



"The Belgian Tetris revisited: the influence of political knowledge on the impact of metaphors"

Dodeigne, Jérémie ; Perrez, Julien ; Randour, François ; Reuchamps, Min

ABSTRACT

Federalism is often presented through metaphors, such as the metaphor of the family or of a – crazy – machine, but little is known about the impact of such metaphors on citizens. In the two previous editions of the Conference Belgium: The State of the Federation, we presented two experiments assessing the impact of the real-life Tetris metaphor on citizens' representations and preferences about federalism. The two experiments, conducted on French-speaking Belgian students, was made of different groups, controlling for the presence, in a text, of a metaphor. The results showed that being exposed to the text with the Tetris metaphor does influence the participants' representations of federalism towards a more institutional representation and above all more regional autonomy. What is even more interesting is that we could test for the interaction between political knowledge and the impact of the metaphor. These tests reveal that the respondents with a lower level of political knowledge are indeed those who are influenced by the metaphors, while the respondents with a higher level are not impacted. In order to dig further into the question of the influence of metaphors, we conducted a third experiment, this time on a representative sample of 500 Flemings and 500 Walloons. Each language group was randomly divided into four sub-groups (125 each): a control group that received no treatment, a neutral group that saw a description of Belgian federalism, a Tetris group that saw a description of Belgian federalism presented as a Tetris, and finally a Divorce group that sa...

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The Belgian Tetris 3.0

How metaphors can differently influence the Flemish and Francophone political minds

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Belgium: The State of the Federation

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Introduction

- What political impact(s) could this metaphor have on the people to which it is addressed.
- Crucial question in CL
 - CMT (Lakoff & Johnson 1980)
 - Metaphors have the ability of highlighting and hiding specific aspects of a target concept
 - “it is often claimed that the use of metaphor is particularly necessary in politics, since politics is an abstract and complex domain of experience, and metaphors can provide ways of simplifying complexities and making abstractions accessible.” (Semino 2008:90)
- **Framing**
 - “[...] select[ing] some aspects of a perceived reality and mak[ing] it more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the described item” (Entman, 1993: 52)
 - “Metaphor helps construct particular aspects of reality and reproduce (or subvert) dominant schemas (Koller 2009: 121)

Du. "Normale partijen die een staatshervorming willen enzovoort die willen eigenlijke hetzelfde als we zo zeggen een ernstige LAT relatie in dit land." (PBN, M5, 3130-3131)'



c'est comme dans un *ménage*, on ne règle jamais les solutions une fois pour toutes. On se marie, ou en vit ensemble, peut importe, à 20 ans, puis on a des enfants, puis les enfants deviennent grands, puis le bonhomme fait sa crise de la quarantaine, puis on se dit que tout compte fait, on se dit que c'était quand même pas si mal et puis rien, et puis entre, temps, madame est ménopausée et puis... (...) puis..... Puis elle a perdu son job, puis les enfants se sont mariés, voilà que la maison est trop grande... les situations évoluent et je ne pense pas qu'on va rêver d'avoir une situation immuable. (PBF, B8, 1968-1977).

