakers thereby asserted their
9 region's political and cultural autonomy vis-à-vis Wallonia and the Belgian state at large.¹ In
10 Wallonia, talk of a Walloon identity is contentious, yet Wallonia evidently exists, both
11 constitutionally and in popular discourse. Furthermore, several Walloon politicians are convinced
12 regionalists, including past and present officials in charge of STI policy for the Walloon region.
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17 Given the regionalization of an economically vital policy field like STI, as well as the potential
18 "evaporation" of the Belgian state in the European Union (EU), we ask how Flanders and Wallonia
19 are construed through STI government policies. We also consider how these STI policies are
20 publicly received and circulated, as national identity must be cultivated in order to gain traction
21 and influence (Hecht 1998: 12). To this end, we examine press reporting on Flemish and Walloon
22 STI policies in one Flemish (Dutch-language) and one Francophone daily.
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26 Our analysis builds on the recognition of the role of "institutions of power" (e.g. language, media,
27 technologies) in articulating nationalism (Anderson 1991: 163). Following Billig (1995), we locate
28 nationalism not only at the periphery of society (e.g. among radical nationalists who operate at the
29 societal extremes), but also in the routine symbols and habits of discourse, as when members of a
30 community speak of "the economy," "our nation," and "our interests" without specifying, or even
31 having to specify, who "we" are. Articulations of nationalism are thus often banal, implicit, and
32 embedded. Because they are continuously and collectively rehearsed, they construct a sense of
33 "us," otherness, and belonging, thereby "flagging" the homeland without actually waving a flag
34 (ibid: 11). By implication, nationalism, autonomism, and regionalism are for us interrelated
35 concepts, as each implies the transformation of the state in one way or another. Whether the
36 transferring of power (political, economic or cultural) proceeds from the nation (i.e. Belgium) to
37 the sub-entities (i.e. Flanders and Wallonia) or vice versa, is of secondary importance. What
38 concerns us are the politics of identity and identity formation with and through STI.
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44 As we are interested in learning how STI policies engender a sense of collective identity that the
45 media and other important policy actors (e.g. politicians, captains of industry, trade unions) can
46 tap into (Lenschow & Sprungk 2010), we take as entry points the Flemish policy program Flanders
47 in Action (Vlaanderen in Actie; VIA), and the two Walloon Marshall Plans (MPs).² The former,
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51 ¹ Belgium officially consists of three regions (the Flemish region, the Walloon region, and the Brussels-Capital
52 region) and three language communities (Dutch-speaking, French-speaking, and German-speaking). The northern,
53 Dutch-speaking region of Flanders comprises the Dutch-speaking community, whereas the southern region of
54 Wallonia is predominantly French-speaking, but also encompasses the German-speaking community in Eastern
55 Wallonia. The Brussels-Capital region is an essentially French-speaking enclave within the Flemish region.

56 ² The official names of these plans are *Plan Marshall pour la Wallonie* and *Plan Marshall 2.Vert*.
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3 which ran from 2006 to 2014, sought to turn Flanders into a top-five economic region by 2020, in
4 line with the European Union's 2000 Lisbon Strategy³; the latter intend to revitalize the Walloon
5 economy along the lines of innovation, entrepreneurship, and creativity. Importantly, both plans
6 mobilize STI as strategic resources to serve an economic project.
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10 As the two policy programs do not stand by themselves but incorporate various activities, actors,
11 platforms, and initiatives (e.g. the Flemish Pact 2020 and the Walloon government's "future plan"
12 Horizon 2022, to give but two examples), we will consider their multiple facets, as well as their
13 history. For now, suffice it to say that the VIA and MP programs are administratively embedded
14 in new regionalism. Contrary to regionalization, new regionalism is an official EU policy, which
15 stimulates subnational governments to define their own regional needs and mobilize their own
16 resources in cooperation with the national level of government and the EU. As a policy orientation,
17 it is strongly economic, as it emphasizes income, economic growth, and employment as "strategic
18 levers" for regional economic development (Versmessen & Delmartino 1998: 286). Following
19 Jeffrey and O'Sullivan (1994: 4), regionalism leaves room for identity, albeit in a secular and
20 pragmatic sense that does not amount to "an atavistic ethnic or cultural exclusiveness."
21 Accordingly, Keating (1992: 56) contends that identity, when linked to regionalism, is always
22 construed from the perspective of doing business. From the perspective of this article economic
23 activity is also intricately linked to identity and nation or region building, as the VIA and MP plans
24 evoke a sense of territory, enact a vision of a particular society, and address particular societal
25 groups in an effort to turn around, strengthen, or improve "the region." Thus, the programs
26 construct a "we" and a "them," as well as a desired common future. As people, place, and region
27 are not necessarily specified in the plans themselves, they may do so implicitly rather than
28 explicitly.
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36 Although both the VIA plan and the MPs emphasize the need of transforming Flanders and
37 Wallonia into knowledge-based economies (KBEs) in order meet the demands of globalization,
38 the plans adopt a different tone and stance. The Flemish plan repeatedly states the need of
39 "Winning the future together"; that is, of involving all Flemings so as to transform Flanders into
40 "a top region, not only in Europe, but in the world, particularly in the social and economic field"
41 (VIA, 2006: 4). It also states that Flanders is already prosperous and already has many strengths,
42 but that the welfare and prosperity of Flanders are "under threat" in a "challenging global economic
43 environment" (2). The message is thus that Flanders is doing relatively well in the global economy,
44 but that it must do even better if it is to maintain its competitive edge and its welfare.
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49 As the success of VIA is partly measured against the performances of "neighbouring countries"
50 and "the growth economies of the east," VIA posits Flanders as a distinct nation in the world with
51 its own resources, talents, and commitments (3). This nationalistic reading of the plan is confirmed
52 in the phrase, "We are creative, we are innovative and we are a *nation* of entrepreneurs" (emphasis
53 added) (3). By contrast, the MP is framed from the perspective of Walloon recovery and
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57 ³ In 2015, the Flemish government officially invoked a new policy, Visie 2015 (Vision 2015), as a follow up to VIA.
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3 “redressement.” Although the term “Marshall Plan” evidently brings to mind the European
4 Recovery Program for rebuilding Western Europe after World War II, recovery also refers to the
5 period of prosperity before the World Wars, when Wallonia was one of the most economically
6 advanced industrial regions in Europe. The MP suggests that Wallonia’s glorious past (“le passé
7 glorieux”) can be rewon, if the Walloons deploy every tool they can muster and work together to
8 “relaunch” the Walloon economy (3). To incite joint action, the MP urges the Walloons to become
9 the architects of their own fate. This aspiration is clearly expressed in the opening sentence of the
10 first MP plan: “The federalization [of Belgium; by which is meant the regionalization of policy
11 and competences] bestows the Walloons with political autonomy, which renders them responsible
12 for their own destiny.” This statement also reads as a call to independence, as the Walloons are
13 *bestowed with* political autonomy by the Flemings, who have repeatedly pushed for the
14 dismantling of Belgium as a unitary state.
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20 As the above excerpts from the Flemish and Walloon policy plans indicate, VIA and the MPs
21 characterize a state of political and economic affairs, take position in relation to these affairs, and,
22 most importantly, envision a prosperous future for the Flemish and Walloon region, respectively.
23 The plans are thus driven by expectations, visions and values, as well as fears. They mobilize
24 arguments, explanations, evaluations, descriptions and prescriptions, sometimes by drawing on
25 tropes or stereotypes, anecdotes, and illustrations. As the plans also indicate, transforming Flanders
26 and Wallonia into top KBE regions does not happen by itself. For instance, while the VIA plan
27 describes Flemings as entrepreneurs, it also states that “we must dare to be entrepreneurial” (3).
28 Similarly, the MP urges Walloon citizens to change their “état d’esprit” or mindset, if economic
29 growth is to ensue (3). Thus, identity construction and transformation are in order both in Flanders
30 and in Wallonia.
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35 The above observations serve as starting points for our media analysis. As we want to know
36 whether, and how, these particular conceptions of the nation/region are picked up in press reporting
37 on STI policies, we ask the following interrelated questions: How are the Flemish (VIA) and
38 Walloon STI policies (MPs) received in the Flemish and Francophone press? Do we discern in the
39 press the same notions of identity as in the policy programs? Are these notions reproduced,
40 problematized or transformed? If so, in what ways? What does this mean for Flemish and Walloon
41 identity construction, and for the construction of nationhood with, and through, science and
42 technology policies?
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47 Our analysis conceives of journalists and the press as policy agenda setters and opinion makers,
48 as the press potentially reproduces and redefines political identities. As we will see, the Flemish
49 and Francophone press speak out on issues of collective identity and also offer various
50 policymakers a platform to express their views on regional economic development, STI, and the
51 state. **Thus, policymaking is not only the prerogative of mandated policymakers, but of
52 journalists and other opinion leaders (e.g. captains of industry) as well (Lenschow &
53 Sprungk 2010). Together, these elites influence public policy and policy institutions, shaping
54 the discourses through which actors interpret, give meaning to, and make sense of the world.**
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3 **However, over time these discourses may acquire “a force of their own independently of**
4 **particular actors” (Fisher 2003: vii). Discourse in this sense is itself a medium of power,**
5 **which no single actor controls. Instead, discourse users become properties of the discourses**
6 **which they have created. In the cases presented and discussed in this paper, the interpretive**
7 **repertoires produced by Flemish and Walloon policy making elites, productive classes (e.g.**
8 **entrepreneurs), and journalists intermingle and are woven into the larger driving force that**
9 **is the KBE. It is only against this backdrop of the globalization of science, technology, and**
10 **the wider knowledge economy that the presented findings can be properly understood, as the**
11 **KBE both constrains and enables the development of a distinct Flemish and Walloon**
12 **identity.**
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17 To enable analysis, we draw on a range of literatures, including science and technology studies,
18 discourse analysis, and media analyses. Our approach is interpretive and interactionist, as it accepts
19 that identities and nations are socially constructed rather than exist as objective phenomenon that
20 can be discovered through empirical testing. Hence, we ask how identity is created, structured,
21 maintained, or conversely deconstructed, resisted, and challenged. Our aim is not to uncover an
22 objective reality behind identity, but to understand how identities are collectively made and remade
23 on a continuous basis.
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27 In what follows, we first present and situate Flemish and Walloon STI policies in time and place,
28 as a means of contextualizing the “nationalisms” inscribed in the VIA plan and MPs (part 2). Next,
29 we present our methodological framework for discourse and media analysis, our data, and key
30 findings (part 3). Upon drawing together these findings in part 4, we single out the storyline of
31 “Catching up” as an important discursive backdrop against which processes of collective identity
32 construction play out through STI policymaking and press reporting. The “Catching up” storyline
33 places Flanders resolutely ahead of Wallonia in the global race towards knowledge, excellence,
34 and growth, but suggests that Wallonia may, in due course, overtake Flanders as a top competitive
35 region. Given the expectations and/or fears that “Catching up” evokes among Flemish and
36 Walloon policy actors (including journalists, entrepreneurs, civil society organizations, etc.), the
37 repertoire serves these actors as a flexible discursive resource to make sense of, and shape, their
38 collective identities. We conclude by tying our findings into a broader discussion about the place
39 of Belgium in Europe and the world, as “Belgium” is constantly redefined in terms of its
40 constituent segments and overarching structures, including the KBE.
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49 **II. Winning the Future Together and Resurrecting the Region**

