



*Governing Urban Diversity: Creating Social Cohesion, Social Mobility and Economic Performance in Today's Hyper-diversified Cities*

## Urban Policies on Diversity in Antwerp, Belgium

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## 1. Introduction

This chapter provides a critical analysis of the urban governance of diversity in Antwerp, the largest city of the Flemish Region in Belgium. With its international seaport, Antwerp has been attracting immigrants from distant places for a long time. While Antwerp has a population of more than 500,000 inhabitants, it has been estimated that 42.1 % of its inhabitants are of foreign descent<sup>1</sup>. Antwerp is also internationally known for its diamond trade, a sector that has been dominated by the large orthodox Jewish community in the city, although recently Indian dealers have become more prominent in this sector. In addition to its ethnocultural, religious and linguistic diversity, Antwerp has been confronted with growing socio-economic differences and an aging population. As the city where the extreme-right anti-immigrant party Vlaams Belang (VB) gained landslide electoral victories during the 1990s and 2000s, Antwerp plays a crucial role in the political debates about diversity in Belgium. Despite the hyper-diversity of the population, diversity policies in Antwerp have mainly been concerned with ethnocultural differences. Moreover, even if the largest non-Belgian minority in Antwerp are the Dutch from the nearby Netherlands, integration and diversity debates have mostly singled out Muslim immigrants.

In this chapter we explore the dominant policy discourses and strategies regarding diversity in Antwerp today. This research is based on an analysis of municipal policy documents and 16 interviews with urban policy-makers, government officials, business and non-governmental organisations, conducted between October 2013 and February 2014. We analyse the policy discourses and strategies regarding diversity through the framework of recognition, encounter, and (re)distribution proposed by Fincher & Iveson (2008). In Antwerp, we see how an early multicultural recognition of ethnocultural diversity has been broadened to include other forms of diversity but eventually shifted towards neo-assimilationism. We argue that in recent years policy-makers have broadened the diversity concept in order to draw the attention away from ethnocultural minorities. With the coming to power of the Flemish nationalist party N-VA, the 2013-2018 government agreement shifted its focus even more to the acquisition of the Dutch language to improve social cohesion. The linguistic divide between the Dutch-speaking Flemish and the French-speaking Walloons is historically an important source of conflict within Belgian politics. The long time inferior socio-political status of the Flemish language has led language to become an important, if not the primary, symbolic marker of the willingness to integrate into Flemish society. Since 2006, the municipal government reduced the support for civil society organisations dealing with diversity. Regarding spaces of encounter, we see a securitisation in which migration and ethnocultural diversity are increasingly considered as a problem or even as a threat to the social cohesion of the city. In terms of the (re)distribution of resources, we notice how policy-makers today put more emphasis on socio-economic inequalities but also on the individual responsibility to achieve upward social mobility and to contribute to the economic performance of the city.

The first part of this chapter starts with an overview of the political system and the governance structures affecting diversity policies in Antwerp. This is followed by a historical overview of key shifts in the federal Belgian and regional Flemish policy approaches to migration, citizenship and diversity. The second part is the largest and consists of a critical analysis of the dominant governmental policy discourses regarding diversity in Antwerp with regard to recognition, encounter and (re)distribution. After analysing the municipal policy discourses and strategies, we turn to non-governmental perspectives on diversity in Antwerp. We end this report with the conclusion that multicultural diversity policies in Antwerp made way for neoliberal, repressive and assimilationist policies towards ethnic-cultural diversity.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.antwerpen.buurtmonitor.be>

## 2. Overview of the political system and governance structure

### 2.1. Governance structure and institutional map

The Belgian federal government has the executive power over migration, citizenship and equal opportunities policies. The State Secretary of Asylum, Migration and Social Integration is since 2008 in charge of the policies regulating the entry, the stay and the removal of foreigners, as well as the reception of asylum seekers. The State Secretary supervises the Immigration Department (responsible for the admission, residence permits, settlement and removal of foreign nationals), the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons (granting refugee status) and the Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (managing reception facilities, return programmes and the observation and orientation of unaccompanied minors) (European Migration Network, 2012).