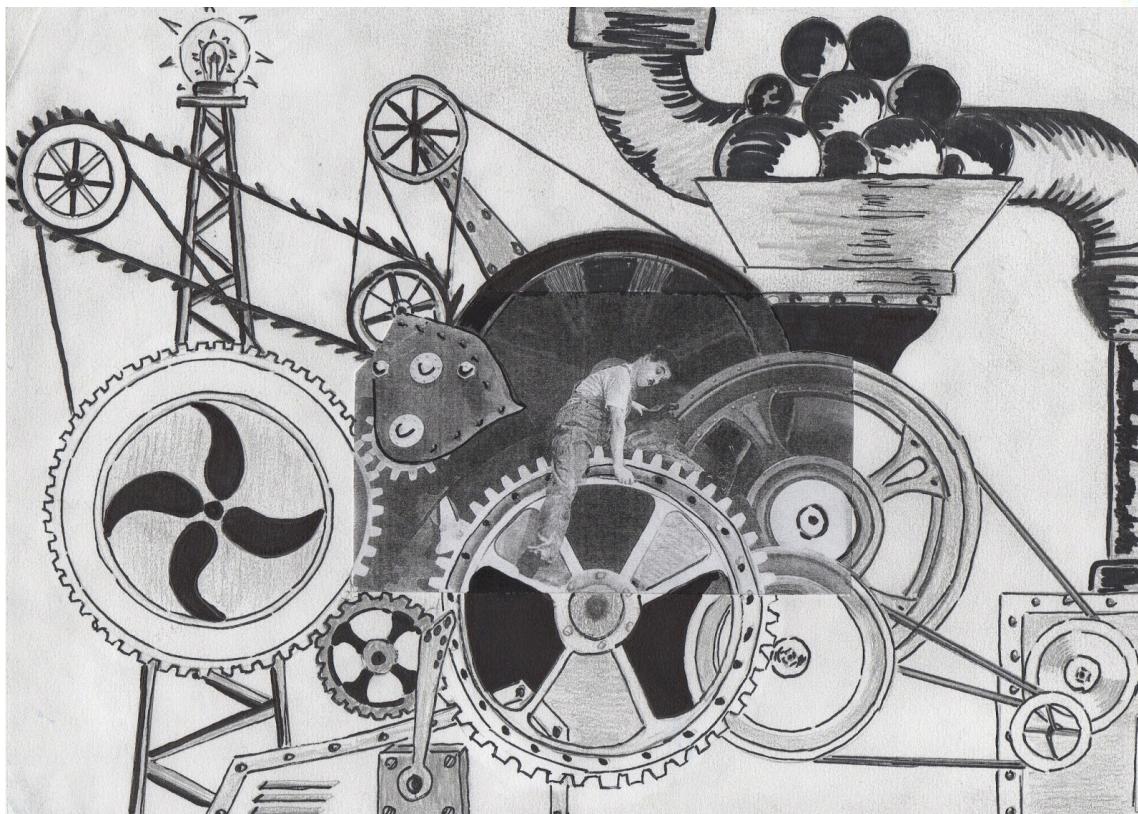
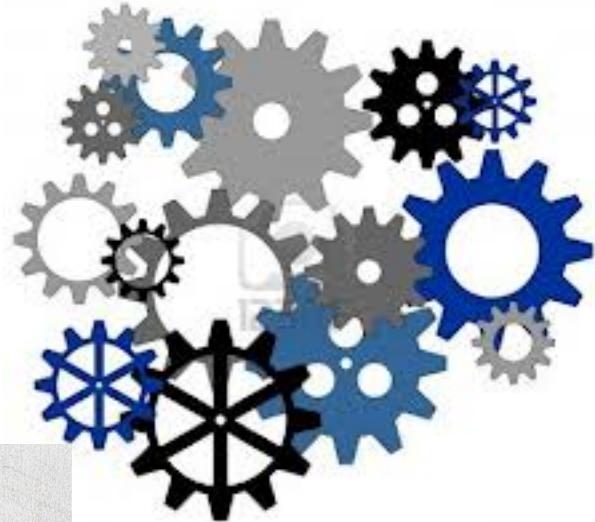
L2: "het is vergelijken met dat huwelijk he. De Belgische staat is een *gearrangeerd en geforceerd huwelijk* geweest." (2263-2266)
(...)

L6: "het is inderdaad een *gearrangeerd huwelijk* en het is *gearrangeerd* door de internationale gemeenschap" (2268-2269)
(...)