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51 In this section we situate the Flemish VIA plan and the Walloon MPs in time and context. We pay
52 particular attention to the nationalist imaginaries that are encoded in these plans and that surround
53 them, partly by drawing connections with broader historic events and present-day trends. For
54 Flanders, this means going back to the launch of the so-called DIRV program, which the Flemish
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3 government launched in 1982 and which transformed Flanders into an autonomous innovation
4 region. Contrary to Flanders, Wallonia lacks a constitutional, nation-specific technology project
5 like DIRV that serves policy actors and others as a shared frame of reference. As we argue below,
6 the MPs are precisely an attempt on behalf of the Walloon government to establish such a frame
7 for Wallonia and the Walloons today.
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10 11 12 13 *Flanders in Action*

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15 On July 11, 2006, the then Flemish Prime Minister, Yves Leterme, and members of his government
16 coalition launched the Flanders in Action (VIA) project, which they presented to the assembled
17 press as a “social and economic action programme for the future of Flanders.” Leterme stressed
18 that Flanders is doing well but not brilliantly, as Flanders is ranked among the upper-middle
19 income European regions, rather than among the top regions. It also faces huge challenges in the
20 areas of demography (notably, an ageing population), globalization (maintaining a competitive
21 edge), and sustainable development.⁴
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25 As a way of dealing with these challenges, the Leterme government presented a range of policy
26 measures called “VIA breakthroughs” in an attempt to make Flemings more entrepreneurial,
27 render Flemish industries more productive, ensure mobility for all, tackle poverty, sustain
28 economic development in an environmentally friendly manner, and streamline innovation, among
29 others. The breakthrough projects were subsequently codified in the so-called Pact 2020, the name
30 of which alludes to the 2020 EU Lisbon Agenda, and which all social partners (i.e. employers’
31 organizations and trade unions), as well as civil society organizations, officially ratified on January
32 20, 2009.⁵
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37 The broad involvement of societal stakeholders is important to note, as from its inception, the VIA
38 plan targeted the long term of policymaking, and thus sought to transcend successive Flemish
39 coalition governments. In line with this reasoning of *governing beyond term*,⁶ and also with the
40 aim of pragmatically adjusting policies when required, the government appointed an independent
41 monitoring committee, which regularly monitors the plan’s progress.
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47 ⁴ <http://www.vlaandereninactie.be/over/voorgeschiedenis>

48 ⁵ The Pact 2020 succeeds the Pact of Vilvoorde, which was ratified by the Flemish government, the social partners,
49 and environmental organizations on November 22, 2001. It is similar to the Pact of Vilvoorde in terms of scope and
50 aims, and encodes the broad consultation method also found in VIA. Following these Pacts, numerous policy
51 programs and platforms have emerged with the aim of complementing and strengthening the VIA project as a
52 whole, such as Vlaanderen 2020, Accent op Talent, and Richting Morgen, among many others. As these programs
53 are inscribed in, or closely linked to, VIA, we do not expound on them in this paper unless the data presented in
54 section 3 warrant their mentioning.

