

# MEASURING (SUB)NATIONAL IDENTITIES IN SURVEYS: SOME – NEW – LESSONS FROM BELGIUM

Dave Sinardet, Kris Deschouwer, Lieven De Winter, Jérémy Dodeigne,  
Christoph Niessen & Min Reuchamps

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## 1. Introduction: surveying national identities

In political science the concept of identity has been used quite widely. Abdelal et.al. (2001: 4) identify “an obvious increase in the attention to identity” since the 1990s. That includes the study of international relations in which the identity of states is being used as an independent variable explaining the choices and mutual perceptions of states. In the area of comparative federalism and regionalism, the attention for identities has increased as a consequence of the ‘new politics of nationalism’ (Keating 1996) at the subnational level. The territorial politics in countries like the UK, Canada or Belgium have been analysed – among others – through the lens of substate identities (Sinardet, 2012). However, that does not mean that the concept has been neatly defined: “The term is richly – indeed for an analytical concept – hopelessly – ambiguous” (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000: 6). It does refer (be it vaguely) to a social category, to characteristics shared by members of a group. But a group of people marked by the same label can refer to many different boundaries between them, for instance race, gender, age, class, religion, ethnicity, ... For each of these a large stream of literature exists about all thinkable aspects.

National identities do however not play a very prominent role in that literature (McCrone & Bechofer 2015). While identities like class or gender can have important and direct effects on behaviour and attitudes, national identity is of a different nature. It is often considered as a so-called ‘banal’ identity (Billig, 1995): largely taken for granted, not that often explicitly mentioned, its meaning and content not often being explicitly spelled out. Most people most of the time do not pay much attention to their national identity (Miller, 1995). Yet when national identities are challenged or activated, they do become more visible and awareness of them becomes more important. Their meaning and content are then explicitly discussed. And that is exactly what has happened in several places in the course of the past few decades. Claims made by substate nationalist movements and parties in Quebec, Corsica, northern Italy, Catalonia, Flanders or Scotland – to cite the most prominent examples – have activated a debate about national and subnational identities. And as a consequence political science has paid attention to these debates and has tried to map the evolutions and varieties in national identities. The strength of national identities (subnational identities in particular) is seen as one of the possible drivers of the demands for the territorial reorganization or breaking up of national states. Regional political entrepreneurs have crafted narratives in which specific regional economic strength and cultural traditions are combined to mobilize for territorial autonomy (Keating et.al. 2003).

Measuring both the content and the strength of these shared feelings of belonging to national communities has then obviously become an important focus in the research on territorial reorganization. A clear difference has however developed between the research focusing on the elite and the research focusing on the population. Although recently some survey research was done on MPs in Belgium (Reuchamps, Sinardet, Dodeigne & Caluwaerts, 2015) and parliamentary candidates (De Winter & Baudewyns, 2015), the dominant approach at the elite level has been qualitative. The way in which elites define the political community, how they stress some of its aspects and underplay others or how they contest the importance of other identity claims was largely measured by using elite interviews or discourse analysis (e.g. Van

Dam 1996; Keating et.al 2003). These methods allow for a fine-grained measurement of the *content* of the national identities, of the different ways in which how being a Scot or a Quebecois is represented and interpreted. It allows for describing the way in which membership of the group is defined, how history is interpreted and how the relation with other groups is defined.

When analysing national identities at the level of the population, a different method is generally used. Here the dominant technique is survey analysis. Individual respondents are asked questions about how they relate to different national identities (for an overview of results for Belgium see Sinardet et al, 2018). The Linz-Moreno question or the hierarchical question (see below) are all attempts to measure the *salience* and the *intensity* of the feelings of belonging to a group. They measure individual characteristics of the citizens, the degree in which citizens identify with certain categories. In this contribution we will look in particular at the way in which the Linz-Moreno question has travelled (well) to Belgium. Before entering the heart of the matter, we must however be aware of the assumptions made when measuring national identities in survey research.

While in the literature on nationalism the tradition is very much one that assumes that identities are constructed and are therefore also malleable and subject to change depending on the time, the context and the actors referring to it (e.g. Anderson 1983, Gellner 1983, Hobsbawm 1991), the tradition of measuring national identities in surveys is deeply rooted in a behaviourist approach. This is actually the very consequence of the technique itself. It assumes the existence of categories that are stable and that do not vary between context, and that can therefore be captured by asking questions to individual respondents. Irrespective of the exact way in which the respondents are asked to indicate the salience or importance of identities for them, we assume in the first place that there is a *homogenous meaning* of each of the suggested identities. Surveys of this type do not measure the content of national identities but define them as a stable category. If a survey question asks whether and to what degree somebody feels Scottish or British, we do not offer them the possibility to say what exactly being Scottish or British means for them. The only way in which responses can be interpreted is by summing the answers and by assuming that the words have the same meaning for all respondents. This is of course an assumption made for all questions asked in survey research, but it is of particular relevance for the measurement of national identities. The homogeneity is taken for granted, just as if being a Scot or a Brit has the same degree of homogeneity across the population as being male or female or being under or over 55. Especially when identities are contested and when they are the object of (sometimes heated) political debates – which is less the case for belonging to gender or age groups – the assumption of a homogenous meaning of the identities is problematic and should at least be explicitly recognized, because it is the meaning given by the researchers that is attributed to the respondents.

A second assumption that is being made is that the feelings of belonging are independent from the context. One is being asked to what extent one feels Walloon or Belgian, but not how this may vary between places and contexts. One might feel more Belgian when abroad, or more Walloon when listening to a statement of a Flemish nationalist. In a survey question only

one single and stable answer is however possible. Stability over time is however not assumed. By repeating the same questions in consecutive surveys, we are able to assess the degree in which the intensity of identities evolves over time within a population.

Yet another assumption that is (always) made by survey research is that the categories offered to the respondents are meaningful. The respondents are supposed to have a clear opinion, to be informed and to have reflected about what is being asked. Survey research is thus trying to measure a complex, varied and moving characteristic of individuals by confronting them with (sometimes hard and exclusive – see below) choices between national identities. The choices offered are also quite obviously tailored to the specific situation in which identities are being measured. It is indeed quite interesting to note that the Linz-Moreno question in which respondents are asked to make a choice between one subnational and the state-wide nation identity has been developed in a context where this dual choice does make sense.