The Belgian federal government also has a Minister of Equal Opportunities, in charge of policies against discrimination on the basis of various social categories like gender, sexual orientation, disability, age and ethnic origin. The most important institution with regards to equal opportunities is the Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism. In addition, the Minister of Equal Opportunities is responsible for the Impulse Fund for Migration Policy, a financial support mechanism that stimulates projects contributing to the social integration of immigrants, the prevention of discrimination and the promotion of intercultural dialogue.

Beyond institutions categorically directed towards immigrants and minorities, it is important to note that diversity has become a widespread policy objective across various policy domains. In 2006, the presidents of all Federal and Programmatory Public Services signed a Diversity Charter to fight discrimination and to promote diversity in the training, selection and recruitment in these public services.

While immigration, citizenship and equal opportunities are the responsibilities of the Belgian federal government, integration is a responsibility of the regional Flemish government. Since 2004, the Flemish government has introduced a separate Minister of Integration. The Minister of Integration supervises an integration sector in Flanders today consisting of 8 reception offices in large cities, 8 mainly provincial integration centres and 34 municipal integration services. Since 2006, the Flemish Minister of Integration also subsidises projects of municipalities and organisations that strengthen local integration and diversity policies through a call for 'Managers of Diversity'. Besides these organisational structures, there is also the independent Expertise Centre Intersection Migration-Integration (*Kruispunt Migratie-Integratie*) subsidised by the Flemish government. This Expertise Centre develops and provides knowledge about migration and integration to the federal, regional, provincial and local authorities, organisations, integration centres, etc.

Besides the state-regulated integration sector, the Flemish government also subsidises the Minorities Forum, an organisation founded in 2000 that brings together federations of migrant self-organisations, giving them a collective voice to advocate their interests as a recognised discussion partner of the Flemish government. Currently, the Minorities Forum is composed of 17 federations, each of them composed of several local self-organisations. In 2010, 13 ethnocultural federations represented together 1,638 member organisations, of which more than 1,200 are recognised for funding by the Flemish government. The members of these federations are autonomous organisations and are run by 8,700 volunteers<sup>2</sup>. Taking into account these numbers, ethnocultural self-organisations play an important role as pressure groups in political decision-making.

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<sup>2</sup> [www.fov.be/ecf/download/Van\\_alle\\_markten\\_thuis.pdf](http://www.fov.be/ecf/download/Van_alle_markten_thuis.pdf)

Within the Flemish government, there is also a Minister of Equal Opportunities. This minister has mainly an inclusive and coordinating function by supporting and encouraging other ministries to take initiatives against discrimination and to promote diversity. Like the federal Minister of Equal Opportunities, the Flemish Minister is responsible for the promotion of equal opportunities regardless of gender, sexual orientation, disability, age and ethnic origin. Since 1991, there is also an Emancipation Affairs Service that has to ensure that the workforce of the Flemish public administration reflects the diversity of the population. With the creation of a Flemish Minister of Equal Opportunities in 1995, the Flemish government broadened equal opportunities policies that were previously only directed at its own staff to all its citizens. In 2008, the Minister of Equal Opportunities launched the establishment of discrimination hotlines in 14 cities, for example in Antwerp. These hotlines have the task to prevent and to stop discriminatory conduct by means of a non-judicial settlement of complaints.

At the level of the provinces, the Flemish government installed provincial integration centres for towns and municipalities that do not have their own reception and integration centres. The province also provides an interpretation and translation service for immigrants.

At the municipal level, a Councillor for Diversity and Integration holds the responsibilities for the integration and diversity policies and their implementation. In the previous legislations, diversity has become an inclusive policy spread over various policy domains and departments.