55 ⁶ The precise Dutch term used in VIA documentation is “*legislatuuroverschrijdend*,” which can roughly be
56 translated as *exceeding legislatures*.
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3 Both the emphasis on the long term and the establishment of a politically independent monitoring
4 committee underline the Flemish government's intention of sustaining VIA for years to come, as
5 political coalitions in Flanders (and Belgium more generally) are volatile.⁷ The long-term rationale
6 of "Winning the future together" (i.e. with all stakeholders) equally indicates that VIA is distinctly
7 oriented towards securing a Flemish future with, and for, the Flemish people. From the onset, the
8 Flemish government and the social partners placed a strong emphasis on regional self-assertion
9 and development. As mentioned earlier, the VIA plan even describes Flanders as a *nation*, which
10 by the standards of international law it is not. In this respect, it is intriguing to note that the VIA
11 plan does not contain explicit references to Belgium or Wallonia; instead, it expresses the ambition
12 of "again belong[ing] to the top regions of the world" – without specifying which regions Flanders
13 should take inspiration from (11).
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18 While the professed ambition of becoming a top region may appear inconspicuous, it can equally
19 be read as a deliberate turning away from Wallonia. This "strong" interpretation of the VIA
20 objective becomes more compelling when we consider that, upon the plan's presentation in 2006,
21 Flemish politicians, as well as journalists and observers (e.g. academics), explicitly and repeatedly
22 stressed that Flanders should not take Wallonia as an example, but draw inspiration from top-
23 performing EU countries and regions such as Finland and Catalonia.⁸ We turn to this point of
24 interest again in section 3.
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28 To conclude this brief presentation of the VIA plan, we highlight one more element of VIA that
29 helps us to better understand its significance in Flanders today. Although VIA sought to be an
30 inclusive, mobilizing, and transformative project for the future of Flanders, it has generally not
31 been met with broad support and enthusiasm. To date, VIA has received a lackluster response from
32 the general public and from various public figures, including one of the government's very own
33 vice-ministers, who in 2011, in an accidentally leaked email, claimed that "VIA is not a strong
34 brand" because it fails to mobilize the broader Flemish public.⁹ Over the past years, several
35 Flemish captains of industry, employers' organizations, opposition politicians, journalists, and
36 others, have made similar remarks, thereby discrediting the VIA initiative, as well as the Flemish
37 government.¹⁰
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42 The misgivings about VIA and the many criticisms it has elicited raise doubts about the plan's
43 political and economic viability, as well as its potential of forging a common future for Flanders
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47 ⁷ What is meant by "the long term," however, is open to flexible (and strategic) interpretation, as initially, the
48 Flemish government set as target the year 2010. It subsequently changed this target to 2020 so as to match the
49 European Union's 2020 Lisbon Agenda. While the target year of 2020 still holds today, the year 2050 is also often
50 provided as a reference on government websites; see e.g. <http://www.vlaandereninactie.be/en/about>

51 ⁸ See e.g. De Standaard, 10.07.2006; 11.07.2006.

52 ⁹ De Standaard, "Vlaanderen in aanvaring," 19.02.2011.

53 ¹⁰ Several policy observers drew on the leaked email incident to ridicule VIA and the ministers associated with VIA.
54 They did so by drawing on a typical Flemish expression, "The mayonnaise doesn't stick," which could be translated
55 as "The chemistry is all wrong." See e.g. Knack, "Mayonaise," 22.02.2011;
56 <http://www.knack.be/nieuws/mayonaise/article-opinion-19792.html>
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3 and the Flemings. Yet, the fact that VIA is publicly disputed rather than embraced does not signify
4 an end to, or even a pause in, the ongoing process of Flemish identity formation. On the contrary,
5 many criticisms of VIA appeal to Flanders' recent past, and more specifically to a "we" experience
6 that for many Flemings requires no further explanation. It is here that we turn to the DIRV action,
7 or "Derde Industriële Revolutie Vlaanderen" (Third Industrial Revolution of Flanders), which the
8 first Flemish executive (the initial name for the Flemish government) initiated in 1982, shortly
9 after the establishment of the Flemish and Walloon regions. As we illustrate below, certain tenets
10 of VIA (e.g. "the open entrepreneur," "decisive governance," "Flanders innovation centre") were
11 already inscribed in the DIRV campaign.
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18 *DIRV as founding myth*

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20 When the first Flemish government was installed in the 1980s, it sought to boost Flemish economic
21 self-awareness and position Flanders as an industrial, entrepreneurial high-tech region
22 (Oosterlynck, 2006: 98). Whereas prior to World War II Wallonia had economically outperformed
23 Flanders, the balance gradually shifted in the late 1950s, with the decline of Wallonia's "old" coal
24 and iron industries. A determining figure in transforming Flanders into a new, invigorated
25 economy after the economic crisis of the seventies was the then chair of the Flemish government,
26 Gaston Geens, who in 1982 launched DIRV, shorthand for "Derde Industriële Revolutie
27 Vlaanderen" (literally *Third Industrial Revolution Flanders*). Through this program, Geens sought
28 to reform the Flemish region economically and establish its independence. Geens therefore
29 presented DIRV as an offensive policy to create new products, production methods, and markets
30 for industries of the future (see e.g.: Vlaamse Raad 1983a; 1983b). He further stressed that it was
31 the government's task to stimulate innovation in new technologies, while entrepreneurs and
32 industries designed concrete projects in partnership with research institutes, universities, and
33 private companies.
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39 The effects of DIRV on innovation policy and practice are palpable, as the program lent support
40 to various technologies, including the highly promising fields of biotechnology, new materials,
41 and microelectronics. Equally important, DIRV delivered a decisive break with economic
42 pessimism in Flanders. As Oosterlynck (2006: 101) writes, although DIRV was an institutional
43 policy effort, it was "primarily a campaign to raise awareness and promote new technologies and
44 innovation." To spur public attention for the program, Geens established the so-called technology
45 days (T-days) for each of the designated technologies, with the aim of mobilizing industrial and
46 research support. A similar effort was made to attract domestic and foreign investors through the
47 so-called project days or P-days, and an international fair by the name of Flanders Technology
48 International, which drew in large crowds.
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53 DIRV can hence be seen as a keystone not just in instigating contemporary innovation policy in
54 Flanders, but in the construction of Flanders as a modern-day high-tech innovation region.
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3 Following Goorden (2004: 8), the DIRV action constructed Flemish socio-economic policy and a
4 Flemish national identity and polity. Through DIRV, the Flemish government presented “a clear
5 image of itself to the general public, with an offensive policy of its own, distinct from both Walloon
6 policy and national policy.”
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9 We do not further expound on the DIRV campaign in this paper. As we illustrate in section 3,
10 DIRV is, and remains, a key reference point in the development of STI policies, including VIA.
11 Given its pervasiveness and the way it is reclaimed by policy actors today, including entrepreneurs,
12 journalists, and even Flemish science museums, it is not an exaggeration to say that DIRV serves
13 as a constitutional moment and foundational myth for the development of a Flemish nationalist
14 imagination.¹¹
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20 *Wallonia's resurrection*

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22 In Wallonia, there is no founding myth such as DIRV on which policy actors can collectively draw.
23 However, the long-term history of the Walloon region plays an important role in the construction
24 of an STI imaginary. Wallonia is often narrated with references to its glorious industrial past; that
25 is, to the first industrial revolution, when Wallonia took an advance in coal mining and steel
26 production (Quévit 1978). Along with England and other regions, Wallonia was one of the key
27 economic players in the world for decades. However, World War II damages and the restructuring
28 of the economy towards secondary and tertiary sectors put an end to the region's growth and
29 economic supremacy. Industrial decline hit Wallonia hard from the 1960s onwards, while Flanders
30 modernized its economy and workforce, and drew in foreign investment. There are implicit and
31 explicit references to Wallonia's great past when the word “recovery” is used. Wallonia must
32 recover from a long, deep crisis (illness) and catch up with the rest of the world to secure a
33 legitimate place in the global economic order.
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39 In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the government made remarkable attempts to raise Walloon
40 economic self-consciousness, with the “Deal for the Future of Wallonia” (*Contrat d'Avenir pour*
41 *la Wallonie*). It was the first future-oriented Walloon policy program that sought to integrate social
42 welfare and economic concerns. The deal was prolonged until 2005; however, it took the form first
43 and foremost of a political declaration, without means and operational goals and target. In 2005, a
44 failed attempt to reform the federal state rekindled political tensions related to the Flemish drive
45 for independence, and a controversy ensued about the state of the Walloon economy (Accaputo et
46 al. 2006). The Walloon majority used these arguments to justify the need for a Marshall Plan for
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54 ¹¹ This is not to argue that DIRV went uncontested, as the political left and various trade unions opposed Geens's
55 policy reforms (see: Van Oudheusden et al. 2015). The point is that DIRV successfully mobilized Flemings and gave
56 rise to a collective sense of Flemishness.
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3 Wallonia that mobilizes human capital, builds competitiveness clusters, and taps into scientific
4 research to pave the way for a better future (L’Echo 11.07.2005).
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7 The plan was presented in August 2005 as a large policy program to promote regional economic
8 growth, entrepreneurship and the creation of jobs via innovation and university-industry
9 partnerships. Initially called “priority actions’ plan for the Walloon future,” it followed and
10 aggregated diverse other plans, while a strong effort was made to promote it. The plan was quickly
11 presented as the core of governmental action. Explicit in the plan is the will of policymakers to
12 fully and strategically handle the regional-level political competences and resources. The program,
13 mobilizing more than one billion for a period of four years, had five axes and several specific
14 operational targets: creating five competitiveness clusters (and a sixth in 2009), stimulating
15 economic activities’ creation, reducing business taxation, supporting research and innovation, and
16 improving work training and the overall employment rate.
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21 The narrative purported in the Marshall Plan is that Wallonia faces severe industrial decline.
22 Prompted by the Flemish demand for additional constitutional reforms and external forces,
23 Wallonia has no choice but to regain control of its own destiny; i.e. to become “the architect of its
24 own fate” (to use the weighty term of actors on the terrain). To build a better future for itself,
25 Walloons must muster every tool they have and enlist every stakeholder within a mobilizing and
26 inspiring, future-oriented project. Economic recovery should bear on innovation and incite
27 industry-university partnerships with the aim of achieving a “European Knowledge
28 Society/Economy.”
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32 The powerful metaphor “Marshall Plan” and the suggestion of a general mobilization decree a
33 state of war and a call to action. This is reinforced through the use of several auto-stereotypes that
34 describe Walloon economic culture, including a strike-prone workforce, high unemployment rates,
35 a lack of entrepreneurship and a state-provider mentality. The plan calls for a “rupture” with this
36 culture to create a new collective “état d’esprit” or state of mind centered on enterprise, audacity,
37 and creativity.
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43 **III. Media and Discourse Analysis**