So the specific questions and categories used to measure identities in surveys also contain assumptions about those identities. This is why we can hypothesize that using different questions can also amount to different results. While in the past, different questions have been used to measure identities – even though the Linz-Moreno question is clearly dominant in research up until now – this was generally also in different surveys, not making it possible to attribute variation to the question used. To be able to assess the impact of the tool on the measurement of identities we have used three different questions measuring national and subnational identities in Belgium in a 2014 electoral survey. We will compare the responses given to these questions in the empirical part of this paper. First, however, we will go into the way identities have been measured in the past in different so-called ‘multi-national’ states, specifically concentrating on the Linz-Moreno question, and the way in which it has travelled to other places where researchers want to measure national and subnational identities. After that we give an overview of the way identities have been measured in Belgium in the past.

## **2. Measuring identities in ‘multi-national’ contexts: the Linz-Moreno question**

As mentioned, the methodological dimension of research on sub-national identities is crucial to understand and analyse the results. Among the questions seeking to grasp the nature of identities in pluri-national contexts, the so-called Linz-Moreno question stands out because of both its design and its comparative fashion.

### *Origins of the Linz-Moreno question*

As Collier (2006) stated, the development and first uses of the “Moreno question” are wrongly attributed to the Spanish scholar, Luis Moreno. In a very good history of the question, Peres (2007) showed that the first use of this question was in fact in a publication by Gunther, Sani and Shabad (1986) based on empirical work that took place between 1978 and 1984. The questionnaire used for the study “was developed by the authors in consultation with DATA and was pretested in 1978” (Gunther, Sani & Shabad, 1986: 437). This research was thus held under the patronage of DATA SA which was a survey research company. Juan Linz, who already was a specialist of the study of multiple identities, supervised the research of the three authors

and introduced them to the multiple identities question as they acknowledged in their introduction (Gunther, Sani & Shabad, 1986: XIX). Thus the so-called “Moreno question” has to be attributed to Juan Linz.

As a matter of fact, we should note that the “Moreno question” does not only follow the logic and method initiated by Linz, it has been formulated by Linz himself. He was working on peripheral nationalism in Spain (Linz, 1973) when his observations led him to provide a conceptual framework for the scaling of five categories of territorial self-identification. The conception of the question was part of a scientific project to collect and analyse quantitative data on subjective identities embedded in a context of strong nationalist mobilizations which Linz was in favour of (Peres, 2007). He even actively took part as an elected regional councillor in the quest for autonomy for the Madrid region within the general process of Spanish devolution after 1978 (Moreno, 2006 & 2007).

The starting point of Linz’ puzzle is the political context of Spain which is “a state for all Spaniards, a nation-state for a large part of the population, and only a state but not a nation for important minorities” (Linz, 1975: 423). Subsequently Linz highlighted that if the linguistic difference is one of the essential drivers for regionalist/nationalist demands, it only becomes politically and socially prominent when it coincides with other cleavages and/or conflicting interests (Peres, 2007: 518).

Following Dupoirier (2007), there are three underlying assumptions to Linz’s approach. The first hypothesis, which had already partially been confirmed by various studies on the Basques, the Catalans, the Valencians and the Scots before the first use of the question, assumes the existence of a dual identity in pluri-national states. The second posits that these identities may be hierarchized, while the third assumes that the stronger the regional identity is, the louder the claims for more autonomy are. With his colleagues at DATA, Linz first used five dual categories in surveys carried out in 1978-79 (Linz, Gómez-Reino y Carnota, Andrés Orizo & Vila Carro, 1981: 519-548). Dismissing nationalist injunctions towards selecting a unique identity, Linz built a questioning model allowing individuals to position themselves vis-à-vis two conflicting allegiances: these identities can not only be accepted or abandoned, but also combined and the intensity of this combination could be specified (Peres, 2007: 522).

Nevertheless, if the questionnaire was developed by Linz, it was popularized by Luis Moreno. As Moreno himself acknowledges, Linz was the first scholar to use the five dual categories in public opinions surveys carried out at the end of the 1970s and so doing he “provided a conceptual base for the scaling of 5 categories of self-identification” (Moreno, 2006: 4). Linz’ studies served indeed as a source of inspiration for Moreno’s own work.

Coming from Madrid, Moreno went to Scotland in 1983 and “engaged in comparative research on home rule between Scotland and Catalonia as the theme of [his] PhD dissertation” (Moreno, 2005: 3) which he passed in 1986. Henry Drucker, a pioneer researcher on Scottish devolution, supervised Moreno’s doctoral thesis and introduced him to works of Mackintosh (1968). The latter worked on dual identities in Scotland and Moreno, drawing a parallel between Scotland and Catalonia, felt that the comparison had to be further analysed (Moreno, 1986). The objective was to corroborate the findings of Mackintosh about the dual identity of

Scotland and those of Giner (1984) concerning the dual identity of Catalonia with new data coming from Scotland. At that time, the only identity question administered in the same wording in Scotland was the 'Forced Choice National Identity' developed in the Scottish Election Study and used in 1974 and 1979. For that question, respondents were asked to choose one identity between 'being Scottish' and 'being British' for which an overwhelming majority of Scots responded 'being Scottish' (respectively 65 and 56 percent) (Curtis 2013).

With the help of Drucker's connections, Moreno asked the *Glasgow Herald* newspaper to add a question to one of their regular opinion surveys. The Linz-Moreno question was eventually submitted for the first time to the Scottish population at the end of June 1986, eight years after Linz. The following question was asked to the readers: "We would like to know how people living in Scotland considers itself in terms of nationality. Which of the following best describes your vision for yourself?". Five response options were offered to respondents: (1) Scottish, not British; (2) More Scottish than British; (3) As far Scottish as British; (4) More British than Scottish; (5) British, not Scottish. These findings confirmed the pre-eminence of a Scottish dual identity, as in Catalonia (Moreno, 2006 & 2007)<sup>1</sup>. They shed new light on the understanding of the political dynamics, in particular in Scotland. As Moreno put it the "political significance of the manner in which Scots identify themselves appears to be more complex than assumed beforehand. Other than acknowledging the high level of legitimacy in the setting up of Scottish democratic institutions within the framework of the British state, Scottish 'dual identity' and a strong sense of Scottishness cut across other functional dimensions of social life, such as gender, class or religion, with variable political effects" (2006: 11). Since the 1997 general elections, the Linz-Moreno question has been regularly used in England, Wales and Scotland (but not in Northern Ireland) via the Scottish Election Study /Scottish Social Attitudes/, Welsh Election Study/ Welsh Referendum Study and British Election Study/ British Social Attitudes (see all data sources in Curtice, 2013)

Noteworthy, there was initially no difference between the questionnaire built by Linz and the "Moreno question" used by Moreno and subsequent scholars. This explains why some authors speak about the "Linz-Moreno" question (Keating, 2009a, 2009b, 2014; Guinjoan & Rodon, 2015; Antón Merino, 2015). However, a significant discrepancy, which Linz regretted, was increasingly introduced in the two extreme options (Peres, 2007: 522). While the initial wording was "I feel X", it is nowadays often administered as "I *only* feel" or "I *exclusively* feel" which contravenes the original idea of the Linz question. But still, even with this proposition, the use of the Linz-Moreno question highlights a much more nuanced identity allegiance than previously observed with exclusive questions. In that sense, the "use of Linz questionnaire is thus not in itself politically innocuous. It leads to a soothing distancing compared to a monistic conception of nationality, in the sense that it plays down the identity choices" (Peres, 2007: 523).