L6 : "een *gearrangeerd huwelijk* kan ook ontbonden worden, zo moeilijk is dat allemaal niet. Het moet gewoon erkend worden door de internationale gemeenschap." (2279-2280)
L2 : "ja maar dat *is getrouwdd voor goede en kwade dagen* en wij zijn nu in kwade dagen." (2281-2282)

L6 : "maar bij een *gearrangeerd huwelijk* is het niet *in goede en kwade dagen* vrijwillig, maar is het verplicht in *kwade* dagen. (...) ik hoop toch dat we zover zijn *dat huwelijken niet meer verplicht zijn ofwel?*" (2283-2287)

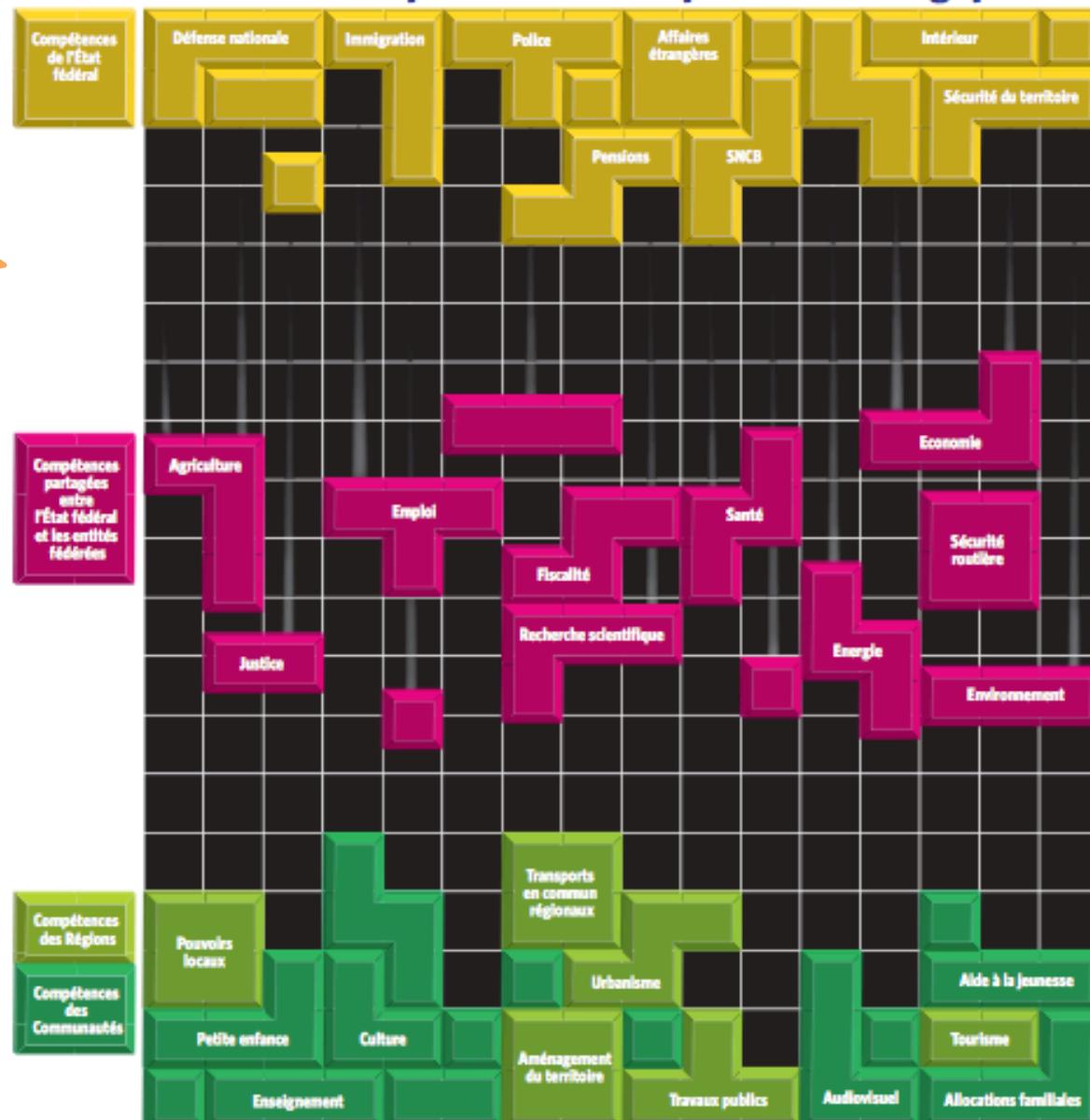
Fr. *On a coupé le citoyen du fonctionnement d'une espèce de mécanisme, de machine folle lancée sur elle-même.* (PBF, B8, 839-840)



