

Voluntary associations in the Belgian political system 1954-1968

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The intention of this paper is to look if some observations and hypotheses, we formulated in previous articles concerning the structures and dynamics of groups in the Belgian political system, in this period, yes or no can be corroborated by systematic research on voluntary associations (1).

1. The Belgian political system from a conflictual point of view.

Starting from the structures of the main Belgian conflicts and especially from a general description of the place of groups in these conflicts (that seemed to be situated mainly on the meso-level) we earlier have already come to some hypotheses about the dynamics of postwar political life in our country (2). The conflicts appeared to be enacted in three series of socio-cultural features, important on the national level: viz. in the socio-economic, the ideological and the ethnic-cultural dimensions. Each dimension was considered (at least in its origins) as a minority-majority relation: so we had a Flemish (Dutch-speaking) minority versus a Francophone (French-speaking) majority, a minority of labourers against a majority of employers, whilst the catholic structures till the end of the last century were dominant in many areas on the free-thinking ones. The three Belgian sociological minorities howe-

(1) We shall confine ourselves here to this more theoretical issue. We hope to publish the full descriptive results of this research in *Bulletin Hebdomadaire du CRISP*.

(2) See: A. VAN DEN BRANDE, Mogelijkheden van een sociologie der Belgische conflicten na de tweede wereldoorlog (1944-1961) in: *Sociologische Gids*, 1963, 10, pp.2-29 and: *idem*, Elements for a sociological analysis of the impact of the main conflicts on Belgian political life. In: *Res Publica*, 1967, 9, pp. 437-469.

ver could reckon upon a demographic majority in their struggles for emancipation. The fact that the conflict-structures were cross-cutting one another completely, was seen as the most important structural feature of the system.

The main general hypotheses formed in this situation were :

1° That the cross-cutting cleavages would keep the conflicts in check.

2° That intercursive power (power *between*) would be prevalent here on integral power (power *over*) and that on the political macro-level, one would find more market than organisation.

The political institutionalisation of the Belgian conflicts was conceptualized in the frame of these hypotheses as a conversion process from the conflicts on the meso-level into a political market on the macro-level. In our opinion, the gist of this institutionalisation was the fact that the six conflict poles and the main categories to which their combination gives rise, are represented in a moderate way by the three great political parties : CVP/PSC (Catholics), BSP/PSB (Socialists) and PVV/PLP (Liberals). These parties are thrown, by the play of coalitions, on each others' power resources and have a common interest in the maintenance of the system. Each of them is representing a combination of majority's and minority's movements, what allows by exchange, a gradual emancipation of the minorities.

2. The groups in this system.

As to the groups, we put :

a) *Concerning their structures :*

1° That they were taking a great place in the conflictual system, what means :

— that a lot of them will be seen as important in the socio-political context ;

— that a majority of the groups, relevant to this context, will be marked by some of the conflictual features.

2° That, between the different kinds of groups relevant for the socio-political system, voluntary associations will be very important, especially for the sociological minorities, but even for the defense movements of the majorities. If so, we can look for a correlation between the importance of these groups and their demographic strength.

3° That they were related to the political superstructures, especially by links with the three great parties.

4° That many groups were built on two or three of the conflictual features. This means that one may look for a high degree of criss-cross as defined by Galtung : « The degree to which there are (groups) who can serve as bridges between completely disparate conflict groups in the structure » (3).

5° All this supposes that the groups that by their structural features are suited to play the role of bridges, indeed have relations with the groups of different poles.

b) *Concerning the functions of the groups :*

in the system, we formed the following hypotheses :

1° When tension and conflict increase in one direction, many groups dividing their interest between different poles, will shift attention in this one direction, withdrawing support from the other conflict poles. In this way conflict will decrease in the other dimensions.

1° *bis* (Inversion.) When consensus and cooperation increase in one dimension, conflict and tension will increase in the others.

2° The developments described under 1., will give rise to reactions. The conflict poles, that are not involved in the actual conflict, will try to take control again of « their » groups in order to restore their strength. They will ask priority for their own interests by these groups, and propose compromises to settle the ongoing conflict.

3. The research done.

This investigation aimed at a general mapping of the main lines of the constellation of the voluntary associations in the Belgian socio-political system, 1954-1968. It opened some ways for a first and only partial verification of the observations and hypotheses mentioned above. The research was confined to associations for adults, that were at least formally voluntary. I.e. associations with every person could join by free choice (4), eventually provided that he fulfilled some conditions,

(3) J. GALTUNG, Rank and social integration : a multidimensional approach, p. 148. In : J. BERGER, M. ZELDITCH and B. ANDERSON edits, *Sociological theories in progress*. Boston, 1966.

(4) So friendly societies were included as a borderline case, because although almost every Belgian is obliged to associate with such a society, everyone is free to join the one of his choice.

with disregard of the factual factors limiting the voluntariness of the membership (5).

A first problem then was the selection of the associations according to their relevance for the Belgian political system. Here we choose a way adapted to our means (6) and at the same time giving some guarantees for objectivity. We analysed the whole scientific literature on Belgian political life in this period, noting the voluntary associations mentioned as playing a role in this context, just as their politically important relations. Out of the 401 publications, we examined (7), 179 (44.6 %) were useful sources, i.e. gave some information on the role or positions of one or more voluntary associations (8). In order to eliminate the groups, more marginal in politics, only the associations with mentions in two or more sources, were retained. So 70 were dropped, 103 stayed (59.5 %). Concerning the latter, we made a distinction between master- (or coordinating) organisations (n = 27, 26.2 %) and primary ones (n = 76, 73.8 %) (9).

For these 103 remaining associations, further information was gathered as well from the examined publications as from other written sources, from privileged witnesses and from the archives of the CRISP (10). To the 64 (84.2 %) relevant primary associations still existing and within reach in 1970, was sent a questionnaire, on which we received a response of 70.3 % (n = 45) (11).

In these ways information was gathered with regard to the identification and structure of the groups, their goals, membership and periodicals and concerning their participation in the consultative adminis-

(5) See on this subject : PALISI B.J., A critical analysis of the voluntary association concept. In : *Sociology and Social Research*, 1968, 52, pp. 392-405.

Our motivation for disregarding this aspect can be given in the words of Val Lorwin : « Segmented pluralism depends on self-definition, and the possibility of individual choice was at the origin of the system. In practice there may be high costs, in social pressure or individual trauma, of change, but in principle the individual can change at almost any time... »

Cf Val, LORWIN, Segmented pluralism : ideological cleavages and political cohesion in the smaller European democracies. In : *Comparative Politics*, 1971, 3, pp. 141-175.

(6) This research was made possible by a scholarship 1969-1970 of the NFWO/FNRS and by the aid of my wife and Mr Marc Lootens. I am very indebted to them all. Mr M. Lootens drew the graphs too.

(7) The list was closed in 1970. Publications on foreign relations or purely constitutional or administrative problems were excluded.