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45 As mentioned at the outset, this paper adopts a broad understanding of both nationalism and
46 policymaking. In line with Anderson (1991) and Billig (1995), among others, we conceive of
47 nationalism as the collective construction of identity at the heart of society and at the center of
48 policymaking through everyday social rehearsals. By the same token, policymaking is not the
49 prerogative of mandated policymakers, as journalists and other institutions of power also inform
50 and craft policies, for instance by setting and framing political agendas (Kingdon 1995). The
51 media, in particular, as bearers of meaning and opinion leaders, give credence to certain policies
52 rather than to others. They also give voice to particular actors and open a space for debate and
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3 criticism. As such, they potentially transform and reshape collective identities rather than simply
4 reproduce dominant meanings.¹²
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6 Our broad conceptualizations enable us to locate nationalism and policymaking in a diversity of
7 practices and discourses. For practical reasons and from a concern with ensuring the reliability and
8 transparency of our findings and interpretations, we bound the potentially limitless reach of data
9 to include press coverage of STI policies in two of Belgium's leading newspapers. Rather than
10 striving to provide an exhaustive and representative media analysis, we intentionally sample for
11 heterogeneity. We hence look for variations within a delimited data set, such as contradictions,
12 ambiguities, and possible shifts or changes in text and talk, with due consideration for how text
13 and talk are flexibly interpreted and used.
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20 *Data selection*

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22 Our selection draws on two newspapers that dominate the Flemish and Francophone market for
23 "quality news," and which each belong to a different media group.¹³ De Standaard is a Flemish,
24 historically pro-catholic newspaper. Until the 1990s, De Standaard was considered a Christian-
25 Democratic paper, associated with the Christian-Democratic party. The newspaper is also
26 historically pro-Flemish, as it was sympathetic towards the Flemish independence movement.
27 Today, the paper is considered center-right. La Libre Belgique is a Francophone daily. It is
28 historically pro-catholic and pro-Belgium (as the title of the newspaper indicates). Due to its
29 catholic roots and its circulation among the Francophone elites in Belgium, La Libre is sometimes
30 described as the Francophone counterpart to De Standaard.¹⁴ Using the Flemish media search
31 engine Mediargus and the Francophone Press Banking (which are the equivalents of Lexis/Nexis
32 in other parts of the world), we searched De Standaard and La Libre for articles on the VIA plan
33 and the MPs. Our search covers the following period: from August 30, 2005, when the first MP
34 was launched and publicly presented, to August 30, 2013, with the MPs' seventh anniversary date.
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41 ¹² On this account, Billig can be criticized for too strongly insisting on the reproduction of nationalism through
42 routine symbols, language, and the media, whereas nationalism is also contested and transformed through daily
43 practices.

44 ¹³ The Flemish and Francophone media in Belgium are concentrated into several media groups. Although print
45 media, audiovisual media, and radio typically tailor to one linguistic community (i.e. the Dutch-language and the
46 Francophone communities), the groups are national. De Standaard is owned by Mediahuis; La Libre Belgique by
47 IPM.

48 ¹⁴ The reason we liken Flemish to *Dutch-speaking*, but do not equate Francophone to *Walloon* has again to do with
49 Belgian's complex institutional organization and multilayered system of government. Whereas Flanders comprises
50 a territorially bound region (officially called the Flemish region), which is populated by Dutch-speaking Flemings in
51 the so-designated Flemish community, the Walloon region was not merged with the French community of
52 Belgium. The Walloon community, which is responsible for language, culture, and education, should hence be
53 distinguished from the Walloon region, which is concerned with economic matters (and which compromises both
54 the French-speaking population of Wallonia and the small German-speaking minority in the east of Belgium). As a
55 consequence, "Flanders" denotes a distinct cultural community with a relatively well-defined territory, whereas
56 "Wallonia" is a looser, less perceptible cultural and political entity.
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3 As the VIA plan was first made public on July 11, 2006, the chosen time period also covers press
4 reporting on VIA both in De Standaard and La Libre Belgique. **Our search generated a total of**
5 **102 articles in De Standaard and 175 in La Libre Belgique.**¹⁵
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10 *Sensitizing concepts*