### *Traveling of the Linz-Moreno question*

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<sup>1</sup> The results were: (1) Scottish, not British 39%; (2) More Scottish than British 30%; (3) As far Scottish as British 19%; (4) More British than Scottish 4%; (5) British, not Scottish 6%. There were also 2% of "don't know" answers.

After its export from Spain to the United Kingdom, the use of the Linz-Moreno question has been repeatedly introduced by various scholars in other political systems. Before presenting them, it is quite remarkably to observe that, aside Martínez-Herrera's (2005) PhD thesis, there is no comparative perspective using the Linz-Moreno question<sup>2</sup>. The overwhelming majority of studies are case-oriented.

Among the first scholars to adopt the methodological choice of the Linz-Moreno question we firstly encounter scholars in European studies. The Linz-Moreno question has been included as a standard question in the Eurobarometer since 1992, replacing the previous 'complementary identity question'<sup>3</sup> (see history of the Linz-Moreno question at the European level in Duchesne 2008; Bruter, 2008). The formulation of the Linz-Moreno question in the Eurobarometer is: '*Do you in the near future see yourself as (nationality) only, (nationality) and European, European and (nationality), European only?*'. This is however a 'partial' Linz-Moreno question since the mixed identity option is not present (as much 'national identity' as European). Besides, the hierarchy between identities is unclear in this formulation. Indeed, is it clear for the respondents that '(national identities) and European' indicates a superiority of the national identity over the European identity while 'European and (national identities)' indicates primacy of European identity over the national identity?

A second country where (some) scholars rapidly adopted the Linz-Moreno question is Canada, and most particularly in Quebec. Because of its (strong) independentist claims, the study of Quebecker's identity is well established in this region since the 1960s. During almost three decades, Quebeckers were asked whether they feel 'Québécois', 'Canadiens français', 'Canadiens anglais' or 'Canadien' (Pinard, 1997), i.e. a type of 'forced choice territorial identity'. In 1997, a survey conducted in the context of the adoption of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) included for the first time the Linz-Moreno question. Guy Lachapelle (2007) who was part of the survey team discussed at length the context and reasons behind the inclusion of this question. In particular, he cited two factors explaining how the Linz-Moreno question became increasingly known in Canada: on the one hand, there was a rich debate animating European scholars in the early 1990s due to the inclusion of the Linz-Moreno question in Eurobarometers (see above); on the other hand, he was convinced by other colleagues studying comparable regions in Europe (David McCrone and John Curtice in the UK as well as Luis Moreno himself in Spain).

France is another country where surveys administered this question. From 1995 to 2007, in addition to Eurobarometers, it has been used in four French surveys (conducted by the company TNS Sofres) in order to compare French and European identities (Dupoirier, 2007). More recently, Alistair (2006) also tested the Linz-Moreno question using Brittany as a case study to test the links between nested territorial identities and claims for regional institution-building. Although he does not acknowledge it explicitly in his work, his education and research background in the UK is likely to have contributed to its exportation to France. At

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<sup>2</sup> She compared five regions from three different countries (Basque Country, Catalonia, Galicia, Quebec and Scotland).

<sup>3</sup> It asked respondents '*Do you sometimes think of yourself not only as a (nationality) citizen but also as a European citizen? Does it happen often, sometimes or never?*

that moment, the Linz-Moreno question was repeatedly implemented in English, Scottish and Welsh electoral surveys. In France, the recourse to the Linz-Moreno question constituted a distinctive rupture vis-à-vis the initial 'forced choice territorial identity' used by the *Observatoire Interregional du Politique* from 1985 to 1992 (plus once in 2000). French respondents had to choose between 'city/county where they live', their 'Département', their 'Région', 'France' or "none). Later on, from 1992 to 2001, the *Observatoire Interregional du Politique* developed a multiple identity metric measure (respondents could express several territorial attachment), in which the intensity of respondents' territorial attachments can be assessed (Dupoirier, 2007: 535).

Despite the growing subnational autonomy throughout the world (Marks et al. 2008), which (partially) reflects the increase of subnational identities, the rest of the scholarly community has not really used that question in their research. Nevertheless, there is a strong qualitative tradition analysing the construction and development of nested identities.

### **3. Measuring identities in Belgium: not only the Linz-Moreno question**

Similar to other states characterised by a devolution process, a research tradition of measuring identities has developed in Belgium during the past four decades, the period largely coinciding with the Belgian federalisation process. Most often, these 'ethno-territorial' identities, as they have often been labelled in Belgium, were measured within the framework of larger quantitative surveys. Particularly since the 1990s this was done as a part of (post-)electoral surveys, resulting in measurements at least every four years. Next to this, there have also been irregular polls on identities in Belgium, mostly carried out by media organisations, but in this contribution we will limit ourselves to scientific surveys.

It is to our knowledge from 1975 onwards that identities as such started to be measured. There had already been a number of public opinion studies conducted on the linguistic conflict in Belgium between 1966 and 1975, focusing on people's perceptions of the most important issues of which some parts are related to the identity debate, but without actual measurement of identity feelings (for an overview see Verdoodt, 1976). In the first part of the 1980s, research on identification was part of a panel survey focusing specifically on the community conflicts (called *Régioscope*), afterwards in (post-)electoral surveys (mostly ISPO-PIOP and Partirep). In these different studies, different types of survey questions have been used.

#### *The hierarchical question*

The most often and consistently used way to measure identities in Belgium is through the hierarchical question, asking respondents to which of a list of given identities they feel most closely related in the first and in the second place. To our knowledge, this question first appears in an inter-university survey in 1975. It is still used in the two electoral surveys organised in 2014. Therefore, the hierarchical question also seems best suited to analyse evolutions of ethno-territorial identities in Belgium over a long period of time, covering about the entire federalisation process.