From Perrez & Reuchamps (2014, 2015)

La nouvelle répartition des compétences en Belgique

Representation
of the last State
reform
© Le Soir



Le Tetris belge
 De 1930 à 1990, le Belgique politique le résumait à l'Etat central, les provinces et les communes. Sauf les prérogatives attribuées aux pouvoirs locaux, l'Etat s'occupait de tout. En 1990, le Constitution a créé de nouvelles institutions: les Communautés et les Régions. Il chaque réforme de l'Etat a été l'occasion de priver des compétences à l'Etat (ce qu'il démontre bien fédéral pour les attribuer aux pouvoirs locaux). C'est le grand Tetris belge où l'on voit l'étage du dessus qui se décompose peu à peu, morceau par morceau, au profit des autres pouvoirs. Dans certains cas, le législateur transfère des blocs homogènes (comme l'Enseignement, attribué aux Communautés en 1980). Dans d'autres, il ne transfère que des éléments d'une compétence (c'est le cas de la fiscalité : le Ministère reste compétent mais accorde aux pouvoirs fédéraux certaines prérogatives). Désormais, on distingue ainsi trois types de compétences. Celles exclusivement exercées par l'Etat (la Défense, par exemple). Celles exclusivement exercées par les Régions et les Communautés (Enseignement, Urbanisme, Travaux publics, etc.). Et celles où chaque pouvoir a une possibilité d'intervention. Dans le domaine de l'emploi, par exemple, l'Etat est compétent dans certains domaines (Dévolution sur le chômage, par exemple) et les Régions sont compétentes pour d'autres (placement et formation des chômeurs). (T.B.)



Région Bruxelles-Capitale



Région Wallonne



Communauté française



Communauté germanophone



Région flamande

Research design: Tetris Metaphor

2 experiments (Online, limeSurvey protocol)

- Experiment 1 (2013): 4 conditions
- Experiment 2 (2014): 3 conditions

Participants

- 1 y. Bachelor students at the UCL and ULg

Research design: Tetris Metaphor

Main results

- Effect of the **text** on the citizens' **representations** of Belgian federalism (Perrez & Reuchamps 2015; Dodeigne, Perrez & Reuchamps submitted)
 - Institutional descriptive schemes prevail over identarian ones
- Impact of the **metaphor** on the citizens' **preferences** (Dodeigne, Perrez & Reuchamps submitted)
 - The Tetris metaphor does matter and boosts participants' autonomist preferences
- **Mediating effect of political knowledge** (Dodeigne, Perrez & Reuchamps submitted)
 - Autonomist effect greater for participants with lower political knowledge

Research design: Tetris Metaphor

Experiment 3 (Online, limeSurvey protocol) | 2017

- 4 conditions

Participants

- Representative sample (region, sex, education level) of Belgian citizens
 - 500 French-speaking citizens
 - 500 Flemish citizens

Research design: Tetris Metaphor

Research questions

- Framing effect
 - Does the presence of an explicit metaphorical mapping influence the citizens' preferences towards more autonomy or more union?
- Aptness effect
 - Is there a difference between different metaphorical mappings (Tetris vs. Divorce)?
- Cultural effect?
 - Do the citizens' preferences vary according to their region?

Experiment 3: 4 Conditions

TETRIS CONDITION

DIVORCE CONDITION

NEUTRAL
TEXT

CONTROL CONDITION

From the Ringer article:

For the Ringer article series began to hit the market, state the promoters and the newspaper's reporters, Google (or the converged news outlet) had already been in the works for at least two years. The initial concept was to merge the company's online news operation, *News.com*, into the print publication. From there it was decided that the best way to utilize those two platforms would be to merge them into one. This is why Google's new website, *Google News*, is the result of the merger of the two publications. In other words, the merged entity will be called Google News, which will be distributed via the communications (2002). In other words, it is only through merging the two publications that Google News can be considered a true newspaper (compared to an unjoined or unassociated with the federal government's news service). The reason for this is that the merged entity is no longer a government entity, but a private entity.