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12 To orient our analytical gaze and to develop our own “arts of combining” analytical tools and
13 research questions (Keller 2005), we employ three sensitizing concepts (van den Hoonard 1997)
14 found in constructionist studies of discourse: *discourse*, *storyline*, and *interpretive repertoire*. Each
15 of these concepts is briefly situated and explained below.
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18 A discourse can be defined as “an ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorisations that are
19 produced, reproduced, and transformed in a particular set of practices and through which meaning
20 is given to physical and social realities” (Hajer 1995: 60). Following Phillips and Jorgensen (2002),
21 discourses amount to the larger circulation of patterns of meaning in society; that is, they play out
22 at the macro level of social order, as they construct people’s lived realities. Discourses do not stand
23 by themselves, however; they are continuously (re)constructed through social action, social
24 organization, and relations of power. They are also tied up with various materialities (e.g. physical
25 substances, practical instantiations of ideas and concepts, technologies, etc.), which both constrain
26 and enable their existence, adoption, and circulation.
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31 In the study presented in this paper, the knowledge-based economy (KBE) constitutes a principal
32 discourse, which shapes identities, social relations, and understandings of the contemporary world.
33 To the extent that the KBE has been unequivocally advanced by global policy institutes such as
34 the Organization for Economic Development, the G7/8, the International Monetary Fund, as well
35 as the European Union, it is essentially a legitimization discourse urging countries and regions to
36 foster innovation for the sake of economic and social growth. The underlying idea of the KBE is
37 (seemingly endless) growth accumulation, as nations and regions innovate and compete to improve
38 their economies and social welfare (Claisse & Delvenne 2011). We return to the KBE in the next
39 section, as it structures the environment of STI policymaking that we are studying.
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44 As we not only want to know which discourses circulate, but how they are enacted and potentially
45 transformed, we draw on the discourse tradition of discursive psychology to analyze the
46 communicative interplay between discourse (macro level) and the meaning production occurring
47 in specific, situated contexts (meso and micro levels). The notion of interpretive repertoire is of
48 use here, as it links the ideological and historical formations with situated practices (Billig, 1991;
49 Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Following McKenzie (2005), a repertoire constitutes the interpretative
50 codes (words, categories, metaphors, heuristics, etc.) that are available to members of an
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55 ¹⁵ For De Standaard, we used the search term “Vlaanderen in Actie.” For La Libre, we used the search query “Plan
56 Marshall” AND “innov*” to avoid retrieving articles on the European recovery plan.
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3 interpretive community. Repertoires hence offer people the means to understand and make sense
4 of reality.
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7 Repertoires can be linked to storylines, which capture a discourse in a short-hand form using key
8 metaphors or other rhetorical devices that figure in the discourse, such as tropes, stereotypes, and
9 frames of reference. Hajer (2005: 301) contends that when carrying out a discourse analysis, “one
10 quickly realises that in any field there are a couple of such stories, which fulfill an especially
11 important role.” Like repertoires, the storylines provide ready-to-use interpretations to make sense
12 of the world (Fischer 2003). They are flexible in that they allow actors to interpret individual cases
13 differently, and define them in accordance with their own interests and needs. Accordingly,
14 storylines are not confined to any one organization or government actor, but are shared by the
15 national and local players involved, and by the academic community, professions, the media and
16 others impacted on by the policy activity (Hewitt 2009).
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21 In discourse theory, the difference between repertoires and storylines is not always clear, as both
22 terms are used differently by different authors and some authors even use them interchangeably.
23 For our purposes, repertoires accommodate a multitude of perspectives and appreciations (possibly
24 concealing differences and differentiation), whereas storylines activate particular interpretations
25 and actions, for instance through the attribution of responsibilities and obligations. Thus, storylines
26 draw out inconsistencies and oppositions between competing views, thereby urging actors to take
27 position. The difference between the two concepts is illustrated in the next section, when we draw
28 out competing appreciations of the repertoire of “Can do,” among others.
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33 In short, we conceive of discourse as the symbolic and material structuring of the world. Storylines
34 and repertoires constitute the discourse by condensing it to one or a few of its key elements that
35 make for easy interpretation and use. Metaphors, tropes, stereotypes, and other rhetorical figures
36 and narrative elements serve as discursive building blocks that together constitute the larger
37 patterns of meaning. Importantly, through discourse, different versions of selves and reality are
38 built and rebuilt (Tuominen, Talja, & Savolainen, 2002: 273). In the following section, we ask
39 which selves and which realities are constituted through Flemish and Francophone press reporting
40 on STI policies.
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46 **IV. From “Can do” to “Rupture” and “Catching up”**

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48 As should be clear by now, both the VIA plan and the MPs subscribe to the KBE (as the KBE is
49 presented in the EU’s Lisbon Agenda, among other foundational sources). However, for Flanders
50 and Wallonia to transform into full-fledged KBEs, a major changeover is deemed necessary. This
51 explains why the Flemish and Walloon governments urge Flemish and Walloon policy and societal
52 actors (administrations, captains of industry, entrepreneurs, scientists and academics, non-
53 governmental organizations, civil society organizations, citizens, and others) to take the necessary
54 decisions and measures to convert Flanders and Wallonia into KBEs.
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3 By insisting on transformation and (continuous) adaption, the VIA plan and the MPs enact a
4 transition repertoire that opens to a more prosperous communal future. Although this repertoire is
5 not unique to Flanders and Wallonia, it is locally enacted and appropriated through region-specific
6 discourses (e.g. “Flanders in action,” “Winning the future together”) and tools and practices, such
7 as the “transition method,” which the Flemish government propagates as a means of mobilizing
8 all Flemings without exception. Through transition, it is hoped that Flemings (and Walloons,
9 through the MPs) will become more entrepreneurial, more creative, and more open towards the
10 world (VIA: 2-4; MP: 3). Seen in these ways, “transition” implies continuous improvement and
11 growth, as well as hope of a better future; i.e., a joint future that is prosperous, social, and
12 sustainable.
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17 We underline the importance of transition as it is inscribed in the VIA plan and the MPS, as it is
18 only against the backdrop of KBE-oriented transformation that our data can be properly
19 understood. As we illustrate below, Flemish and Walloon policy actors mobilize a range of
20 repertoires and storylines that position Flanders and Wallonia in relation to other regions and
21 countries, and to one another. This observation is not surprising, as in a KBE constellation constant
22 comparison takes place between national and regional economies. These comparisons may be
23 explicit, as when national economies are ranked on a socio-economic performance scale, or
24 implicit, as for instance when the Flemish Minister President posits that Flanders should only take
25 inspiration from “top EU regions” (to which Wallonia does not belong, and therefore does not
26 even warrant mentioning) (DS 11.07.2007). The comparisons can also be self-referential, as when
27 Flemish policy actors conjure up the Flemish DIRV campaign or Walloon actors invoke
28 Wallonia’s glorious past (“le passé glorieux”). Our data suggest that these pasts tend to be
29 communal rather than national (i.e. Flemish or Walloon rather than Belgian) when actors talk about
30 VIA or the MPs. One of the points we hence wish to explore is how the KBE serves actors as a
31 discursive resource to (re)construct their collective identities.
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38 Across the examined time period, we find countless examples of how the transition repertoire is
39 reproduced in De Standaard and La Libre Belgique. **In the vast majority of articles, change and
40 transition are embraced and propagated, if not celebrated, through phrases such as
41 “building a new economy,” “Gazellesprong” (leaping to the future through the stimulation
42 of entrepreneurship), and “putting Flanders on the map (again) through innovation.” In La
43 Libre Belgique, actors recurrently speak of “La Wallonie qui gagne” and present Wallonia
44 as an economic “miracle.”** However, various actors equally express doubts about transition and
45 change, giving rise to darker images of “decline,” “stagnation,” “catastrophe,” and “urgency,” both
46 in De Standaard and La Libre Belgique. Messages of hope and despair may also overlap. It is here
47 that the storyline of “Can do” emerges in De Standaard specifically.
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54 *Can do*
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3 “Can do” is a catchphrase deployed by policy actors (notably Flemish entrepreneurs) in De
4 Standaard, typically in relation to the public presentation and implementation of VIA. It can be
5 read as a message of hope and reassurance and as a call to action (Flanders can do better), as well
6 as a message of despair (Flanders *cannot* do better). The following two excerpts illustrate how
7 “Can do” is articulated through talk of Flemish entrepreneurialism and dynamism.
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10 “I’ve been wanting to do business in Flanders for a long time now. But I don’t see
11 opportunities. Too many rules and regulations. It’s also much too expensive. There is no
12 ‘can do’ mentality. In the US, it takes 48 hours to start up a business. In Flanders, one feels
13 discouraged even before having begun. There is not enough dynamism.”¹⁶ –
14 “Bescheidenheid brengt je hier nergens” (27.06.2012)
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18 “Look at the DIRV action twenty years ago, the renowned Third Industrial Revolution
19 Flanders. Back then, the Flemish government had a much smaller budget than today. But
20 didn’t DIRV have an impact? Back then there was a conviction among Flemings that *Yes,*
21 *we can.* That spirit no longer exists. It’s pointless to complain about the worsening of our
22 economy.”¹⁷ – “Vlaamse economie ‘can do.’” (09.10.2010)
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26 The first excerpt is taken from an interview with a successful Flemish expat presently residing in
27 New York, on the occasion of a “Flanders promotion trip” of the Flemish Minister President to the
28 United States. By contrasting the Prime Minister’s presentation of Flanders as a “rich, assertive
29 region” with the testimonies of “first-class” (“top” in Dutch) Flemish entrepreneurs in the US, the
30 article questions the “can do mentality” of the Flemings. Flemings, it is suggested, are not
31 entrepreneurial enough and Flanders as a whole lacks “dynamism.” The article raises doubts about
32 “Flanders in Action” and the Prime Minister’s mission of promoting the VIA project and Flanders
33 abroad.
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37 In the second excerpt, taken from an interview with the former head of the Flemish employers’
38 organization VOKA, the tone is despairing, but arguably less so than in the first excerpt. The
39 interviewee recalls the DIRV campaign, arguing that it was once possible to create policy “impact”
40 despite smaller policy budgets. As mentioned earlier, in Flanders, the 1982 DIRV action is
41 generally conceived of as a highly successful technology-push policy that inspired and mobilized
42 “the Flemings.” The interviewee appears to draw on DIRV as a means of reassuring the readers of
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49 ¹⁶ “Ik wil al lang business doen in Vlaanderen. Maar ik zie geen opportuniteiten. Veel te veel regeltjes. Veel te duur
50 ook. De ‘can do’-mentaliteit ontbreekt. In de VS duurt het 48 uur om een zaak op te starten. Het kost ook twee
51 keer niets. 1.050 dollar, om precies te zijn. In Vlaanderen ben je al ontmoedigd nog voor je begonnen bent. Er is
52 veel te weinig dynamisme.”