The municipal business unit 'Living Together' organises initiatives in the field of integration, community centres, safety and quality of life in all areas of the city, either on its own or in cooperation with other services. Under the integration service, there are the Reception Offices where new immigrants start their integration courses. As the integration course implies learning Dutch, these reception offices are closely linked with a special language school for immigrants called The House of Dutch. Besides the reception office and the language schools, there is also a municipal Interpretation and Translation Service. Finally, the Ombuds Office of the City also provides a Discrimination Hotline. Besides these municipal social services, there is the more autonomous Integration Centre De8, mainly financed by the Flemish government. De8 organises and supports intercultural projects and services with the aim of structurally changing organisations and society.

With regards to social policies, it is also important to mention the Public Centres for Social Welfare (OCMW in Dutch). Although funded by the federal government, these specialised centres for social aid support foreigners with a legal status financially and provide urgent medical care for persons without official documents staying in Belgium.

Finally, at the smallest administrative level we find the nine City Districts, with democratically elected District Councils responsible for local Culture, Sports, Youth and Seniors policies.

Besides all these governmental institutions, we should not neglect the presence of many non-governmental organisations in Antwerp. Many federations of migrant self-organisations have their seat in Antwerp. Their role in shaping and contesting urban policies should be taken into account.

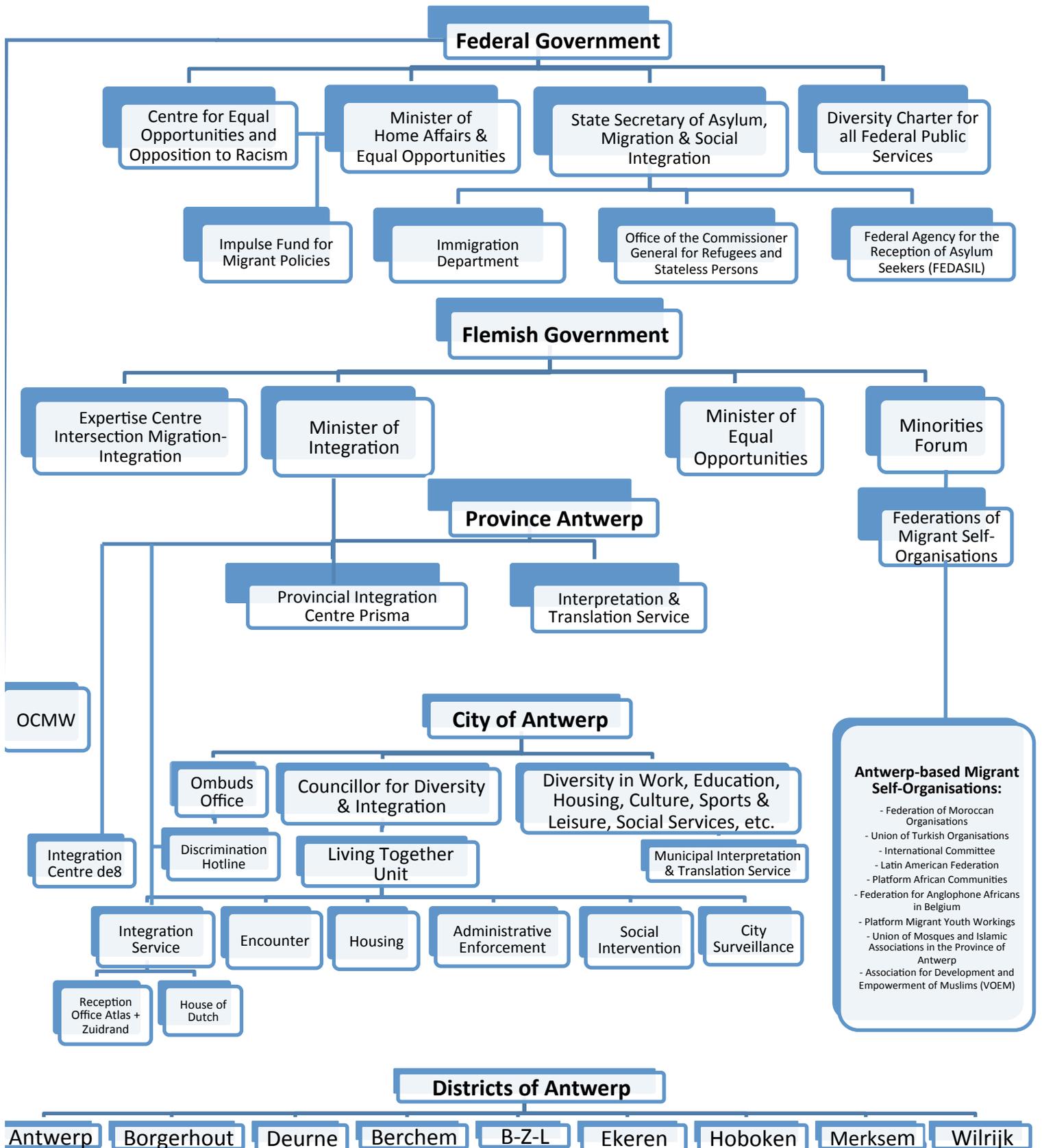


Figure 1.1: Institutional Map of Diversity Governance Structures in Antwerp, Belgium

## 2.2. Key shifts in national approaches to policy over migration, citizenship and diversity

### *Belgian Immigration Policies*

After World War II, the Belgian government signed guest worker agreements with increasingly diverse and distant countries like Italy (1946), Spain (1956), Greece (1957), Morocco and Turkey (1964), Tunisia (1969), and Algeria and Yugoslavia (1970) (Eggerickx et al., 1999). Due to a growing demand for low-skilled workers, particularly in the construction, steel and mining sectors, the 1960s became a decade of unprecedented immigration to Belgium. Unlike the Netherlands, France and the United Kingdom, Belgium received relatively few immigrants from its former colonies in Congo, Burundi and Rwanda. As the colonial population never received Belgian citizenship, migration to Belgium remained limited to a select elite of students, diplomats and businessmen during colonial rule (Schoonvaere, 2010).