Table 1: Ethno-territorial identities in Flemish region, based on hierarchical question (1975-2014)

1 <sup>st</sup>	75	79	80	81	82	86	91	95ip	95i	96	99	03	04	07	09	10	14i	14p	19
Bel	19	34	40	37	35	44	42	52	36	37	56	54	42	52	43	45	56	56	45
Fla	17	45	44	47	48	33	40	25	23	23	27	30	39	34	27	29	28	21	31
Prov	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	4	2	4	6	3	5	9	3	7	4
Com	61	19	14	13	14	20	13	17	32	30	13	12	12	10	15	13	13	15	9
Eur									?	?					9				10
Oth							2	3			0	0		1	1	4	0	1	1
N		100 4	69 0	492	418		237 9	206 6			249 7	124 7		112 4	153 1	190 0	113 1	925	100 6

Table 2: Ethno-territorial identities in Walloon region, based on hierarchical question (1975-2014)

1 <sup>st</sup> choice	75	79	80	81	82	86	91	95	99	03	04	07	09	10	14p	19
Bel	27	54	59	61	57	58	68	65	72	68	56	75	57	70	69	57
Wal	22	18	17	15	18	16	11	10	11	10	12	8	9	5	11	11
FrC	4	16	16	17	16	11	11	8	5	6	8	6	5	7	5	5
Prov	4	2	1	1	1	2	0	0	2	2	5	1	3	2	4	4
Com	44	9	6	6	8	12	7	10	10	10	15	8	9	14	10	11
Eur													16			9
Oth							3	7	0	4		2		2	1	2
N		944	619	457	381		1391	1241	1294	742		662	800	337	911	1022

Data from: AGLOP - GLOPO: 1975 (inter-university); Régioscope (ULB-UCL): 1979, 1980, 1981, 1982, 1986; ISPO/PIOP: 1991, 1995, 1999, 2003, 2007, 2010, 2014; ISPO (only FI): 1995, 1996; Partirep: 2009, 2014; EOS-RepResent: 2019

These evolutions can be found in tables 1 and 2. Particularly striking is the much higher importance attached to the commune/city in the surveys where this was proposed first (1975, 1995i and 1996). However, some of the differences that can be seen in the tables can probably be (at least in part) explained by methodological differences. Indeed, the way the hierarchical question has been put to respondents has differed. Most important differences include the wording of the question, the wording of the proposed identities, the number of proposed identities, the number of references to one identity and also the order of the proposed identities (De Winter, 1999).

Let's first focus on the wording of the question. Between 1979 and 1986 (in the Régioscope studies) the question was asked as follows: 'To which group do you consider to belong above all?<sup>4</sup>'. From 1995 this became: 'Of which unity do you consider yourself part in the first and

<sup>4</sup> 'A quel groupe estimez-vous appartenir avant tout?'

the second place?' for Flanders while in the French version the wording was less precise.<sup>5</sup> The first questions refer more to an actual group of people, while the second one refers more to an institutional reality.

The wording of the identities also differed: the Régioscope studies referred to 'l'ensemble des belges' (to make the distinction with the other proposed identities), while later studies just used Belgium. Two non-electoral ISPO studies conducted in 1995 and 1996 (only for Flanders) on the contrary used 'Belgian' and 'Flemish'.

Also, Régioscope included all the different institutional identities, making a distinction between the 'Dutch language community' and the 'Flemish region' (which was dropped in ISPO-PIOP) and also proposing the Brussels region as well as the German-speaking language community (Delruelle-Vosswinkel et al, 1983: 15). In the Partirep surveys (2009, 2014) and EOS-RepResent survey<sup>6</sup> (2019) Europe was added as an option, which was also the case in the 1995 and 1996 ISPO-studies.

In some cases, some type of identities were further specified and divided. This is for instance the case in the 1975 study, where the local level – which in other surveys was generally proposed once as 'your commune or city' – was divided into three options: your commune, the entity of which your commune and its surroundings is part of and your city.

The order in which the different identity options are presented to respondents also shows variation. Research showed that this indeed has an effect on the results due to a primacy effect: options that are presented first tend to get more support, at least among respondents without strong opinions on the matter (Billiet, 1996). Because most surveys use a decreasing order going from the highest to the lowest level of governance, Belgium was often in first position, followed by the regional/community levels, the province and the local level. However in the 1995 and 1996 ISPO-studies the order was inversed, with the local level being presented first and also being adapted to where the respondent lived (e.g. Antwerp instead of 'your commune/city'). Also, as the Partirep & EOS survey followed the same logic, it put Europe in first position. The 1975 study also put the local levels first.

All these differences must be taken into account for a nuanced analysis of the evolutions of 'ethno-territorial' identities in Belgium (and mostly some of the quite surprising differences)

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<sup>5</sup> 'Tot welk geheel rekent zichzelf op de eerste en op de tweede plaats?' / 'A quoi avez-vous le sentiment d'appartenir en premier et en deuxième lieu?'

<sup>6</sup> 2019 : **À quelle entité culturelle ou géographique vous sentez-vous appartenir en priorité ?**

1. L'Europe
2. La Belgique
3. La Communauté française de Belgique
4. La Région ou la Communauté flamandes
5. La Communauté germanophone
6. La Région wallonne
7. La Région de Bruxelles-Capitale
8. Votre province
9. Votre ville ou votre commune

**Et à quelle entité culturelle ou géographique vous sentez-vous appartenir en second lieu ?**

based on the hierarchical question (for a more detailed analysis of the evolution of results for the hierarchical question, see Deschouwer & Sinardet, 2009; Frogner & De Winter, 2013).

### *The Linz-Moreno question*

The second most used question in Belgian research on ethno-territorial identities is the Linz-Moreno question. This first appeared in 1995 in the ISPO/PIOP electoral survey and has been used in most electoral surveys since then, mostly to allow comparison of Belgian data with those of other 'multi-national' countries. Because the wording remained constant the "Moreno question" also allows for more reliable longitudinal comparison, although this only covers the last 20 years and thus only half of the period covered by the hierarchical question (see tables 3 and 4).