These findings indicate that FDI in R&D can lead to the local state's technological upgrading. In other words, the foreign firms' R&D activities have been leading to a lot of technology transfer to R&D centers in the local state. This finding is consistent with previous studies that have also indicated that R&D activities of foreign firms have contributed to the technological upgrading of local industries (Kang, 2000). Thus, it is suggested that the foreign firms' R&D activities have contributed to the technological upgrading of local industries.

*This is the big
Belgian Tetris...*

This is the big Belgian divorce...

∅...



INPUT

FREE DESCRIPTION TASK : REPRESENTATIONS OF BELGIAN FEDERALISM

PREFERENCES REGIONAL AUTONOMY

PERSONAL SOCIO-DEMO INFO

The Belgian tetris

From 1831 to 1970, Belgium came down to the central state, the provinces and the municipalities. Except for the prerogatives attributed to the local authorities, the State was taking care of everything. In 1970, the constituent power created new institutions: communities and regions. And every state reform has been the occasion to take competences from the state (from there on called the federal state) to attribute them to federal authorities. **This is the big Belgian Tetris, where we see the upper floor that is falling apart (decomposing), block by block**, at the benefit of other authorities. In certain cases, the legislator is transferring homogeneous **blocks** (like education, attributed to the communities in 1989). In other cases, it is only transferring some elements of a competence (it's the case of the tax system: the federal state remains competent but assigned certain prerogatives to the federal entities). From now on, we therefore make a distinction between three types of competences. The ones that are exclusively exercised by the federal state (like Defense, for example). The ones that are exclusively exercised by the Regions and Communities (Education, Town planning, Public works, and so on). And the ones for which each power has a possibility of intervention. In the domain of employment, for instance, the (federal) State is competent for certain domains (unemployment legislation, for instance) and the Regions are competent for other ones (training courses of unemployed people).

The Belgian divorce

From 1831 to 1970, Belgium came down to the central state, the provinces and the municipalities. Except for the prerogatives attributed to the local authorities, the State was taking care of everything. In 1970, the constituent power created new institutions: communities and regions. And every state reform has been the occasion to take competences from the state (from there on called the federal state) to attribute them to federal authorities. **This is the big Belgian divorce**, where we see the federal state that is decomposing , piece by piece, at the benefit of other authorities. In certain cases, the legislator is **transferring homogeneous competences** (like education, attributed to the communities in 1989). In other cases, it is only transferring some elements of a competence (it's the case of the tax system: the federal state remains competent but assigned certain prerogatives to the federal entities). From now on, we therefore make a distinction between three types of competences. The ones that are exclusively exercised by the federal state (like Defense, for example). The ones that are exclusively exercised by the Regions and Communities (Education, Town planning, Public works, and so on). An the ones for which each power has a possibility of intervention. In the domain of employment, for instance, the (federal) State is competent for certain domains (unemployment legislation, for instance) and the Regions are competent for other ones (training courses of unemployed people).

Neutral version: The Belgian tetris federalism

From 1831 to 1970, Belgium came down to the central state, the provinces and the municipalities. Except for the prerogatives attributed to the local authorities, the State was taking care of everything. In 1970, the constituent power created new institutions: communities and regions. And every state reform has been the occasion to take competences from the state (from there on called the federal state) to attribute them to federal authorities. ~~This is the big Belgian Tetris, where we see the upper floor that is falling apart (decomposing), block by block, at the benefit of other authorities. In certain cases, the legislator is transferring homogeneous blocks (like education, attributed to the communities in 1989).~~ In other cases, it is only transferring some elements of a competence (it's the case of the tax system: the federal state remains competent but assigned certain prerogatives to the federal entities). From now on, we therefore make a distinction between three types of competences. The ones that are exclusively exercised by the federal state (like Defense, for example). The ones that are exclusively exercised by the Regions and Communities (Education, Town planning, Public works, and so on). And the ones for which each power has a possibility of intervention. In the domain of employment, for instance, the (federal) State is competent for certain domains (unemployment legislation, for instance) and the Regions are competent for other ones (training courses of unemployed people).