53 ¹⁷ “Kijk eens naar de Dirv-actie van twintig jaar geleden, de fameuze Derde Industriële Revolutie in Vlaanderen.
54 Toen had de Vlaamse regering veel minder budget dan nu. Maar welke impact heeft Dirv niet gehad? Toen heerste
55 in Vlaanderen een sfeer van *yes, we can.* Die sfeer is er nu niet meer. Jammeren over de teloorgang van onze
56 economie zal niet helpen.”
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De Standaard that change is possible and that “not everything is lost” (“niet alles is om zeep”), as stated in the article’s heading.

These examples suggest how “Can do” alludes to the possible, as it incorporates a message of reassurance and hope, which in turn can be read as an incitement to joint action. At the same time, “Can do” evokes a message of despair and doubt about whether change in Flanders is even possible, as Flemings may not be entrepreneurial enough. Depending on their aims and outlook, actors may choose to emphasize the first or second reading.

Rupture

In line with the MP, most of the articles in *La Libre Belgique* endorse a discourse of rupture. Rupture implies a break with the past, but can the MP stimulate a changeover that puts Wallonia on the road to recovery? Furthermore, what needs to be changed?

An interview with Michel Quévit (LLB 08.09.2005), a renowned academic in Wallonia and expert of innovation policies and regional development, renders this “rupture” repertoire explicit. In the interview, explicit references are made to Wallonia’s past, and specifically to the idea of industrial decline between the 1950s and the late 1980s. For Quévit, the recent past, since the 80s, is characterized by stagnation. When talking about a “harsh decline,” an implicit reference is made to a “glorious past”; that is, a time period when Wallonia was at the forefront of industry before World War II. Subsequently, Quévit is invited by the interviewer to give his thoughts on the new Marshall Plan. He is enthusiastic about the MP, arguing that it heralds a change in the way the Walloon government appreciates entrepreneurship. The present government embraces entrepreneurship as a motor for economic development.

However, Quévit also raises concerns. Upon comparing Wallonia to other regions such as the US, he points out the problem of education and fundamental research that are not taken into account in the MP. This, in turn, is related to the idea of changing Walloon mentalities and the Walloon mindset, as indicated in the following excerpt.

“I want to believe in the Plan”. Then, he states that his concerns are stronger for what “stands on the side of the plan: education, and the cultural problem of mentalities”. That is to say? “We, in Wallonia, got used to be stuck in a logic of gain rather than responsibility. A culture defined by “What can I get” rather than by “what do I bring.” It is related to a very harsh decline”¹⁸ – “Une histoire wallonne selon Quévit” (08.09.2005: 18)

¹⁸ “Je veux croire au plan. D'ailleurs, il dit que ses inquiétudes sont plus lourdes pour ce qui est... "à côté du plan: l'éducation et le problème, culturel, des mentalités". C'est-à-dire? "On s'est habitué en Wallonie à ne plus savoir sortir d'une logique d'acquis plutôt que de responsabilité. Une culture du "qu'est-ce que je reçois?" plutôt que du "qu'est-ce que j'apporte"... C'est lié à un déclin qui fut très rude.”

In a follow-up interview with the same journalist, Quévité is still skeptical about the rupture induced by the Marshall Plan:

“It is false to state that Wallonia hasn’t done anything. But it has done too little, too slowly, and many things remain to be done. I think first and foremost of learning, developing creativity. The PISA report is disturbing. Creativity must become a priority.”¹⁹ (10.02.2007: 5)

For Quévité, as for other interviewees and columnists who draw on the rupture repertoire, the Marshall Plan does not suffice to deal with the problems of Wallonia, the reform should be deeper and tackle many more aspects related to cultural aspects, to a mindset, for instance by integrating education inside the MP. The rupture discourses build on references to the past (the “glorious past” before World War II, and the “ugly past,” between the 1950s and present), and insist on the importance of eliminating unhelpful attitudes and bad habits that affect the Walloon economy negatively and hinder the development of a creative, entrepreneurial society.

At with “Can do” in *De Standaard*, the skeptical discourses about rupture are tempered with more positive, or hopeful, overtones. In such instances, the MP is considered to be “working well,” as there is evidence to suggest that the region is moving forward. This new trend is recognized by international investors such as Google and Microsoft, who in recent years have located businesses in Wallonia, and the region is even taken as an example for its dynamic program for innovation and entrepreneurship.

“Another good point for the fast developing Wallonia. It is one of the two invited regions (with California) at the World Investment Conference [...] This nice platform given to Wallonia is the result of the multiple actions implemented by the government to set a virtuous circle of development.”²⁰ (22.05.2008: 33)

Whereas the “Can do” and “Rupture” repertoires are more or less specific to *De Standaard* and *La Libre* in that they are essentially about Flanders and about Wallonia, other repertoires explicitly relate the two regions (and communities). Below, we single out two such inter-regional repertoires.

Wallonisation

When the VIA plan was launched and presented in 2006, Flemish politicians, as well as journalists, publicly stated that Flanders should not compare itself to Wallonia, but only to top EU nations and

¹⁹ “Il est faux de dire que la Wallonie n’a rien fait. Mais elle a fait trop peu, pas assez vite, et il reste des choses qu’elle ne fait pas. Je pense surtout à l’apprentissage, au développement de la créativité. Le rapport Pisa est inquiétant. La créativité doit être une priorité.”

²⁰ “Encore un bon point pour la Wallonie en plein essor. Elle est l’une des deux régions invitées d’honneur (avec la Californie) de la conférence mondiale de l’investissement [...] Cette belle tribune offerte à la Wallonie est le résultat des diverses actions pour l’installer dans un cercle vertueux de développement.”