(8) The main part of useful sources was formed by bulletins of the *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP* (125, against 54 others, or 69,8 %).

(9) The first were retained, even if they had only one mention, when they coordinated primary groups mentioned in more than one source.

(10) Centre de Recherche et d'Information Socio-politiques (Bruxelles), to which we are very grateful for its aid.

(11) A combination of different methods for data-collection was the only way to get sufficient information on this subject.

tration on national level. In some cases, supplementary information was asked about relations with other groups or political parties, when these relations were mentioned in the literature without clear reference to their nature or the time of their existence.

4. The results as compared with the assumptions about the groups in the system.

a) *Concerning their structures.*

1° and 2° As we saw above 179 sources on 401 (44.6 %) were mentioning voluntary associations as relevant for the political system. In this way 173 organisations were revealed, of which 103 (59.5 %) appeared at least in two publications and were mentioned together 757 times. All this indicates clearly that voluntary associations indeed are playing a role in the Belgian political system, but doesn't give us an answer as to their relative importance in the system. A little indication in this direction may be given by the sum of the mean memberships 1954-1968 for the 66 retained primary associations for which we got this information (12): this sum was 6,680,720 for an adult population of 6,393,857 (1961).

As to the character of the political important associations however there is no doubt: only 3 out of 110 (13) are not marked by, at least one, conflictual feature. They totalize a mean membership of 652,667 (9.77 %). So, 90.23 % of the membership in political important primary voluntary associations pertained to organisations, involved in one or more of the three conflictual dimensions. Moreover 744 mentions on 757 (98.3 %) were relative to this kind of associations.

Table I gives us an idea of the distribution of the associations as to the combinations of conflict features. As a group may be marked by one, two or three of them, $3 \times 3 \times 3$ possibilities exist.

We can see that neither associations with three features ($n = 6$), nor combinations of the ideological and ethnic-cultural dimensions ($n = 9$), are represented strongly. The frequency of organizations marked at the same time by ethnic-cultural and socio-economic features, is only slightly higher ($n = 12$).

(12) For master-organizations it was impossible even to estimate the membership and for 17 or 20,5 % of the retained primary associations we had no information on this point.

(13) Seven out of the 103 associations changed in the period 1954-1968, as to their conflictual features, and are counted twice in this respect, this gives us a number of 110.

TABLE I

Number of Belgian politically-important voluntary associations (primary and master-organizations together) as to their conflictual features
Period : 1954-1968

Dimensions : socio-écon.	Employers and independents			Labourers			Without socio-econ. features			Total			Total
	Fl.	Fr.	W. E-C f.	Fl.	Fr.	W. E-C f.	Fl.	Fr.	W. E-C f.	Fl.	Fr.	W. E-C f.	
Ethnic-Cult.													
Ideological													
Catholic	0	1	8(2)	0	0	4	1	1	4	1	2	16(2)	19(2)
Free-thinking	1(1)	2(1)	2(1)	1(1)	1	7(2)	1	0	0	3(2)	3(1)	9(3)	15(6)
Without ideological features	4(1)	1(1)	26(1)	1	0	7(2)	18(1)	16	3	23(2)	17(1)	36(3)	76(6)
Total	5(2)	4(2)	36(4)	2(1)	1	18(4)	20(1)	17	7	27(4)	22(2)	60(8)	
TOTAL :	45(8)			21(5)			44(1)			110(14/2)			110(14/2)

(n) = the preceding number contains n associations that changed in the period 1954-68 as to their conflictual features and that in this way are counted once more elsewhere in this table.

TABLE II
**Mean membership 1954-1958 of the retained primary voluntary associations,
 Number of primary organizations, and mentions in the scientific literature of primary and master-organizations together
 as to the conflict poles
 Period : 1954-1968**

Conflict pole	Members	%	Primary Associations			Mentions	%
			Members known	Members unknown	T.		
Catholic	2.968.233	44,4	14	3	17	241	31,8
Free-thinking	2.314.328	34,6	11	2	13	148	19,6
Without ideol. features	1.398.159	21	41	12	53	368	48,6
Total	6.680.720	100	66	17	83	757	100
Employers and Independents	498.595	7,5	32	7	39	294	38,8
Labourers	3.607.558	54	16	0	16	215	28,4
Without socio-econ. features	2.574.567	38,5	18	10	28	248	32,8
Total	6.680.720	100	66	17	83	757	100
Flemish	256.645	3,8	16	3	19	133	17,5
Francophone	266.620	4	5	9	14	155	20,5
Without ethnic-cult. features	6.157.455	92,2	45	5	50	469	62
Total	6.680.720	100	66	17	83	757	100

The greatest numbers are found in the cells: employers without other features ($n = 26$) and Flemish ($n = 18$) and Francophone ($n = 16$) associations without other features, followed by the labourers « neutral » ($n = 7$) and free-thinking ($n = 7$) organizations. The combinations of an ideological with a socio-economic dimensions are in general more frequent ($n = 27$). This first image however has to be corrected by some data on the importance of the groups in question. Comparison of the figures 1 to 3 offers some possibilities in this direction: the most important corrections as to the membership are, that there exist very strong concentrations on the axis connecting the labourers and free-thinking poles, on the axis between the labourers and the catholic poles, in the catholic pole itself, and in the category without conflictual features. Concerning the number of mentions, the two last mentioned categories are forming an exception on the general impression that this number to a great extent, can be seen as a function of the two preceding factors, viz. of the number of associations and the membership.

As one can see in table II, the labourers sociological minority totalizes the greatest number of members, although the entire ideological dimension ranks higher in this respect as the socio-economic dimension in whole. The ethnic-cultural dimension is the least important as to membership and mentions alike. However we see, that, except for the numerical strength of the labourers movements, in every dimension the organizations with majority features appear as the most outstanding.

But, as the sociological majorities in Belgium are minorities in a demographic respect, it doesn't create a surprise, that in this situation the

GENERAL LEGEND FOR FIGURES

- — — = principal axis of a conflict-dimension.
- - - = connecting axis between conflictual poles.
- ZK = without socio-economic features.
- PZ = employers and independents.
- A = labourers.
- K = catholic.
- V = free-thinking.
- F = francophone.
- VL = flemish.
- CVP = Christian Social Party (Catholics).
- BSP = Belgian Socialist Party (Socialists).
- LIB = Liberal Party.
- PVV = Party of Liberty and Progress (name of the Liberal Party since 1961).
- VU = « Volksunie » (Flemish nationalists).
- KP = Communist Party.
- WP = Walloon and francophone parties.