Tetris 3.0: Groups' composition

			Scenario 1 – Control	Scenario 2 – Neutral	Scenario 3 - Tetris	Scenario 4 - Tetris
N	FL	500	125	125	125	125
	WA	500	125	125	125	125
	Total	1000	500	500	500	500
Gender (% Male)		50,6%	50%	50,8%	50,8%	50,9%
<i>Education</i>			In all scenarios, there is an equal repartition regarding Education (70,8 % - 17,8 % - 11,4 %)			
<i>Age</i>			In all scenarios, there is an equal repartition regarding diplomas (23,6 – 39,5 - 36, 9)			

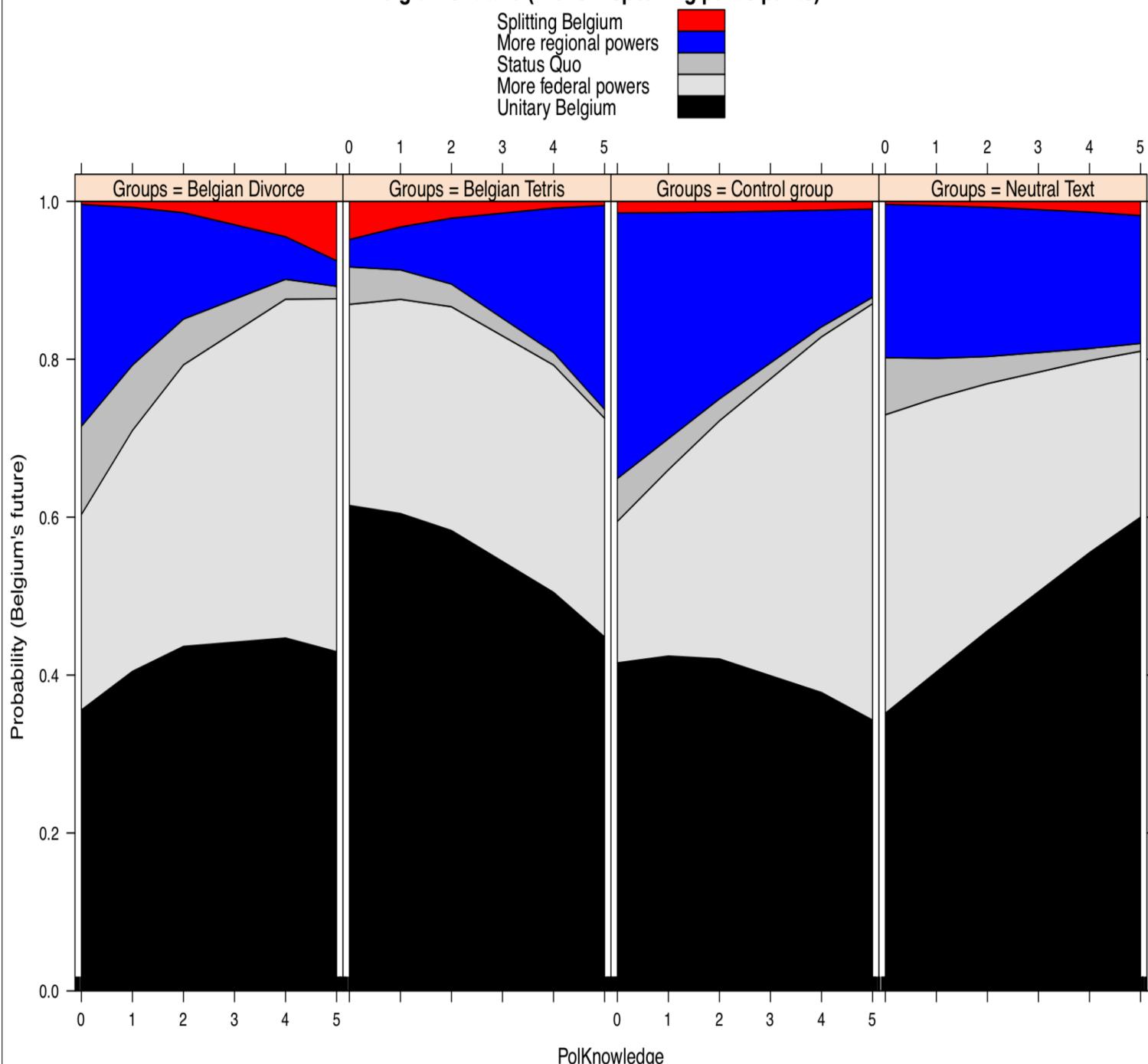
Representative for the different scenario according to Walloon/Flemish, Gender, Region, Diploma and Age