Like many other European countries, Belgium installed an immigration stop for low-skilled labourers in 1974, following the economic decline in the aftermath of the oil crisis. Nevertheless, immigration would continue through family reunification programmes and asylum requests. Due to political instability, migration from Central African countries mainly consisted of refugees and asylum seekers in the decades after independence. In numerical terms, however, migration from Morocco and Turkey still represented the largest non-European migration to Belgium due to family reunification programmes. This trend would continue into the 1980s.

With the establishment of the European Union in 1993 and the Schengen Agreement in 1995, immigration of EU-citizens became easier because of the right of free movement and residence across the European Economic Area. With the enlargement of the European Union, this has given rise to a recent increase of immigrants from Eastern European countries like Poland, Bulgaria and Romania (European Migration Network, 2012). At the same time, the restrictions for non-EU citizens to enter the Schengen zone led to an increase of irregular migration.

In order to facilitate the integration of immigrants into society, policy-makers have gradually opened up access to Belgian citizenship. While Belgian citizenship used to be obtained by birth to a parent of Belgian nationality following the principle of *jus sanguinis* ('right of the blood'), the Belgian Nationality Code of 1984 made it easier for foreigners to acquire Belgian citizenship. Through the introduction of the principle of *jus soli* ('right of the soil'), foreigners could declare their will to become Belgian citizens after seven years of continuous residence in Belgium. With the Nationality Code of 1984, it was expected that access to Belgian citizenship would automatically lead to a successful integration. In the following years, Belgian citizenship laws were amended multiple times, most significantly when the law of 1 March 2000, nicknamed the 'quickly-Belgian law' (*snel-Belg-wet*), gave Belgium one of the most flexible citizenship regimes in Europe. Among other measures relaxing access to Belgian citizenship, the 'quickly-Belgian law' accelerated the acquisition of Belgian nationality by shortening the residence requirement to three years and even two years for stateless people and refugees. Under this law, Belgium was also the only European country where residence alone was sufficient to acquire citizenship. While other European countries introduced formal integration tests, Belgium's residence-based citizenship laws did not require a proof of the willingness to integrate or the basic knowledge of one of the official languages spoken in the country (Foblets & Yanasmayan, 2010). Fearing abuses and integration problems, conservative political parties criticised the flexible citizenship regime and proposed stricter conditions. From 2013 onwards, Belgian citizenship laws have been tightened with formal integration requirements like knowledge of one of the official languages and proof of economic participation. The minimum residence to acquire Belgian citizenship also increased from three to five years. The controversies