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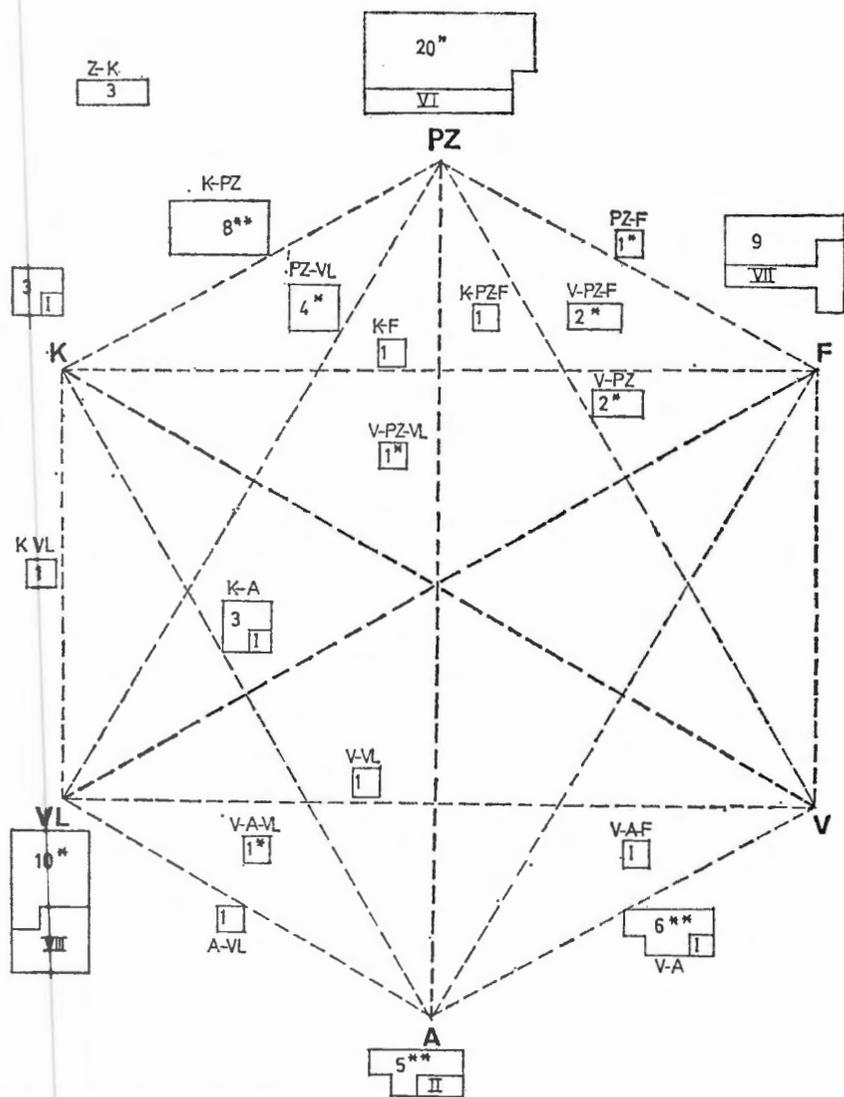


FIG. 1. — Dispersion of the Belgian politically-important voluntary associations in the three-dimensional conflictual space, with subdivision into primary and master-organizations. Period 1954-1968.

(See also the general legend.)

n = number of primary associations.

N = number of master-organizations.

n** = n contains two (or as much as*) associations that changed in the period 1954-1968 as to their conflictual features and that in this way are counted once more elsewhere in this graph.

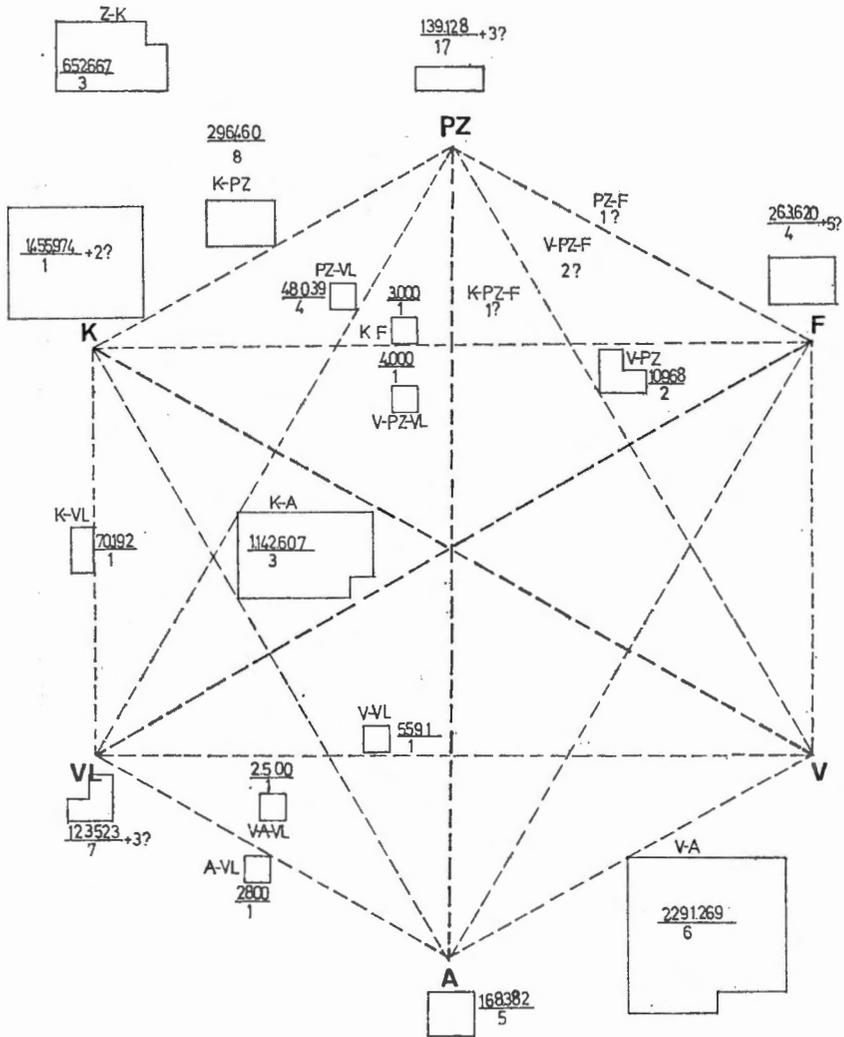


FIG. 2. — Mean memberships of the Belgian politically-important voluntary associations as to their dispersion in the three-dimensional conflictual space. Period 1954-1968.

(See also the general legend.)

- $\frac{n}{m}$ = mean number of the memberships as to number of associations for which this datum is known.
- +m? = number of associations, without data on the memberships.
- = 50.000 memberships and less.