French-speaking voters	Unitary vs. More federal	Unitary vs. Status quo	Unitary vs. More regional	Unitary vs. Splitting
<i>Reference category= control group</i>				
Neutral Text	0.91 (0.80)	0.45 (1.12)	-0.38 (0.80)	-1.18 (1.56)
Belgian Tetris	-0.04 (0.82)	-0.53 (1.09)	-2.66*** (1.01)	0.80 (1.22)
Belgian Divorce	0.48 (0.79)	0.88 (1.01)	-0.02 (0.76)	-1.18 (1.41)
Political Knowledge	0.25 (0.18)	-0.34 (0.29)	-0.18 (0.20)	-0.05 (0.32)
Neutral Text Political Knowledge	-0.48** (0.24)	-0.16 (0.37)	0.04 (0.26)	0.25 (0.46)
Belgian Tetris Political Knowledge	-0.17 (0.24)	0.12 (0.37)	0.65** (0.31)	-0.34 (0.40)
Belgian Divorce Political Knowledge	-0.17 (0.24)	-0.09 (0.36)	-0.29 (0.30)	0.60 (0.42)
Constant	-1.84 (0.73)	-1.91 (1.01)	-0.98 (0.75)	-2.62** (1.25)
Identities		✓ (***)		
Political Interest		✓ (*)		
Income		✓		
Age		✓		
Education		✓ (**)		
Gender		✓		
Observations	500	500	500	500
Akaike Inf. Crit.	1,179.59	1,179.59	1,179.59	1,179.59

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Belgium's future (French-speaking participants)