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3 regions like Finland, the Scandinavian countries, Catalonia, Scotland, and the Netherlands. This is
4 because at the time Wallonia was considered to be an economically underdeveloped region far
5 behind Flanders; hence, the region went unmentioned in the VIA plan (DS 11.07.2007). However,
6 in De Standaard this narrative changes towards the end of 2009, shortly after the Walloon
7 government highlighted the positive results of the first MP on the Walloon economy.²¹ A few
8 months later, a Flemish economist and opinion leader by the name of Geert Noels wrote an
9 editorial in De Standaard in which he warned of the “Wallonisation” of Flanders. By
10 “Wallonisation,” Noels meant that Flanders risked becoming more like the Wallonia of old,
11 because of rising unemployment levels and the growing role of the Flemish state in the economy.
12 He also argued that Flemings dislike entrepreneurship and show a lack of initiative, whereas
13 Wallonia today shows signs of economic revival and ambition. Noels based his claims on a socio-
14 economic study on Wallonia, which he had conducted for his economic think tank Econopolis.
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20 Noels’s warning did not go unnoticed. The term quickly gained traction in other Flemish media
21 and in policymaking circles, as well as in certain Walloon media outlets. Although “Wallonisation”
22 acquired an explicitly negative connotation and received much criticism in Wallonia, Noels later
23 claimed that he had not just meant to warn against “complacency” and “economic stagnation” in
24 Flanders, but had also meant to praise Wallonia for its dynamism (DS 05.02.2010).
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28 However one understands “Wallonisation,” policy actors in Flanders drew on the term to call for
29 less self-contentment on behalf of the Flemings and for immediate action on behalf of the Flemish
30 government to re-launch the Flemish economy. For instance, a former rector of the University of
31 Leuven asserted that, “We [Flemings] do well, but I would prefer if we were less self-satisfied
32 with ourselves... We can and must do much better” (DS 04.02.2010). Thus, similar to “Can do,”
33 “Wallonisation” served actors as a resource to spur collective action in Flanders.
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38 It is intriguing to note that through incidents such as “Wallonisation,” Wallonia and the MPs re-
39 emerge more explicitly in De Standaard’s reporting on VIA. **Whereas prior to 2009 Wallonia**
40 **was not mentioned at all in articles relating to VIA, we find fourteen explicit references to**
41 **the MPs after the Wallonisation incident, as well as explicit comparisons between VIA and**
42 **the MPs.** Whether the incident actually sparked renewed attention for Wallonia and its socio-
43 economic policies in De Standaard, is hard to say. “Wallonisation” does however appear to have
44 unfolded with the repertoire of “Catching up,” to which we now turn.
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48 *Catching up*

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51 “Catching up” is the most pronounced repertoire in our dataset. It is mobilized by all actors on
52 both sides of the linguistic border. It suggests that Wallonia will, in due time, outperform Flanders,
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55 ²¹ The MP was evaluated in 2009 by an independent Walloon economic and employment observatory, the Walloon
56 Institute of Assessment, Forecasting and Statistics (IWEPS).
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3 due both to a slowdown in the growth of the Flemish economy and relatively higher growth
4 performance in Wallonia. As such, it places Flanders resolutely ahead of Wallonia in the global
5 race towards knowledge, excellence, and growth, but suggests that Wallonia may, in due course,
6 overtake Flanders as a top competitive region. Given the expectations and fears that “Catching up”
7 evokes among Flemish and Walloon policy actors (including journalists, entrepreneurs, civil
8 society organizations, etc.), the repertoire serves these actors as a flexible discursive resource to
9 make sense of, and shape, their collective identities. The example of “Wallonisation,” above,
10 serves as one, significant, indication of how “Catching up” plays out in De Standaard.
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14 Let us now consider some instances of how the repertoire is deployed in La Libre. There are
15 countless examples that implicitly or explicitly compare the Flemish and Walloon policy
16 programs, as the following excerpt indicates.
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19 “And the boss of the regional foreign trade agency underlines the innovation and
20 partnership’s capacities that the Marshall Plan 2.green made possible. Ernst & Young
21 praises its excellence. ‘Even in Flanders you can hear about it,’ says Herwig Joosten
22 (E&Y). The Marshall Plan is doing better than Flanders in Action. ViA is too complex,
23 and the basis for fiscal deduction in patenting activities isn’t broad enough.”²² (06.06.2013:
24 31)
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28 Based on a comparative review of Flemish and Walloon GDP over a ten-year period (2003-2013),
29 an economist gives his view on where Wallonia stands in relation to Flanders, as follows.
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31 “The Walloon Miracle? Not quite yet. Wallonia will overtake Flanders... in 2087. 75 years
32 will be necessary for the Walloon GDP pro capita to surpass Flanders if nothing changes.
33 However, the Walloon government has implemented good policies.”²³ (16.05.2013)
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36 In this excerpt, skepticism and optimism are jointly articulated, suggesting that Wallonia is on the
37 road of recovery but, as mentioned elsewhere in the article and recognized by other actors such as
38 the Walloon employers’ organization, UWE, “the road is still long.”
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41 The same organization also cautions against comparing Flanders to Wallonia, arguing that
42 Wallonia must recover for its own sake, not for Flanders or for Belgium.
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44 “Let’s stop comparing Wallonia to Flanders. The goal of the Walloon recovery is not to
45 reach the level of Flanders. The goal is full employment, turning back to prosperity;
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50 ²² “Et le patron de l’Awex de souligner les capacités d’innovation et de partenariat ouvertes par le plan Marshall
51 2.vert. Celui dont, justement, Ernst & Young loue les qualités. “On en parle même en Flandre, dit Herwig Joosten
52 (E&Y). Le plan Marshall marche mieux que Vlaanderen in Actie. ViA est trop complexe et la base de déduction
53 fiscale pour octroi de brevet pas assez large.”

54 ²³ “Le Miracle Wallon ? Pas tout de suite. La Wallonie dépassera la Flandre... en 2087. Il faudra 75 ans pour que le
55 PIB/habitant wallon dépasse celui de la Flandre si rien ne change. Pourtant, le gouvernement wallon a mis en
56 œuvre de bonnes politiques.”
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3 undertaking the [political, economic, fiscal] autonomy that will be ours in the next few
4 years.”²⁴ (ibid.)
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7 This assertion is noteworthy, as it provides a rare counternarrative to *Catching Up* and contradicts
8 the first sentence in the 2005 MP, which explicitly states that Wallonia would do well to develop
9 its own growth path to avoid that Flanders demands even more constitutional state reforms.
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11 12 13 *Catching up in the global KBE*

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16 To render the above observations more tangible, we outline the rationale of the KBE and the
17 discerned repertoires in the following graph, based on our interpretations of actors’ accounts in the
18 newspapers that we analyzed.
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21 **[INSERT GRAPH 1 HERE]**
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23 The graph plots the performance of Flanders and Wallonia as KBE regions (vertical axis) over
24 time (horizontal axis). The variable “KBE performance” encompasses the key features of the KBE,
25 such as innovation, growth, and excellence. If we were to imagine a vertical line in the middle,
26 this line would indicate the contemporary moment, where possible futures for Flanders and
27 Wallonia are realized. The curves on the right side of the separation line project these possible
28 futures; that is, they indicate how Flanders and Wallonia *could* perform socio-economically in the
29 years to come. It is here that we encounter the repertoires and storylines chosen for this section
30 (e.g. “Can do,” “Rupture,” “Catching up”). Flemish and Walloon performance are measured
31 against one another, as well as against the top EU regions, which at present outperform both
32 Flanders and Wallonia (the gradually ascending line).
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37 We conclude this section by again emphasizing that the discerned repertoires must be understood
38 within a global KBE narrative, which urges regions and countries to compete against, and compare
39 themselves with, one another. In Belgium, the KBE opens a discursive space for “Catching up,”
40 which projects a past in which Wallonia was economically ahead of Flanders and a future in which
41 Flanders is eventually surpassed by Wallonia. To the extent that this scenario arouses fears,
42 worries, hope, or excitement among policymakers, it serves them as a means of inciting collective
43 action in ways that implicitly or explicitly redefine “Flanders” and “Wallonia.” **From this**
44 **analysis, we learn that, whereas the pressures of globalization are tangible in both regions,**
45 **responses to these pressures differ. The difference resides not so much in how Flanders and**
46 **Wallonia engage with the demands of increasingly global trade in goods and services,**
47 **technology, flows of investment, and information (although there are of course distinctions**
48 **to be made), but in how each region projects its own distinct collective socio-economic future.**
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54 ²⁴ “Arrêtons de mesurer la Wallonie à la Flandre. “Le but du redressement wallon n’est pas d’arriver au même
55 niveau que la Flandre. Le but est le plein-emploi, le retour à la prospérité et d’assumer l’autonomie qui sera la
56 nôtre dans les prochaines années.”
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3 **As Karl Deutsch (1966) has argued, collective identity – whether built on shared economic**
4 **interests, values, language or culture – has to be sustained by flows of communication**
5 **between insiders, or interlocutors who communicate more frequently and on more issues**
6 **with one another than with outsiders (Fletcher 1998). Belgium, in this sense, qualifies as a**
7 **state rather than a nation, with mainstream (and other) media starkly divided along**
8 **linguistic and cultural lines. New demands for more “regionalization,” increasingly heard on**
9 **both sides of the linguistic border, are prone to strengthening this foundational divide,**
10 **particularly when media employ discourses and give voice to spokespersons that reinforce**
11 **cultural differences exacerbated by globalization. These observations are relevant to other**
12 **stable multilingual, multicultural knowledge economies, such as Canada and Switzerland,**
13 **which like Belgium are sometimes characterized as nation-less countries, and which likewise**
14 **invest huge amounts of public resources in science and technology development (Atkinson-**
15 **Grosjean 2006: 5-6). Communities within these states have developed culturally specific**
16 **narratives to engage with marketization, globalization, and knowledge production, inviting**
17 **examination of how science, technology, and collective identities become entangled and are**
18 **coproduced.**
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28 **V. Conclusion**