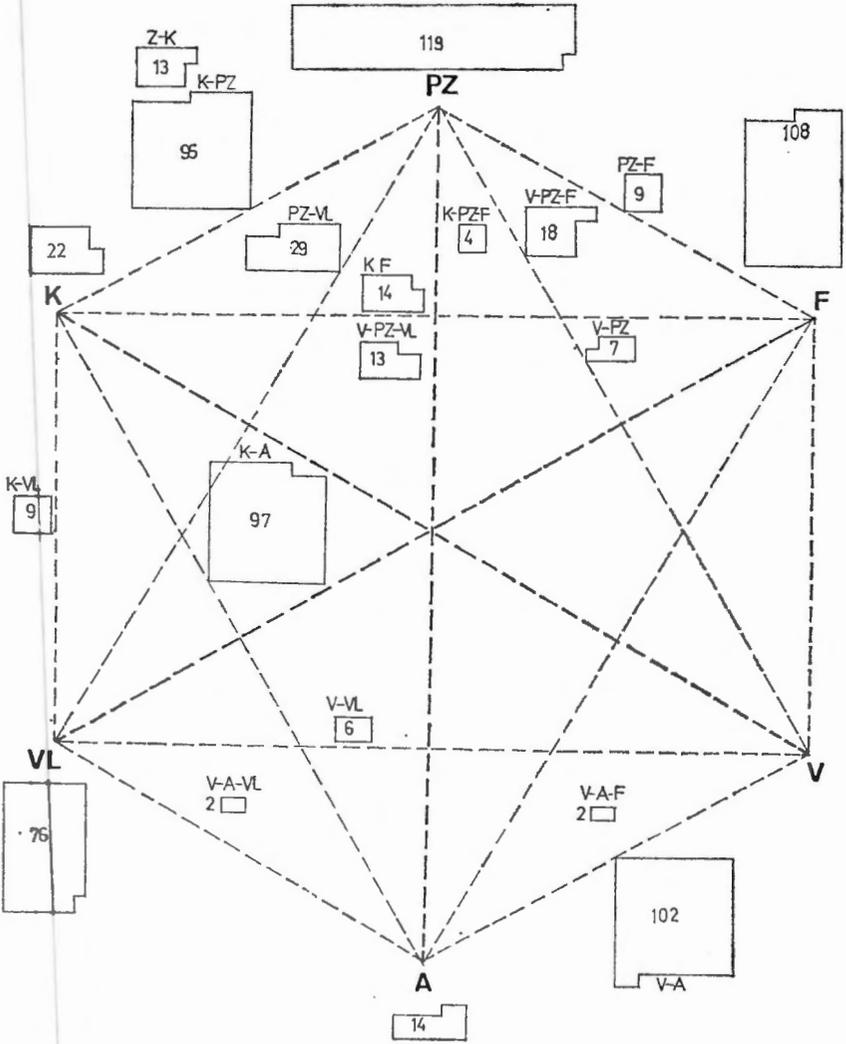


FIG. 3. — Mentions in scientific publications on Belgian political life, of voluntary associations, as to their dispersion in the three-dimensional conflictual space. Period 1954-1968.

(See also the general legend.)

□ = 1 mention.

Only associations mentioned in two or more sources were retained.

For each association only the first mention in a source was counted.

correlation (table III) between membership and number of mentions in the literature (as an index of political importance) is not so high as theoretically could be expected. The correlation between the membership and the number of delegations in the consultative administration, as an other indicator of political importance, is somewhat better, while the correlation between the two indexes is good.

TABLE III

Product-moment correlations between number of mentions in scientific literature, mean membership 1954-1968 and number of delegations in the consultative administration, for the retained primary voluntary associations*

	Number of mentions	Membership	Number of delegations
Number of mentions	1.00	0.32	0.63
Membership	0.32	1.00	0.41
Number of delegations	0.63	0.41	1.00

* We are grateful to Misses Samblankx for her aid in the calculation of these correlations.

3° How the associations were related to the political superstructures is the following point of investigation. Table IV gives some information about it.

A majority (61.9 %) of all associations are not bound or oriented exclusively to one political party. Very great differences exist however in this respect between the three conflict-dimensions, giving an indication for the political institutionalization of each: the associations with ideological features have very high scores here. The scores are already lower for the socio-economic categories, although the labourers movements prove that they know that their political strength is conditioned mainly by the positions of their voluntary organizations in the political parties. The latter are seemingly not so attractive for Flemish or Francophone associations. Notable is that just the categories with a high membership are strongly oriented to the political parties. As to the parties chosen: 17 associations were bound or oriented to the CVP/PSC, 13 to the BSP/PSB, 8 to the Liberals or PVV/PLP and 4 to the Volksunie. So, 36 on the 42 with a fixed orientation, were related to one of the three « great national » parties. More information about this can be found in figure 4.

The number of relations, signalized in the scientific literature as having factually existed during some time in the period considered, doesn't give such a clear image, although the ideological dimension has the primacy here too. The reason seems to be, that this image is disturbed by the

TABLE IV

Percentage of voluntary associations (primary and master-organizations) in each category bound or oriented to a political party (1954-1968), number of relevant positive, regular relations that, according to the scientific literature, existed between the associations and political parties, 1954-1968, and number of delegations of the primary associations in the consultative administration on the national level (\pm 1969) as to the conflict poles

Conflict pole	% Assoc. bound or oriented to a pol. party	Number of relations betw. assoc. and pol. parties	%	Number of delegations *	%	Associations for which nr. of deleg. is unknown
Catholic	89,4	21	32,8	239	28,7	5
Free-thinking	93,3	16	25	184	22,1	1
Without ideol. features	14,4	27	42,2	410	49,2	13
Total	38,1	64	100	833	100	19
Employers & Independents	46,6	14	21,9	304	36,5	11
Labourers	76,1	14	21,9	480	57,6	3
Without socio-econ. features	11,3	36	56,2	49	5,9	5
Total	38,1	64	100	833	100	19
Flemish	25,9	8	12,5	39	4,7	4
Francophone	23,8	26	40,6	0		0
Without ethnic-cult. features	49,1	30	46,9	794	95,3	15
Total	38,1	64	100	833	100	19

* Abstraction made of the number of seats in each delegation.

fact that 7 neutral associations had relations with different parties at once, totalizing in this way 21 relations on the 64. Out of this 7 groups, 5 were Francophone ones, with 16 relations. When we know that 240 mutual relations between associations were reported, the relations with political parties (64 or 21 %) seem to be a relatively small part of the political group-life. Here too the attention chiefly goes to the « great parties » (46 relations on 64 or 71,8 %). The distribution is as follows : CVP/PSC : 17, BSP/PSB : 13, Liberals-PVV/PLP : 16, Volksunie : 5, Communist Party : 4, Walloon and Francophone Parties : 9. More details on this matter are given in figure 5.

TABLE V

**Number of delegations in the consultative administration
as to the political orientation and the functional features of the associations
(± 1969)**

Functional features	Profes- sional	Inter- profes- sional	Tech- nical	Cul- tural	Pure pressu- re-group	Total	%	Assoc. for which nr. of deleg. is unknown
Political orientation								
Neutral	163	67	22	6	25	283	34	10
Bound or oriented to a political party	19	425	42	28	36	550	66	9
Total	182	492	64	34	61	833	100	19
%	21,8	59,1	7,7	4,1	7,3	100		

$\chi^2 = 347,2$; $P < 0,001$.