caused by the ‘quickly-Belgian law’ illustrate how important integration policies have become to maintain social cohesion in the host society. In the Belgian context, integration policies have developed differently in Flanders and in Wallonia. As it would lead us too far to discuss both regions, we focus on the Flemish integration policies, building on Syrett and Sepulveda (2012)’s categorisation of integration policies.

### *Flemish Integration Policies*

The development of integration policies on the Flemish level coincided with state reforms in Belgium that delegated more responsibilities to the Flemish region. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Belgian authorities did not feel the need to develop any integration policy for immigrants as it was expected that guest workers would only stay temporarily in the country. Many immigrants and their families, however, settled permanently in the country after the immigration stop in 1974. At that time, however, there was still no policy to help immigrants with their settlement and participation in the host society. The non-policy of this era reflected the idea that integration was a spontaneous process that cannot be influenced by policies. In the 1970s and the 1980s, some civil society initiatives emerged on a local scale in Flanders. These voluntary initiatives were unevenly spread. In some cities, volunteers would set up services to help immigrants but in other areas there were no such initiatives. With the state reform of 1980, the integration and reception of immigrants became a Flemish responsibility. Under the Flemish Minister of Welfare, a first step towards institutionalisation was taken in 1984 by recognising and subsidising the voluntary initiatives (Van Puymbroeck, 2011).

Following the first electoral breakthrough of the far-right anti-immigrant party Vlaams Blok in 1988, both the federal and the Flemish government would become more actively concerned with the social position of immigrants. During this period, the federal government created the Royal Commissioner for Migrant Affairs (1988-1993) and gave it the task to develop a national integration policy for immigrants. According to the policymakers at that time, the priority consisted in alleviating the socio-economic deprivation in which most immigrants found themselves. Therefore, socio-economic policies would form the basis for the construction of an integration policy. Integration policies fell under the Ministry of Welfare, although some cultural aspects resorted under the Ministry of Culture. In the 1990s, the Flemish government would bring into practice multiculturalism by the recognition and funding of ethnocultural self-organisations in order to stimulate the emancipation of immigrants. At the same time, the government encouraged local authorities to take over private initiatives in the integration sector. Integration centres became more regulated and centralised on the regional and provincial level. Although the integration policies of the government became more interventionist, they were still non-compulsory.

From 1999 onwards, the previous pluralist integration paradigm changed significantly to a new ‘assimilationist’ framework. In Flanders, the new assimilationism came to underline the importance of the Dutch language and shared cultural norms and values. The cultural assimilation of the immigrants became increasingly presented as a necessary condition for their socio-economic emancipation. From the perspective of active citizenship, the individual responsibility of the immigrant was stressed. Integration services also reduced their target groups: while the integration sector of the past was oriented towards a broad group of ethnocultural minorities, the new institutions were limited to the reception of newcomers. At the same time, the organisation of the integration policies became more decentralised in favour of local authorities while the provincial level would become less important. Since 2004, integration became an autonomous policy domain with a Minister of Integration in the Flemish government. With the 2003 Incorporation Decree [*Inburgeringsdecreet*], incorporation trajectories became compulsory as certain groups have to sign an ‘incorporation contract’ by which they are obliged to learn the Dutch language, to follow social

orientation courses and to accept career assistance. Along with the compulsory character of the integration policies came the professionalisation of the integration sector. Old and new immigrants are now directed towards reception offices, language schools, social workers and employment services. Recently, the government even introduced administrative fines for those who do not comply with the conditions of the incorporation contract. In this sense, the neo-assimilationist approach has increasingly subjected integration to state control.