Table 3: Ethno-territorial identities in Flemish region, based on the Linz-Moreno question (1995-2014)

<b>Flemish region</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2014</b> <b>p</b>	<b>2017</b>
Only Flemish	3,6	7	7,2	7	7,3	8	8,7	11,9
More Flemish than Belgian	23,1	22,4	23,3	29	27,4	27,4	18,4	23,5
Equally Flemish and Belgian	45,3	42,2	42,3	45	35,5	41,3	41,7	36,9
More Belgian than Flemish	17,2	13,3	15,1	8	17,0	12,4	8,0	14,4
Only Belgian	10,8	15,1	12,1	11	12,7	10,9	23,2	13,2
Total %	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	2088	2157	1202	517	1073		1002	604

Table 4: Ethno-territorial identities in Walloon region, based on the Linz-Moreno question (1995-2014)

<b>Walloon region</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2014</b> <b>p</b>	<b>2017</b>
Only Walloon	1,5	2,30	3,6	3	1,6	4,4	2,1	5,8
More Walloon than Belgian	9,4	11,3	8,3	11	6,1	5,0	6,9	10,4
Equally Walloon and Belgian	44,7	41,8	39,7	31	38,0	21,1	42,7	34,6
More Belgian than Walloon	25,3	22,0	18,3	13	19,9	22,8	11,7	19,2

Only Belgian	19,1	22,5	30,0	42	34,4	46,7	36,6	30,1
Total %	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
N	1223	1381	764	310		467	1004	396

Sources: 1995-2014, as above; 2017: Belgian Tetris survey (Reuchamps et al., 2018).

In general, the Linz-Moreno presents the advantage that it allows respondents to put their regional and national identity at the same level, while the hierarchical question forces to choose between different identities. A disadvantage is that it reduces the ethno-territorial identification to those two levels, while these may not necessarily be the most important ones for all respondents (although results for the hierarchical question in Belgium show that on average about 4 respondents in 5 do choose either the regional or the national identification as their first).

However, in the Belgian context the Linz-Moreno has an important disadvantage compared to most other countries it has been used in. The complexity of the institutional and identity landscape in Belgium, based on regional as well as community identities, is difficult to translate to the Linz-Moreno which only allows for one type of regional identity to be measured.

This difficulty mostly rises in the French-speaking part of Belgium. Indeed, while the Flemish identity covers the regional as well as the community aspect, on the other side of the language border there is an important difference between the Walloon and the francophone identity. This difference reveals itself in the institutional landscape (community and regional institutions not having been merged such as on the Flemish side), in political and intellectual debate (where 'regionalists' and 'communitarians' have been at odds with each other) and also among public opinion, as is shown by the results of the hierarchical question. The problem also occurs for Dutch-speaking respondents when the Brussels population is included in the sample and most particularly in recent years when a Brussels regional identity has developed. Still, while a dual tension between substate and state does still more or less make sense for Flanders versus Belgium it does not make sense for Francophone Belgians who can be Belgian but also Walloon, Francophone or 'Bruxellois'.

A solution to this problem would be to use two Linz-Morenos for Walloon respondents: one comparing their Belgian with their Walloon identity, the other comparing their Belgian with their francophone identity. However, this is more time-consuming and might also be confusing for a number of respondents. Moreover it still doesn't allow to measure the relation between the two types of sub state identities.

#### *A metric scale*

As a way to combine elements from both types of questions, a metric scale was introduced in the Draw Belgium research project (Reuchamps et al., 2010) and used on a population-wide representative sample in the PartiRep 2014 survey (of which the data that will be used in the

empirical section of this paper). Respondents are asked to score their degree of identification with Belgium, with Flanders, with Brussels, with Wallonia and with the French Community on a unidimensional scale running from 0 (no identification at all) to (10 complete identification). As respondents can identify themselves strongly with the national as well as the sub-national level these variables are not mutually exclusive, but can be combined: respondents could indicate for each of these identities how important they are. This metric scale can thus grasp both hierarchy and complementarity of identities.

### *Other types of measurement*

While the hierarchical and the Linz-Moreno question have been most used, some surveys also included other types of identity measurement. The Eurobarometer (Fitjar 2010) or the German Social Survey (ALLBUS 2016), for example, ask for respondents' 'attachment' to the local, regional, national and supra-national level on a four-point scale (very, fairly, not very, not at all). The Centre Liégeois d'Etude de l'Opinion (CLEO) uses a question which does not introduce any hierarchy between the identities, but measures the frequency and intensity of different possible identities. This was used in various -- usually non-electoral surveys -- since the late 1980s, including the 'Wallobaromètre'<sup>7</sup>). Interestingly, this shows that there is not necessarily an opposition between regional and national identity, as it shows that those feeling most strongly Belgian also feel most strongly Walloon and European (Jacquemain et al, 2006). Unfortunately, these data are only available for the Walloon region (with the exception of 1995 when the question was also included in ISPO-PIOP).

The own identity can also be measured by looking at the differences with other relevant identities. The ISPO-PIOP surveys include a question asking respondents to which extent they perceive differences between Flemish and Walloon. Most of these also asked Flemish respondents whether they felt closer to a Dutch citizen than to a French-speaking Belgian, and asked francophone respondents whether they felt closer to a French citizen than a Flemish one.

Some research used a much broader definition of identity than the strictly ethno-territorial version, interestingly showing its relativity. When asked in an open question which of the groups they belong to is the most important for them, only 5 % spontaneously refers to a geo-political group (more precisely 4,3% of the Flemish, 5,4 % of the Walloon and 7,8 of the Brussels francophone respondents). The ethno-territorial identification only comes after the primary group (family), a philosophical group (e.g. Catholics) and an organisation. Almost one third does not refer to any group (Doutrelepoint, Billiet & Vanderkeere, 2001: 14). Focusing specifically on ethno-territorial identities can thus attribute them more salience than they actually have or even to essentialise them.

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<sup>7</sup> The intensity/frequency question was formulated as follows:

- a) «Est-ce qu'il vous arrive de vous sentir (Wallon, Belge, etc.) ? Jamais, rarement, de temps en temps, souvent, très souvent ?
- b) «Quand vous vous sentez (Wallon, Belge, etc.), est-ce un sentiment faible, moyen, fort» ?

#### 4. Methodological inconsistencies between identity questions

In this section, we compare the results from three identity questions: the hierarchical, Linz-Moreno and the metric questions.