On 76 primary associations, 44 (57,8 %) were represented at least in one official advisory commission or council on the national level. The division of the delegations in this consultative administration, as far as the information reached for the groups under investigation, is given in table IV too. The results are very striking: 94.1 % of the delegations pertain to the socio-economic dimension, a good deal of them being characterized at the same time by an ideological feature (400 on 784 or 51 %. So there remain only 23 ideological delegations without socio-economic features). Only 4.7 % are found in the ethnic-cultural dimension. This invites the question to the political significance of the consultative administration. Table V may throw some light on it.

The chi square is extremely significant here.

There are indeed two very strong concentrations in this table : 51 % in the cell « inter-professional/politically bound » and 19.6 % in the

TABLE VI

Belgian politically-important voluntary associations (primary and master-organizations together)
as to conflict-poles and number of conflictual features
 Period : 1954-1968

Conflict-pole	NUMBER OF CONFLICTUAL FEATURES								TOTAL	
	No	%	One	%	Two	%	Three	%		%
Catholic	0		4	21	14(2)	73,7	1	5,3	19(2)	100
Free-thinking	0		0		10(3)	66,7	5(3)	33,3	15(6)	100
Without ideol. features	3	4	67(4)	88	6(2)	8	0		76(6)	100
Total	3		71(4)		30(7)		6(3)		110 $\frac{(14)}{2}$	
Employers & Independents	0		26(1)	57,6	15(5)	33,4	4(2)	9	45(8)	100
Labourers	0		7(2)	33,4	12(2)	57	2(1)	9,6	21(5)	100
Without socio-econ. features	3	6,9	38(1)	86,2	3	6,9	0		44(1)	100
Total	3		71(4)		30(7)		6(3)		110 $\frac{(14)}{2}$	
Flemish	0		18(1)	66,7	7(1)	25,9	2(2)	7,4	27(4)	100
Francophone	0		16	72,7	2(1)	9,1	4(1)	18,2	22(2)	100
Without ethnic-cult. features	3	5	37(3)	60,6	21(5)	34,4	0		61(8)	100
Total	3	2,7	71(4)	64,6	30(7)	27,3	6(3)	5,4	110 $\frac{(14)}{2}$	100

(n) = the preceding number contains n associations that changed in the period 1954-1968 as to their conflictual features and that in this way are counted once more elsewhere in this table.

cell « professional/neutral ». This means that the consultative administration (as seen here), for 88.6 % determined by an economic-technical functionality and for 66 % in the hands of party-bound groups (and that concerns here exclusively the three national parties), is mainly related to party-politics by more general associations, for which minority-

TABLE VII

Number of mentions in the scientific literature, mean membership 1954-1968 and number of delegations in the consultative administration (\pm 1969) as to the number of conflictual features of the voluntary associations

	NUMBER OF CONFLICTUAL FEATURES				TOTAL
	No	One	Two	Three	
Mentions	13	339	368	37	757
%	1,7	44,8	48,6	4,9	100
Membership	652,667	2,150,627	3,870,926	6,500	
%	9,8	32,2	57,9	0,1	100
Delegations in consult. admin.	15	391	426	1	
%	1,8	47,0	51,1	0,1	100

TABLE VIII

Belgian politically-important voluntary associations (primary and master-organizations together) as to political orientation and number of conflictual features
Period : 1954-1968

Political orientation	NUMBER OF CONFLICTUAL FEATURES								TOTAL	
	No	%	One	%	Two	%	Three	%		%
Neutral	3	4,4	61(1)	89,7	4	5,9	0	0	68(1)	100
Bound or oriented to a political party	0	0	10(3)	23,8	26(7)	51,9	6(3)	14,3	42(13)	100
Total	3	2,7	71(4)	64,6	30(7)	27,3	6(3)	5,4	110 2	(14) 2

$$\chi^2 = 59,1 ; P < 0,001.$$

majority features remain important, while organizations with a more specific functionality seem to be aside the party-system.

4° The fourth structural assumption was that many groups should be marked by two or three conflict-features, forming in this way bridges between the different categories and poles.

As we see in table VI : 27.3 % and 5.4 % have two resp. three features. This is far from a majority, but it is striking that the dimensions with the greatest membership and the strongest party-political

orientation, have — in the same order — the highest percentages of associations with more than one feature. So, it can be supposed that the latter will be more important in different respects. This assumption is confirmed indeed by table VII, while table VIII gives us an idea of the clearly greater political involvement of this kind of associations.

The associations with two conflict-features are obviously the most important ones in the political system.

In imitation of Galtung (14) we constructed also a measure of criss-cross. With 27 possible combinations of features (status sets), 35 cells with a link-value (number of common features) of 2, and 145 cells with a link-value of 1, we came to the formula :

$$\frac{\Sigma (k \cdot x y)}{35 \cdot 2 \cdot \frac{N}{27} \cdot \frac{N}{27} + 145 \cdot 1 \cdot \frac{N}{27} \cdot \frac{N}{27}}$$

where k is the link-value of a cell, and x and y are the frequencies in the two status sets. In this formula, the numerator indicates the real link capacity, the denominator the maximum capacity. So the minimum value of the measure is 0, the maximum value 1. Only the links between entities with a different combination of features (different status sets) are taken into account here, because they connect the elements in the criss-cross structure. For the period 1954-1968 the measure of criss-cross for the politically relevant voluntary associations in Belgium

was $\frac{1306}{3569} = 0.37$. This means a fair degree of criss-cross, although the result is not so high as could be expected. Nevertheless, when the measure is weighted by the percentage of mentions in the literature of each category, as an indicator of the importance of the groups, the result improves very much : in this way, we get a value of 0.89 (15).

5° The last structural assumption was, that the associations that were suited to play the role of bridges, really did it.

A first indication in this direction is given by table IX. Here we see that on the 240 politically important relations between the retained

(14) J. GALTUNG. *Op. cit.* pp. 148-153 and 181-182.

(15) The formula here is :

$$\frac{\Sigma (k \cdot xy \cdot W_y W_x)}{35.2 \cdot \frac{N}{27} \cdot \frac{N}{27} \cdot \frac{100}{21} \cdot \frac{100}{21} + 145.1 \cdot \frac{N}{27} \cdot \frac{N}{27} \cdot \frac{100}{21} \cdot \frac{100}{21}}$$

where W_x and W_y are the weighing coefficients of the two status sets, and the measure is normed by a random-distribution of the weights over the really occupied (and weighted) status sets.

voluntary associations, just the half (120) are found between groups with an identical combination of conflict features, and this chiefly (90 %) between groups with one feature. On the other hand, groups with 2 and 3 features were involved in 111 from the 120 relations (92.5 %) that existed between groups with a different combination of conflict-features, connecting in this way the structural elements. We calculated that 99 (82.5 %) of them had at least one feature in common. So the role of bridges, was really played by the associations fit for it.