29
30 This article explores Flemish and Walloon socio-economic policy plans (“Flanders in Action” and
31 the Walloon “Marshall Plans”) and mainstream press reporting on those plans (2005-2013) in a
32 Flemish and a Francophone quality daily. The article suggests that policy actors in these
33 newspapers draw on similar transition repertoires, including “Catching up,” to legitimize or
34 discredit policies and actions. The “Catching up” repertoire places Flanders resolutely ahead of
35 Wallonia in the global race towards the knowledge-based economy (KBE), but suggests that
36 Wallonia may, in due course, overtake Flanders as a top competitive region. Given the expectations
37 and worries that “Catching up” evokes among Flemish and Walloon policy actors, the repertoire
38 serves these actors as a flexible discursive resource to make sense of, and shape, their collective
39 identities in an interdependent KBE constellation.
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44 As we have chosen a limited set of policy documents and press articles from two major quality
45 newspapers, it may well be that we have distinguished only one policy/media discourse rather than
46 a range of such discourses. We hence caution against classifying “Catching up” as a dominant STI-
47 driven repertoire in Flanders and Wallonia, even if our findings suggest that “Catching up” is a
48 discursive resource which various actors recurrently draw on. The “Catching up” repertoire is
49 noteworthy because it reflects Wallonia’s repositioning in the world as a potential KBE player.
50 This repositioning is reflected in De Standaard’s news coverage on VIA, as prior to 2009 (before
51 the first evaluation of Wallonia’s first Marshall Plan), the newspaper hardly took interest in the
52 MP and in Wallonia’s socio-economic performance. After 2009, we find explicit references to the
53 MPs and explicit comparisons between Flemish and Walloon socio-economic performance. We
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3 also note that “Catching up” is linked to other repertoires, such as “Wallonisation.” The latter has
4 both a pejorative and a more positive connotation, depending on who is talking, to whom the
5 message is addressed, and when it is invoked.
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8 **It is equally important to stress that this study does not consider how these repertoires are**
9 **received and rearticulated by other societal actors, such as scientists and technologists, civil**
10 **society groups, or the broader “public opinion.” More research is needed to learn the answer**
11 **to how groups in society respond to specific storylines and symbols. Paraphrasing Fletcher**
12 **(1998), a research agenda that combines qualitative content analysis with reception analysis**
13 **to gauge these broader societal trends is not an easy one, but it is important to think along**
14 **these lines.**
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18 **A good starting point for such an analysis would be to integrate discourse-analytic concepts**
19 **such as repertoire into the sociology of expectations and related science and technology**
20 **studies (STS) approaches that examine future prospects and promises in innovation (Borup**
21 **et al. 2006). A key notion that springs to mind is “sociotechnical imaginary,” defined by**
22 **Jasanoff and Kim (2009) as “collectively imagined forms of social life reflected in the design**
23 **and fulfillment of nation-specific scientific and/or technological projects.” Identifying the**
24 **repertoires that sustain, or conversely, challenge, such broader national imaginaries would**
25 **give us a better understanding of how science and technology are promoted and questioned**
26 **by non-scientific actors and institutions, such as the media and the state. Here, discourse**
27 **analysis can make a tangible contribution to STS studies that explore the relationship**
28 **between science and technology, governance, and nation building (Hecht 1998; Jasanoff &**
29 **Kim 2009; Felt 2013) by providing analytical tools and resources that make explicit *how***
30 **groups and institutions “make themselves at ease” with the KBE imperatives of knowledge,**
31 **innovation, and competition (Horst & Irwin 2010). A fine-grained analysis of this kind would**
32 **helpfully challenge overly simplistic renditions of the KBE as a homogenizing force that**
33 **expunges all differences. As Schot and Rip (2010: 4) have argued, rather than assuming that**
34 **all countries simply go through the same modernization process, we must acknowledge the**
35 **simultaneity of, and the interplay between, globalizing forces and particularizing tendencies,**
36 **as nations develop with a global KBE in nation- or region-specific ways. For Belgium this**
37 **means that whereas in earlier times Flemish and Walloon collective identities were**
38 **reconfigured within the constellation of the Belgian nation-state, today such reconfigurations**
39 **must also be understood in relation to the globalizing KBE context.**
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48 The observations made in this article invite further reflection on the meaning and place of
49 collective identities in a complex, interdependent world driven by capital flows, knowledge, and
50 technology. Whereas some authors contend that nationality in the traditional, state-linked sense
51 has no place in the present global, interdependent constellation (Habermas 2012), others insist on
52 the mutual incompatibility of collective identities (e.g. Flemish identity opposes Belgian identity).
53 While there is some truth to each of these outlooks, identities are also multiple, malleable, and
54 messy, as the chaotic complexity of lived reality contrasts with institutionally formulaic identities
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3 (Gubrium & Holstein 2001: 17). In complex, culturally diverse countries such as Belgium, nation-
4 state integration and disintegration may well play out simultaneously through the artful
5 interweaving of nationhood (Belgium), regionalism (Flanders and Wallonia), and
6 supranationalism (Europe).
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10 11 **VI. Acknowledgments**

12 13 14 15 **VII. References**

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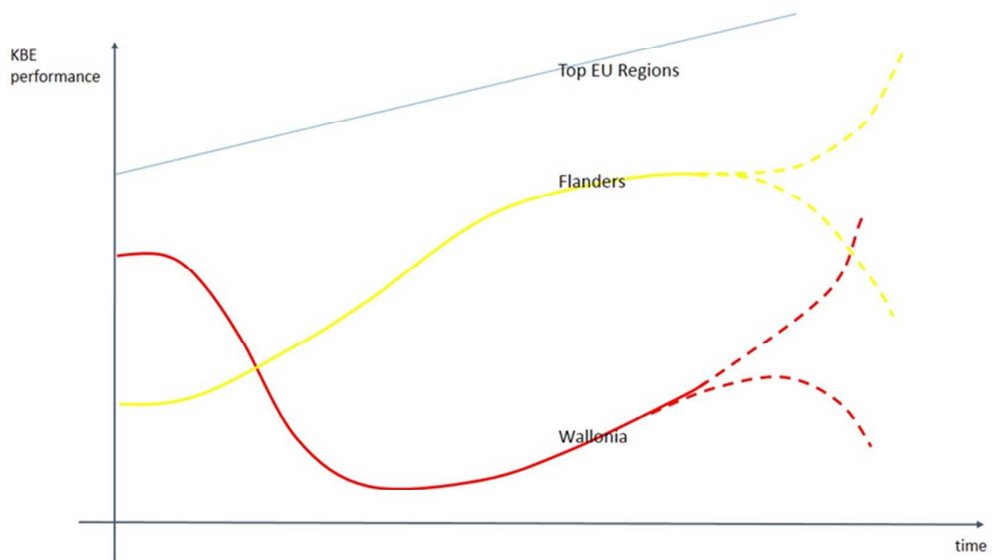
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Graph 1. Performance of Flanders and Wallonia in the knowledge-based economy, projected over time.



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