##### *Weaknesses and strengths of the various identity questions*

Of course these types of questioning methods are far from being perfect and following the methodological analysis formulated by De Winter (2007), five weaknesses can be identified. A first problem is that the number of possible choices influences the frequency of the responses: the more items by category, the more likely this category will be chosen frequently. A second difficulty is linked to the emotional connotations problem with the identification items. The formulation of the propositions can induce rejection or adhesion. Therefore scholars and researchers have to pay great attention in the wording of the alternatives which must be neutral. Thirdly, findings on *recency effect*, which implies that the latter category on the list is more often chosen, and *primacy effect*, which implies that the category on the top of the list is more often chosen (Billiet, Loosveldt & Waterplas, 1984; Marsden & Wright, 2010), indicate that the order of the proposition has a great influence on the results. Those *recency effect* and *primary effect* provoke the fourth weakness: the logical contradictions observed in the responses obtained through the Linz-Moreno question, hierarchical question, the frequency/salience question and the metric question used in the 2014 Partirep survey (De Winter, 1998; De Winter & Frogner 1999). Finally, a specific problem with the Linz-Moreno questioning is that it is difficult to apply to situations of multiple (i.e. more than two) identities. The Linz-Moreno question does not determine the prevalence of identity on its multiple alternative identities unless it is multiplied until every binary combination possible is obtained. Because it is composed of only two levels of identity, the Linz-Moreno question thus is less rich than the hierarchical question.

Consequently regarding the respective strengths and weaknesses of the three questionings, the balance provided by the Linz-Moreno question and its benefit in terms of simplicity and ordinariness that makes it easily applicable in research designs, imply that it is the most favoured option by scholars. Its success is thus more a matter of nuance and pragmatism than the result of empirical adequacy. But still, quite paradoxically its simplicity gives the Linz-Moreno question a methodological acuity: It can be “interpreted as an ordinal variable of the degree of regional identity or conversely national identity, which allows for more detailed analyses” (De Winter 2007: 592).

A significant weakness of the Linz-Moreno question is that it does not allow for ‘neither national nor regional’ as an answer. Besides, the question only permits dual territorial comparison (NAT/EU or EU/NAT or NAT/REG...). This does not fit with the complexity of multi-level identities in a polity like the European Union where a person can feel, for instance,

Basque, Spanish and European. Moreover, from an epistemological perspective, results obtained with the Linz-Moreno question are not beyond reproaches.<sup>8</sup>

### *Measuring inconsistencies*

Belgium offers an interesting case for studying the effects and results of using different identity questions. Three different questions were used in the PIOP-ISPO surveys of 1995 (hierarchical, Moreno and intensity/frequency questions) while the most recent Partirep 2014 survey included the hierarchical, Moreno & metric questions. So we have some unique material to examine the results of three different types of question, and to evaluate the validity of these questions in their capacity to grasp identity by establishing the degree of “logical inconsistencies” that may exist between the answers given to different identity measurements. The degree of inconsistencies between the hierarchical, Moreno & intensity/frequency questions in the PIOP-ISPO surveys of 1995 has been analysed by De Winter (1998) for the Flemish sample and by De Winter & Frogner (1999) for the Walloon sample. They found a relative high level of logical consistency between the answers to the hierarchical and Linz-Moreno question (about five out of six), but low degree (about half) of consistent answers between these two questions and the frequency/intensity question. They also noted that the logical consistency between the answers to the hierarchical and Linz-Moreno question is considerably lower for the respondents that ticked the first answer category on either question, indicating considerable “primacy effects”, i.e. the tendency of some (unsophisticated?) respondents to simply choose the first option that was offered on the response card.

Regarding the inconsistencies between the hierarchical, Moreno & metric measures included in the Partirep 2014 voter survey, we first present the exact formulation of these three identity measures, then discuss the operationalization of the concept on logical inconsistencies, present our actual findings regarding the occurrence of inconsistencies<sup>9</sup>, to finish with some reflections on the use of different measurements in cross-regional and cross-country research.

The three identity question types are not formulated in fully equivalent forms in terms of questions asked and answer categories offered: the hierarchical scale includes other territorial identities (such as province and local) options than just Belgian vs. regional identities offered in the Linz-Moreno scale; and the metric scales do not force respondents to explicitly indicate a hierarchy between identities as do the other scales. Still we may consider some answer patterns as “inherently inconsistent”. In order to explain the operationalization of this “inconsistency” test, we need to carefully examine the wording of the three questions, and the answer categories offered to respondents, in the Partirep 2014 electoral survey.

In this survey, the hierarchical question was formulated as follows: *Which geographical or cultural entity do you consider yourself to belong to in the first place? And which geographical or cultural entity do you consider yourself to belong to in the second place?* The categories

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<sup>8</sup> For a good discussion of data availability about Linz-Moreno question see Fitjar (2010: 35-40).

<sup>9</sup> Note that the analyses, as usual, were run separately for the Flemish and Walloon samples, excluding the more complex case of identities in the Brussels capital region (which were in any case not included in the Partirep 2014 surveys, and which pose particular problems regarding the use of the Linz-Moreno question in a complex context.

provided and presented on a response card (in that order) were Europe, Belgium, Francophone community, Flemish community/region, German-speaking community, Walloon region, Brussels region, Your province, Your municipality or city.

The Linz-Moreno question was asked in the following way:

*Which of the following statements most accurately describes your personal opinion?* The answer categories were (again, in that order): I only feel Flemish/Walloon, I feel more Flemish/Walloon than Belgian, I feel as much Flemish/Walloon as Belgian, I feel more Belgian than Flemish/Walloon, I only feel Belgian. The respondent was given a card with these five options to choose from.

Finally, the metric measure was operationalised with the following three questions: *For each of the identities below, could you indicate to what extent they apply to you? You can do so using a scale ranging from 0 to 10, where 0 means not at all, and 10 means a lot.* This included the categories: Belgian, Flemish/ Walloon and European. The respondent was given a card with the three scales.

These three question types allow us to establish -- to some extent -- a hierarchy between respondents' identities: in the hierarchical question, they have to indicate a first and a second choice, the Linz-Moreno question also indicates a hierarchy (exception made for the 'central' category, i.e. "I feel as Flemish/Walloon as Belgian"), while the metric scales allow us to establish a hierarchy for all respondents that did not give exactly the same score on the Belgian and Flemish/Walloon scales.

We may presume that for instance, respondents with a consistent hierarchy in terms of their predominant identification with Belgium rather than their region, would display this hierarchy in the answers to all three identity measures. Hence, a respondent that opts for the Linz-Moreno category of "more Belgian than Flemish" should opt on the hierarchical question for Belgium in the first place, and Flanders in the second place (or at least for Belgium before Flanders as first or second choice). Likewise, in order to be internally consistent, such respondent would give a higher score on the Belgian "metric identity scale than his score on the Flemish metric scale. Hence, the respondent pattern of identity would be considered inconsistent if she opts for the Linz-Moreno category of "more Belgian than Flemish", but in the hierarchical question for Flanders the first place, and Belgium in the second place (or at least for Flanders before Belgium as first or second choice), or in the metric measure would give a higher score for the Flemish one than on the Belgian scale.