	1946-1974	1974-1988	1988-1999	1999-2013
<b>Immigration policies</b>	Recruitment of guest-workers	Immigration stop Family reunification programmes	Asylum requests Schengen Agreement EU freedom of movement	Asylum requests EU enlargement Irregular migration
<b>Citizenship policies</b>	Jus sanguinis	Jus sanguinis	1984: Nationality Law: Jus soli	2000: Quickly-Belgian Law
<b>Integration policy</b>	Guest-worker policy	Non-policy	Pluralist policy	Neo-Assimilationist policy
<b>Integration policy coordination</b>	Belgian Minister of Labour	Belgian Minister of Welfare	Flemish Minister of Welfare; Flemish Minister of Culture	Flemish Minister of Welfare; Flemish Minister of Integration ('Inburgering')
<b>Integration policy levels</b>	Mostly local initiatives Uneven spread	Mostly local initiatives Uneven spread	Centralisation on regional (Flemish) & provincial level	Decentralisation Reducing provincial level
<b>Civil society or government integration initiatives</b>	Predominance of voluntary civil society initiatives in integration sector	Predominance of voluntary civil society initiatives in integration sector	Public institutionalisation Recognition of migrant self-organisations	Mainly local public authorities Limited function self-organisations
<b>Modes of integration</b>	Labour market demands	Spontaneous process	Socio-economic Interventionist Non-compulsory	Culturalist Interventionist Compulsory

Figure 1.2: Periodisation of key shifts in immigration, citizenship and diversity policies in Belgium/Flanders

### 3. Critical analysis of policy strategies and assessment of resource allocations

#### 3.1. Dominant governmental discourses of urban policy and diversity

In this section, we examine the dominant policy discourses on diversity in Antwerp, the largest city of the Flemish Region in Belgium. We analyse these policy discourses and strategies through the lens of the recognition, encounter, and (re)distribution framework proposed by Fincher & Iveson (2008). With regard to the recognition of diversity, we observe how the pluralist recognition of ethnocultural diversity has been broadened to include other forms of diversity as well but eventually shifted towards neo-assimilationism. Regarding spaces of encounter, we see a securitisation in which migration and ethnocultural diversity are increasingly considered as a problem or even as a threat to the social cohesion of the city. In terms of the (re)distribution of resources, we notice how current policy-makers put more emphasis on socio-economic inequalities but also on the individual responsibility to achieve upward social mobility and to contribute to the economic performance of the city. After analysing the municipal policy discourses and strategies, we will turn to non-governmental perspectives on diversity in Antwerp.

We start this section by discussing the recognition of diversity in contemporary policy discourses in Antwerp. Looking at the 2013-2018 municipal government agreement and interviews with policy-makers, we observe a strong emphasis on neo-assimilationist discourses with an ambiguous and sometimes even hostile attitude towards migration and ethnocultural diversity. The current municipal government, which for the first time in decades is not led by the Social Democratic party SP.A but by the conservative Flemish nationalist party N-VA, has not launched any new policy plan regarding diversity yet, but we analyse its perspective on diversity policy through the 2013-2018 government agreement and through public statements in the media. To identify when and why this shift to neo-assimilationist diversity policies took place, we also analyse the 2008-2012 City Plan Diversity and the 2009-2011 Living Together in Diversity Policy Plan. The latter documents illustrate how diversity policies have shifted away from a focus on ethnocultural minorities to a broader concept of diversity including age, gender, sexual preference and socio-economic differences. Based on interviews with governmental and non-governmental actors, we argue that this broadening of diversity actually facilitated the shift from multicultural to neo-assimilationist policies. Being aware that 33.5 % of the citizens in Antwerp voted for the extreme-right anti-immigrant party Vlaams Belang (VB) in the 2006 local elections, the former municipal government strategically chose to diminish the attention for ethnocultural minorities by opening up diversity policies to all kinds of social groups. When the Flemish nationalist party came to office in 2013, they continued phasing out facilities that empower ethnocultural minority groups in favour of individual assimilation trajectories.