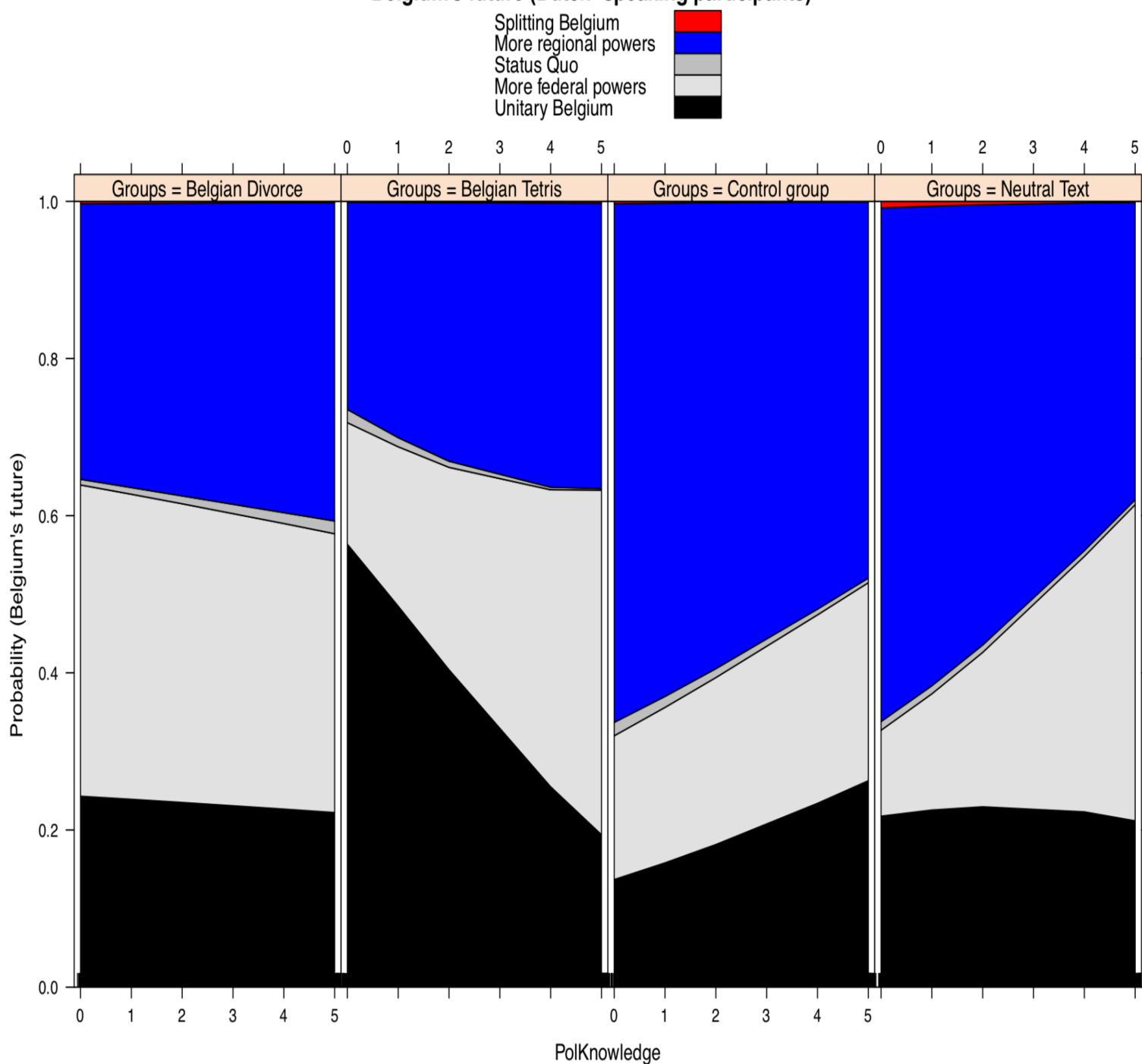


Dutch-speaking voters	Unitary vs. More federal	Unitary vs. Status quo	Unitary vs. More regional	Unitary vs. Splitting
Reference category= control group				
Neutral Text	-0.98 (1.43)	-0.90 (1.33)	-0.47 (1.28)	0.56 (1.52)
Belgian Tetris	-1.58 (1.45)	-1.43 (1.29)	-2.33* (1.31)	-2.29 (1.60)
Belgian Divorce	0.20 (1.34)	-1.43 (1.40)	-1.21 (1.24)	-0.57 (1.58)
Political Knowledge	-0.07 (0.26)	-0.35 (0.27)	-0.19 (0.23)	-0.42 (0.32)
Neutral Text Political Knowledge	0.33 (0.37)	0.24 (0.38)	0.09 (0.34)	0.06 (0.43)
Belgian Tetris Political Knowledge	0.49 (0.37)	0.13 (0.39)	0.47 (0.34)	0.75* (0.43)
Belgian Divorce Political Knowledge	0.06 (0.35)	0.52 (0.38)	0.24 (0.33)	0.30 (0.43)
Constant	-0.18 (1.08)	0.93 (1.07)	0.48 (1.00)	-1.06 (1.37)
Identities		✓ (***)		
Political Interest		✓		
Income		✓		
Age		✓		
Education		✓ (*)		
Gender		✓ (*)		
Observations	500	500	500	500
Akaike Inf. Crit.	1,044.35	1,044.35	1,044.35	1,044.35

* $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

Note:

Belgium's future (Dutch-speaking participants)





THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

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