Similar logical reasoning of internal consistency can be applied to most of the other categories of the Linz-Moreno scale, i.e. for those opting for the "more Flemish than Belgian" category, and those opting for "only Flemish" or "only Belgian" positions.<sup>10</sup> The middle category of the Linz-Moreno scale poses a particular problem as the hierarchical question does not allow for ex aequo, i.e. balanced regional and Belgian identities, which are however predominant by now for both the Flemish and Walloon populations (Deschouwer et al. 2015). We adopt a "strict" attitude (given the fact that the hierarchical question does not allow ex aequo?): we code as "inconclusive" (and thus will be treated as missing) a respondent when he feels "as much

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<sup>10</sup> For a detailed explanation of the calculations of logical inconsistencies between the Moreno and hierarchical scale, see De Winter & Frogner (1999).



Belgian as regional” on the Linz-Moreno question, but on the hierarchical question mentions Belgium as first choice, and Flanders as second. Thus, when it is impossible to decide unequivocally on the consistency between response categories from two question types, the case is regarded as “inconclusive” and treated as a missing value. Hence, some comparisons are calculated on only a part of the survey sample.

Evidently this logic holds also for Walloons respondents. As in Wallonia the territorial identities are much more skewed towards the Belgian “pole” (Deschouwer et al., 2015), we also need to analyse consistencies separately for the Flemish and Walloon regional sample.

## *Results*

Regarding the comparison of the hierarchy expressed in the Linz-Moreno question vis-à-vis the one expressed in the “hierarchical question”, we find an overall consistency for 80.3% of the respondents (calculated on the basis of 36.8% of the respondents (n=513/1393), excluding all inconclusive cases as well as all cases for which respondents picked the Moreno “as much Flemish/Walloon as Belgian” category, given that the ex aequo answer is not possible in the hierarchical question (77.3% among the Flemish respondents vs. 84.7% of the Walloon respondents).

The comparisons between the Linz-Moreno question with the metric scales do not yield better results, on the contrary. In fact, we find 58.0% consistent respondents (n=808/1393) (comparisons based on 1393 respondents, as all respondents produced unequivocally consistent or inconsistent answers) Regarding the consistency within the regional samples, we find only 59.1% consistent answers among the Flemish respondents vs. 53.5% among the Walloon respondents.

However, we find a moderately high degree of consistency between the hierarchical question and the metric scales: i.e. 75.3% (indisputable for 32.0% of respondents (=446/1393), excluding again all inconclusive cases as well as all cases for which respondents gave an equal value for the metric scales, as ex aequo are not possible in the hierarchical question). Regarding the consistency within the regional samples, we find 70.7% consistent answers among the Flemish respondents vs. 83.1% among the Walloon respondents.

Hence, our test of logical consistency produces mixed results. On the positive side, a (large) majority of respondents gives answers on our three operationalisations of identity that are consistent with the presumed internal hierarchy thesis (allowing also for an ex aequo position except for the hierarchical question) of national vs regional identities. Hence, these answers seem to be somewhat “structured” by an underlying internal hierarchy of identities, and do not seem to be just the result of random choices or coding mistakes.

However, the Linz-Moreno question seems to be affected by a response order effect when compared to the hierarchical question. Of the respondents that answered “Only Belgian” or “More Belgian than Flemish/Walloon”, 88.9% and 91.3% gave an answer consistent with the hierarchical question, against only 51.2% and 64.5% respectively that chose “Only Flemish/Walloon” or “More Flemish/Walloon than Belgian” (differences between Flemish and Walloon are minimal). So the two answer categories lowest on the response card (“Only Belgian” or “More Belgian than Flemish/Walloon) score considerably more consistent answers

that the two answer categories highest on the response card. Curiously, it is not the most extreme response that produces the most consistent response (“only Belgian”) but the more moderate position (“more Belgian than Flemish/Walloon”). So we cannot conceive this as a genuine recency effect.

On the other hand, when we combine Linz-Moreno with the metric question, we find that the most extreme responses produce the most consistent response (“only Flemish/Walloon” or “only Belgian” produce the least consistencies (56.5% and 46.4% respectively, differences between Flemish and Walloon are minimal). So rather the opposite of a recency or primacy effect.

These patterns of inconsistencies are puzzling and cannot be attributed to simple response order effects. One can wonder to what extent these inconsistencies are linked to inconsistencies on other attitudes, and to what extent respondents’ background characteristics and core political attitudes affect inconsistencies (only results for the full Flemish+Walloon sample will be reported). We examined each of the three types of inconsistency. Note that these inconsistency measures are intercorrelated to various degrees: the hierarchy/metric (in)consistency measure correlates with the hierarchy/Moreno and Moreno/metric ones (Kendall tau = 0.617 and 0.386 respectively). We find a very weak correlation between Moreno/metric and hierarchy/Moreno (Kendall tau = 0.142).

First, the Partirep survey, that consisted on one pre-electoral and a post-electoral wave, each part contained a classic left-right self-placement question (11-point scale). While people can change their left-right attitudes in the course of a couple of months, and especially from the eve of an election campaign to the week after Election Day (26 May - July 1, 2014), we presume that there should not be too much difference in these LR self-placements, unless the same factors of survey error that may affect the consistency between our three identity measures should be at play.

In order to be lenient towards consistency, we consider respondents consistent on the Left-Right scale if their self-placement in the second wave is equal to their placement in the first wave, *or* differs with only one unit. In practice, 63.8% respondents were consistent on the lenient Left-Right scale (if we only consider those that gave an identical answer, we find only 33.3% consistent). Whatever Left-Right consistency measure we use, the Left-Right consistency scales does not correlate in any significant way with our three identity inconsistency measures.

Second, the Partirep survey contains the by now classic question about preferred division of competencies between the regions and the federal state. We find a modest correlation with Moreno/hierarchical and Hierarchical/Metric inconsistencies (tau  $r = -0.109^{**}$  and  $-0.204^{**}$  respectively) indicating that those that lean towards the federal competence pole tend to be more consistent on these two identity consistence comparisons. However, we find no significant correlation with the saliency attached to state reform, a finding affected probably by the fact that only 3% of the respondents found the issue as the most salient for deciding their vote.