TABLE IX

Number of regular, direct, positive and reciprocal relations reported in the scientific literature as having existed between politically important voluntary associations in Belgium during some time of the period 1954-1968, as to the number of conflict-features of the groups concerned

Number of conflict-features :		0	1	2	3	TOTAL
A. Relations between groups with completely identific features :		0	108	12	0	120
B. Relations between groups with a different combination of conflict features :						
	0	—				
	1	6	3			(9)
Number of conflict-features	2	8	76	9		(93)
	3	0	14	4	0	(18)
Total of B. :						120
General total						240

Comparison of the mentioned relations and the link-capacity of the structure may give us some idea of the relative meaning of these frequencies : there were 99 relations between associations with a different combination of conflict-features, but with at least one of these features in common, as against a link-capacity of 1,306. This means that 7.6 % of the link-capacity here is reported as being realized in politically important relations. We calculated also the link-capacity between groups with completely identic conflict-features (16). This was 752. As 120 relations of this kind were mentioned, the realization here was 16 %. It is normal that this result is fairly higher than the former, because the reciprocal attraction, generally spoken, can be supposed to be higher

(16) Here is the formula : $\Sigma \left(\frac{x(x-1)}{2} \cdot k \right)$.

here (17). This kind of relations is forming knots, fortifying the structure, and especially important for two-path links in it. All together 10.6 % of the total link-capacity was realized.

Some more details, about the latter comparison are given in table X. The highest degree of realization is found in the ethnic-cultural dimension. The general trend seems to be that the (politically relevant) inter-group activity in the conflict-dimensions, increases inversely with their party-political institutionalization, although the catholic pole reduces somewhat this trend.

TABLE X

Total link capacity, number of the regular, direct, positive, reciprocal relations mentioned in the scientific literature between voluntary associations with at least one feature in common*, and percentage of total realized link capacity as to the conflict poles. Period 1954-1968

Conflict-poles	Total link capacity	Number of relations	% realized total capacity
Catholic	672	35	5,2
Free-thinking	594	7	1,2
Employers & Independents	1 374	44	3,2
Labourers	438	17	3,9
Flemish	657	83	12,6
Francophone	495	49	9,9
On :	2 058	219	10,6

* Identical ones are of course included.

We can note in table X that on a total of 240 relations mentioned, 219 (91.2 %) existed between groups with at least one feature in common (18). This shows us again where the coherence of the system is to be searched for.

A last remark on these comparisons is, that it is difficult to interpret these results in a more absolute way, because there are no comparable data hitherto, as far as we know. But for any interpretation one has to remind, that only the relations reported as politically important are counted here and that there may have existed between these associations, many other relations, not mentioned in the scientific literature.

b) The best way to get near *the functioning of the groups in the system* as proposed in our hypotheses, is to look for differences in polarization during the period considered. For this end, we divided the

(17) On this problem, see J. GALTUNG. *Op. cit.*, p. 162.

(18) See note table X.

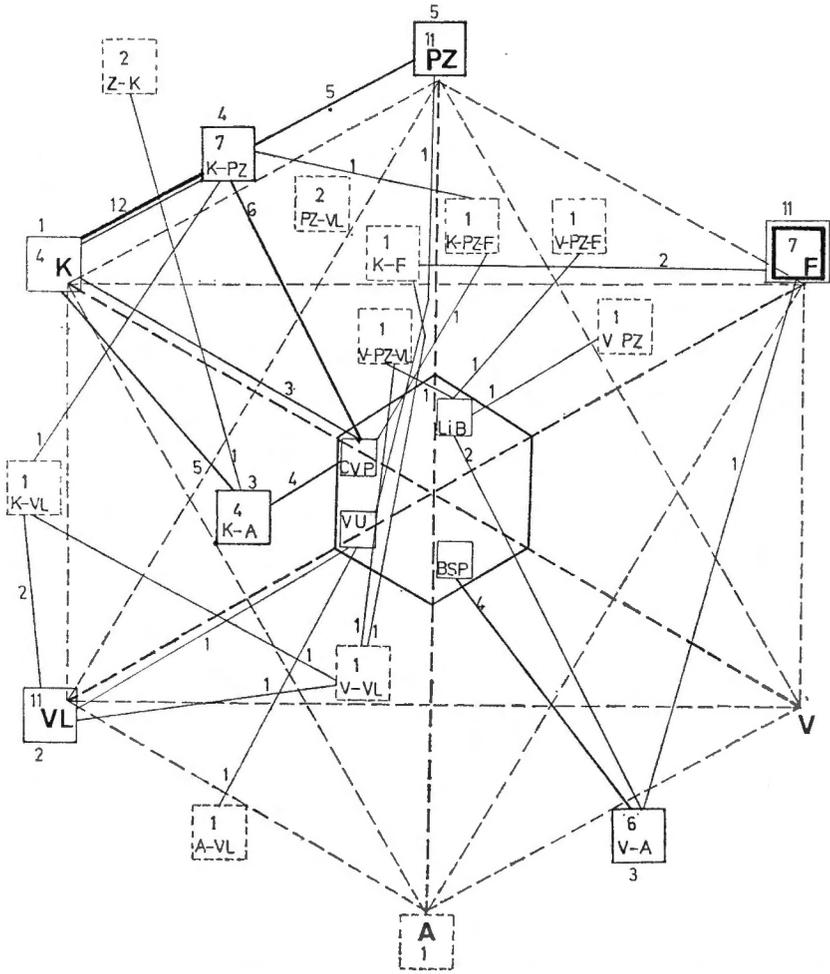


FIG. 6. — Regular, positive, direct and reciprocal relations between the politically-important voluntary associations mutually and between them and the political parties in Belgium. Period 1954-1958.

□ = political parties (see explanation in the general legend).

$\frac{n}{m}$ = n associations with the same conflictual features and m mutual relations.

\underline{m} = m relations between two different categories of associations. The values of m are also indicated by the thickness of the lines.

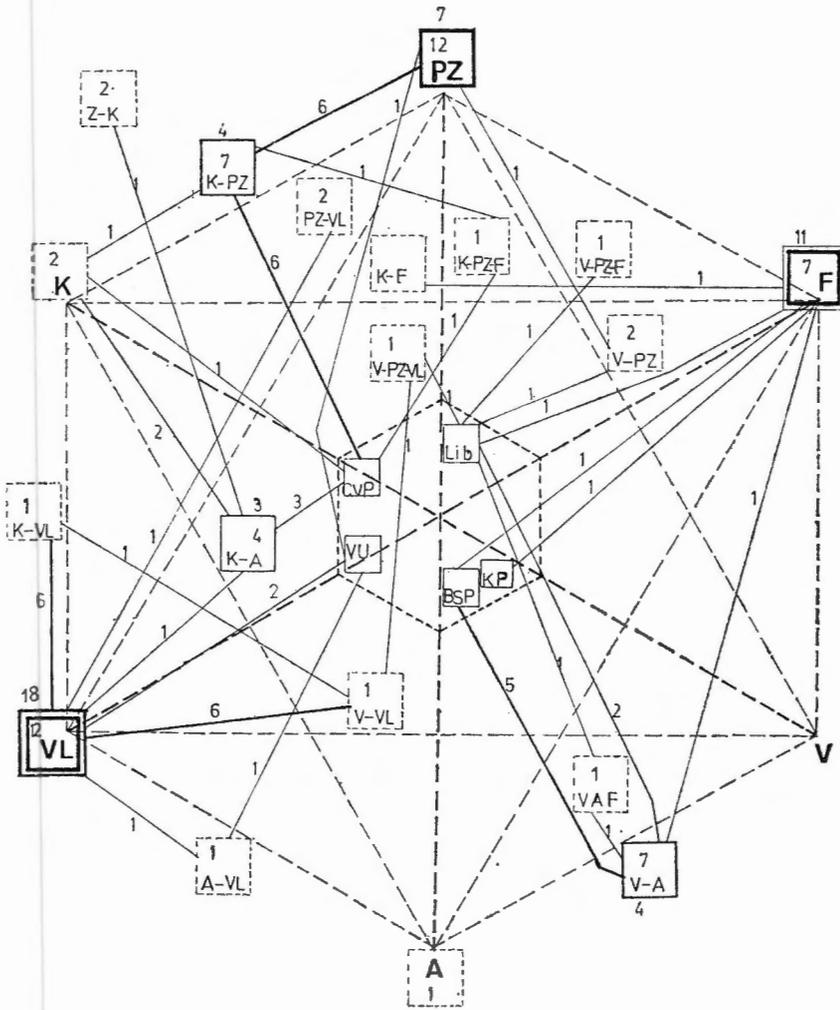


FIG. 7. — Regular positive, direct and reciprocal relations between the politically-important voluntary associations mutually and between them and the political parties in Belgium. Period 1958-1961.

- = political parties (see explanation in the general legend).
- $\frac{n}{m}$ = n associations with the same conflictual features and m mutual relations.
- \underline{m} = m relations between two different categories of associations. The values of m are also indicated by the thickness of the lines.

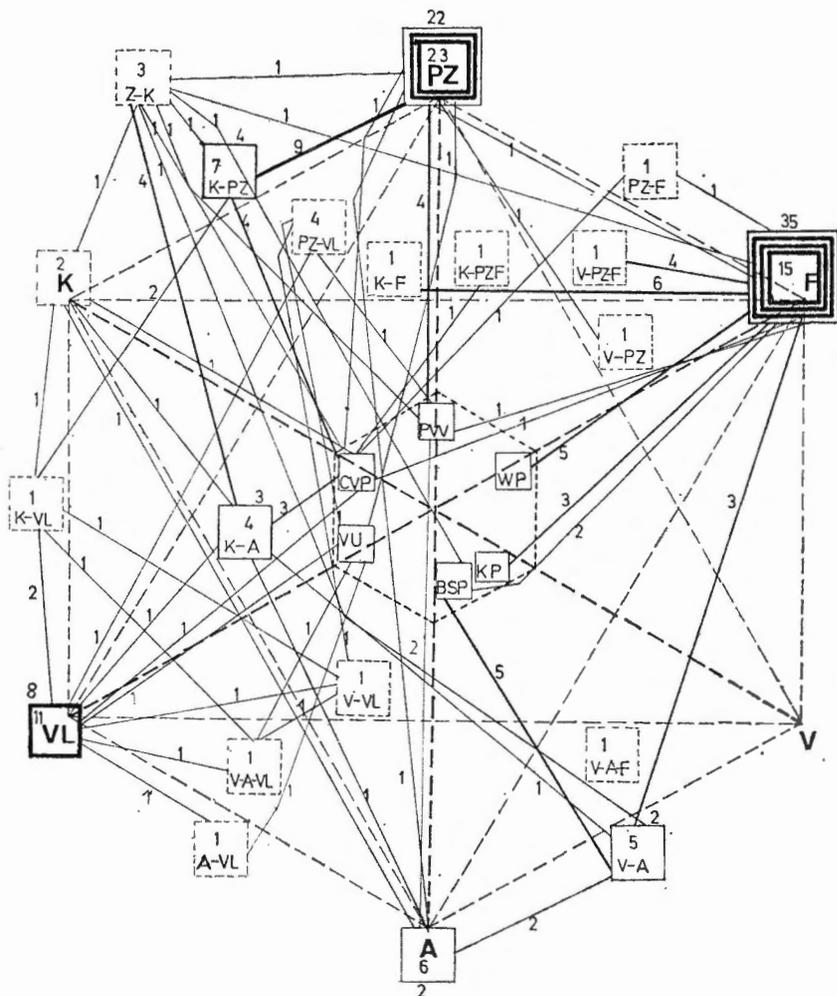


FIG. 8. — Regular, positive, direct and reciprocal relations between the politically-important voluntary associations mutually and between them and the political parties in Belgium. Period 1961-1965.

□ = political parties (see explanation in the general legend).

$\frac{n}{m}$ = n associations with the same conflictual features and m mutual relations.

\underline{m} = m relations between two different categories of associations. The values of m are also indicated by the thickness of the lines.