Third, regarding the socio-economic background characteristics, we find no correlation between the three types of inconsistency and age and gender, while the level of education is only slightly correlated with the Moreno/hierarchical inconsistency (Kendall tau = -0.135\*).<sup>11</sup> Fourth, regarding core political attitudes, we do find a (weak) correlation between the hierarchical-metric inconsistency measure and “political interest” and (Kendall tau =-0.103) and “political knowledge” (Kendall tau =-0.118). Finally, the three inconsistency measures are weakly associated with the vote for parties. The voters for the MR and PP are less consistent on the Moreno/metric scale (kendall tau = -0.055\* and 0.051\* respectively). On the Linz-Moreno/hierarchical comparison, the MR and VLD voters are less consistent while those of the N-VA are more consistent (-0.091\*; VLD: -0.113\*\* and 0.149\*\* respectively). The N-VA voters are also more consistent on the hierarchical/metric comparison, while the SPA, VLD and PS are less consistent (respectively 0.242\*\*, -0.088\*, -0.088\* and -0.112\*\*).

On the basis of the analysis of the consistency of the answers given to the three measures of identity included in the Belgian 2014 Partirep survey, as well as the lack of significant associations of the inconsistency measures with key background variables and political attitudes, the verdict about the validity and reliability of the Linz-Moreno question, as well as its old and new competitors, is still open. The hierarchical and Linz-Moreno question forces respondents to establish a hierarchy between identities (with the latter allowing balanced regional/national identity, much used in the Belgian case). Other variables have been used in other regional/state contexts to test the validity of the Linz-Moreno question such as the “regional/state nationalism” measure<sup>12</sup> or the “attachment to the region/state” (a somehow metric version of the hierarchical scale, now measured on a 0-10 scale<sup>13</sup> (Guinjoan & Rodon, 2015). Other measurements about the intensity and saliency of identity feelings should be added, as well as open questions and interpretative analyses regarding the choices respondents make on all the existing measures mentioned above.

The validity of these questions is however seriously bounded by the context of the region. In some regions, the question of regional vs national identity has been politicized for decades, a politization sometimes peaking during crucial elections or referendums where independence of the region is the most salient issue. In other regions, the question of regional vs national identity (let alone independence) is not a very salient issue (ex. Germany) or is competing with other salient territorial identities (i.e. the Brussels region, where Belgian vs Brussels regionalist identities compete, as well Flemish vs Francophone ones, and local identities compete). Also, in the provinces of Limburg and Luxemburg, we find some remnants of a provincial identity.

These precautions do not only warn us to be cautious about the validity of the Linz-Moreno question in complex societies like Belgium (given its changing centre/periphery relations of its regions/communities), but more importantly for its validity in comparative cross-national research.

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<sup>11</sup> The (weak) effect is mainly caused by the hierarchical/metric inconsistency in the Flemish sample (kendall tau = -0.148\*\*).

<sup>12</sup> “On a 0 to 10 scale, where 0 is the minimum level of Catalan/Spanish identity and 10 the maximum level of Catalan/Spanish identity, which national identity do you relate more closely with?” (Guinjoan & Rodon, 2015).

<sup>13</sup> “On a 0 to 10 scale, where 0 means that you don’t feel any attachment and 10 that you feel strong attachment, which is your level of attachment to region/State?” (Guinjoan & Rodon, 2015).

## Conclusion

In this paper we have reflected on the use of surveys for measuring national and subnational identities. We have followed the journey of the Linz-Moreno question that was designed for measuring the relations between two possibly conflicting identities. This technique to measure identities by means of surveys has travelled well to those places where researchers have tried to understand the relation between identities and demands for subnational autonomy. These places include Canada, the UK and Belgium. Yet in Belgium the feelings of belonging to the national state and to regions and communities have also been measured in other ways. Exactly the complex setup of regions and identities has pushed the researchers towards other types of questions. One of these is the 'hierarchical' question, asking respondents to identify with one entity out of a more or less long list. In that list also more local (provincial and urban) and supranational (Europe) have – sometimes – been added. Later, a 'metric' question was also added, asking respondents to indicate on a 0-10 scale to what extent they feel Flemish/Walloon, Belgian and European.

The 2014 PartiRep survey contained three identity questions: the Linz-Moreno question, the hierarchical question and this new metric question. Comparing the responses to these three questions, we must however conclude that they are not very consistent. The hierarchies between the identities vary between the questions. When people are asked within one hour three times in a different way how they relate to Flanders, Wallonia, Belgium or other political communities, an important number of them respond in a different way. All three questions do measure something, but apparently, they do not always measure – contrary to what we assumed – fully the same thing. Similar comparisons between responses to identity questions in 1995 had already pointed into that direction.

This finding is sobering. It does oblige us to reflect on the validity (and possibly also reliability) of the instruments. Measuring identities in political systems in which these are debated is of course very relevant and useful. Understanding the intensity of (sub)national identities and the way in which they evolve over time, can add to our understanding of the political dynamics. Yet exactly in political systems where identities are debated, we might fail to capture exactly what they mean if we measure them by means of survey questions. Survey questions in general and therefore also survey questions about identities assume a number of elements that are a consequence of what is not measured. Identities are assumed to have a homogenous meaning for all respondents. Identities are assumed to be clear and well-understood. Identities are assumed to be important, which leads then to an answer that is meaningful and reliable. Identities are assumed to be the same across contexts. Yet one can imagine that answering a question about Belgian or subnational identities at the end of a long (and maybe boring) questionnaire about politics and parties and a wide variety of attitudes produces a different answer (activates different feelings and meanings) compared to a question asked at the very beginning. And in the PartiRep questionnaire the three questions were indeed asked in the beginning (Linz-Moreno), in the middle (hierarchical) and towards the end of the interview (metric).

Measuring identities is relevant and important. Yet there is some work ahead of us. If respondents appear to be 'inconsistent', they are of course inconsistent in our preset terms. Respondents themselves are probably consistent in a way that we fail to grasp. For further research one should therefore reflect on ways to also grasp the meaning of identities and their possible variation in the population and across contexts. Adding open questions to the measurement of identities, asking the respondents to explain why they have answered the way they did, might be an interesting technique. Yet while we can certainly refine the instruments for measuring identities with surveys, the qualitative logic of surveys has in-built disadvantages that cannot be avoided. Measuring identities should therefore also not limit itself to quantitative survey research. Understanding the *content* of identities, rather than their intensity or salience, requires qualitative research. That type of research has however too often been limited to elite studies. There is still some ground to be covered if we want to fully understand how identities play a role at the mass level.

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