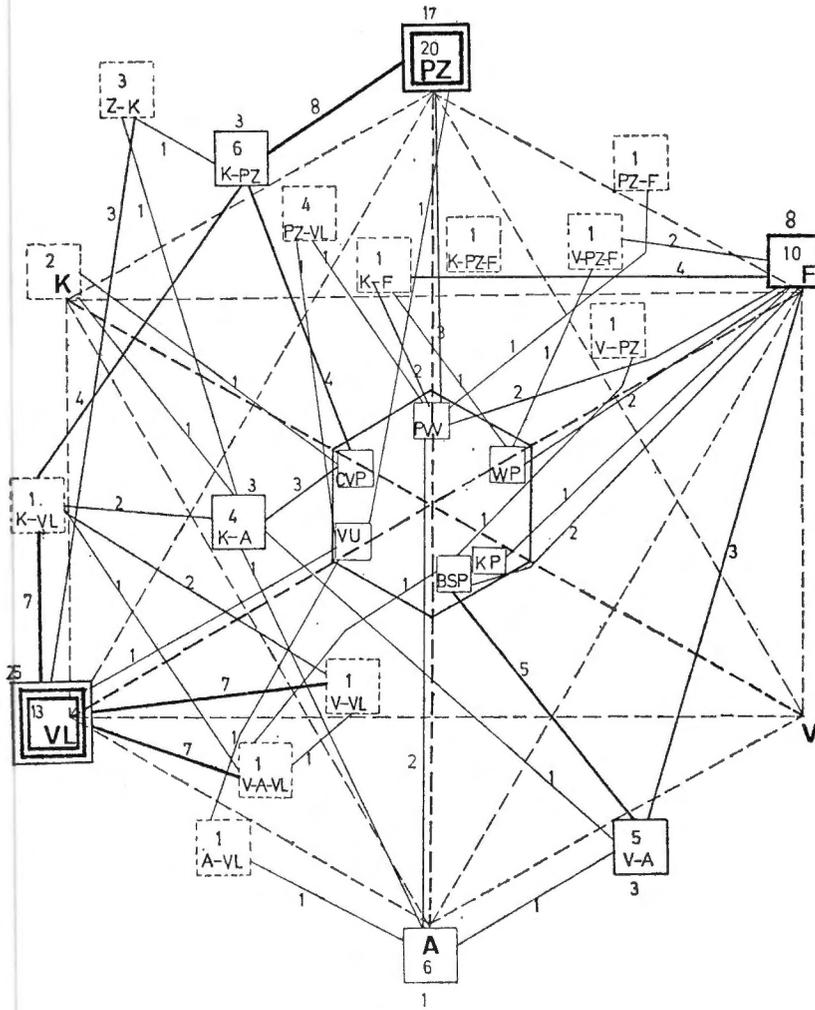


FIG. 9. — Regular, positive, direct and reciprocal relations between the politically-important voluntary associations mutually and between them and the political parties in Belgium. Period 1965-1968.

- = political parties (see explanation in the general legend).
- = n associations with the same conflictual features and m mutual relations.
- = m relations between two different categories of associations. The values of m are also indicated by the thickness of the lines.

whole time studied here, in four partial periods from three or four years, separated every time by national elections. These politically well defined periods could then be compared as to the differences in polarization. The best indicator (19) of the latter is found in the relations between the voluntary associations mutually and between these groups and the political parties. An image of these relations, presented in a three-dimensional conflict-space is, for each of the four partial periods, given in the figures 6 till 9. The purest numerical form of this indicator is given in the relations between groups with at least one feature in common, because one may suppose that the « conflictual » motivation of the relations is maximum here. The most important of these data can be found, for each of the four partial periods again, in table XI.

TABLE XI

Numbers and percentages of the regular, direct, positive, reciprocal relations mentioned in the literature between voluntary associations with at least one feature in common* as to the conflict-poles

For the period : Conflict-poles :	1954-1958		1958-1961		1961-1965		1965-1968	
Catholic	27	45 %	11	15 %	11	9 %	13	12 %
Free-thinking	4	6 %	6	8 %	3	3 %	4	3 %
Employers & Independents	15	25 %	19	25 %	36	31 %	28	25 %
Labourers	6	10 %	8	11 %	11	9 %	11	10 %
Flemish	7	11 %	34	45 %	18	15 %	49	45 %
Francophone	13	22 %	12	16 %	46	40 %	14	13 %
On :	60	100 %	76	100 %	115	100 %	109	100 %

* See note table X.

The general image emerging from all this, is the following :

In the first partial period (1954-1958) the effects of the school-issue are clearly visible in the polarization of the ideological dimension, paramount in the catholic pole, as a reaction against the free-thinking government in this period. Besides, there is some movement in the Francophone pole, presumably in response to a Flemish revival, just before the period considered here.

From 1958 on, when the « school-pact » made an end to the open ideological struggle, the polarization in this dimension decreases sharply and the two other conflicts have free scope. We see this immediately in the second period (1958-1961), where especially the two remaining minorities, the Flemish and the labourers, react to the possibilities of

(19) In order to economize we are retaining here only the most important indicators. Some other indicators however pointed in the same direction as the ones retained here.

the new situation. The Flemish reaction can be read obviously in the data presented here, while the frustrated hopes of the labourers — and especially of the free-thinking, Francophone labourers as can be seen in figure 7 — made that this period ended in the general strike (1960-1961) against the « Loi unique/Eenheidswet ».

As to the third period, we wrote in an earlier publication (20) : « During the socialist-catholic government Lefèvre-Spaak (1961-1965) the liberal opposition stimulated the conservative and Francophone (mainly Brussels) conflict poles. This government tried to solve the different problems at the same time in a moderate way. So doing, it polarized simultaneously the two conflict dimensions (socio-economic and ethnic-cultural)... ». This statement is confirmed by the results here, although there is a depolarization in the Flemish pole and about a *statu quo* in the labourers pole, that yet gains in cohesion. These two emancipation movements indeed were in general favoured by the measures taken by the progressive government.

In the last period finally, there is again a polarization in Flemish direction, especially during the catholic-liberal government Van den Boeynants-Declercq, with the struggle for splitting up the university of Louvain.

We see that our hypotheses *b* 1° and *b* 1° *bis*, concerning the functions of the groups in the system are confirmed, viz. that when conflict increases in one dimension, group activity will grow in this direction, and inversely, when the consensus increases in one dimension, tension and consequently polarization of group activity will grow in the other ones. For hypothesis *b* 2°, concerning the reactions of not involved poles, there is neither direct verification, nor falsification in the results here, although some data can be seen as indirectly produced by the mechanism described there. The data learn us moreover :

1° That the priorities chosen by a certain governmental coalition, moderate though they may be, arouse reactions on the group-level (21). The polarizations on this level can partly be explained by this mechanism.

2° That there exists in an activated conflict-dimension, a play of action and reaction between the two conflict-poles, presumably connected with

(20) A. Van den BRANDE. *Op. cit.* (1967) p. 465. The general description of the concrete effects of the balance of conflicts as given on pages 264-265 is in main lines confirmed by the research done here.

(21) See : *idem*, pp. 461-463 and 468.

an alternation in the orientation of the different governments. This gives rise to an alternation of the polarization in the two poles of a conflict-dimension.

5. Conclusion.

We can conclude that our assumptions are to a great extent, but with some corrections, confirmed by the results : as to the structures : voluntary associations are seen as really playing a role in Belgian political life and as marked to a very high degree by the conflictual features presumed. They are related to the three « national » political parties, but with great differences in the political institutionalization between the conflict-dimensions. The group constellation is characterized by a great measure of criss-cross, especially when the importance of the groups in question is taken into account. Finally the role of bridges is really played by the associations suited to do so.

Main corrections here are :

a) That the (old) majority-poles are the most outstanding in the meso-field of voluntary associations, exception made for the membership of the labourers-organizations. The minorities however have in general a stronger political institutionalization.

b) That associations with three conflict-features are of few importance and that the associations with two features are relatively not so numerous but outstanding in every respect, so that can be said that they take a central place in the system.

c) That the participation in the consultative administration could be seen as new phenomenon, pointing out behind the system described here the growth of a new one, marked more by functional than by interscursive power and concerned more with efficiency than with legitimacy.

Finally we saw that two out of our three « functional » hypotheses could be verified, with the corrections given above.