Rather than fostering spaces of encounter and democratic deliberation between groups, the Antwerp municipal government diminished its support for the umbrella migrant self-organisations while other self-organisations have to fulfil stricter requirements (like building bridges with the rest of society) in order to receive funding. Around the same time that ethnocultural organisations lost support from the city, security became a major policy priority. Through a system of municipal administrative sanctions, the municipality also has the legal tools to deal in a quick and repressive way with public nuisance, which, according to one of our interviewees, are all too often associated with youngsters of migrant origin. At the same time, the municipality invests in anti-radicalisation plans in order to control Muslim extremism in the city.

Finally, policies for the (re)distribution of resources are mainly concerned with poverty reduction. The Antwerp municipal government conducts an activation policy that aims to reduce poverty by assisting more people to find a job. The municipal government, however, puts the emphasis on the responsabilisation of disadvantaged groups without questioning structural inequalities.

*Recognition: from a multicultural legacy to neo-assimilationism*

Regarding the recognition of diversity, we argue that neo-assimilationism has become the dominant discourse in Antwerp today. In recent years, Flanders, but Antwerp in particular, has witnessed the growing popularity of conservative Flemish nationalism, which couples a neoliberal focus on individual responsibility and entrepreneurialism to a nationalist focus on cultural-linguistic homogeneity and separatism. The Flemish nationalist party N-VA explicitly distinguishes itself from the extreme-right Flemish nationalist party Vlaams Belang by arguing that they accept and welcome ethnic diversity<sup>3</sup>, but couples this to strict assimilationist policies and the individual responsibility of migrants for their socio-economic position and mobility. The Flemish nationalist party N-VA promotes the exclusive use of Dutch as the only official language in the public institutions of Flanders, and sees the knowledge of Dutch as an indispensable condition for migrants to enter the labour market, social housing and social services. We start this discussion with the new government agreement of the Antwerp municipal government. In its 2013-2018 government agreement, titled ‘Respect for A’, the Antwerp municipal government led by the Flemish nationalist Mayor Bart De Wever underlines above all the importance of the Dutch language as the main source of social cohesion in the city:

*‘Our city is more than the sum of all Antwerp citizens. It is an urban community that consists of a rich diversity of numerous cultures, worldviews, neighbourhoods and streets, clubs, businesses, families and individuals, ... Together we form Antwerp. But we can only do this only if we respect each other's individuality and embrace the same basic values and, of course, understand each other. The Dutch language connects us all’ (Respect for A, p. 3).*

In line with the 2003 Flemish Incorporation Decree [*Inburgeringsdecreet*], the Antwerp municipal government agreement claims that a good knowledge of Dutch improves the social cohesion of the city by connecting people of diverse backgrounds. Therefore, all municipal services in Antwerp are urged to actively use Dutch. While the municipality promised to increase the number of Dutch training centres, everyone who settles in Antwerp is expected to make efforts to learn the language, the local customs and culture. For those who refuse to make efforts, the municipality foresees sanctions. At the same time, the municipality decided to stop using the Municipal Interpretation & Translation Service. Moreover, in the light of general budget cuts, the municipality would reduce the staff of this service from eleven to three employees. In order to achieve the aim of understanding each other better, the municipality rather prefers reinforcing the use of Dutch than translating foreign languages (Respect for A, p. 56). The importance of the Dutch language can also be observed in the municipal ‘multiyear plan 2014-2019’. Under the heading ‘The Dutch language connects all of us’, four operational aims are mentioned that should reinforce the use of the Dutch language in the city. The table below shows the financial resources to realise these four operational aims.

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<sup>3</sup> After winning the 2012 municipal elections, the N-VA was the first party to appoint a Councillor of Moroccan origin in the Antwerp city council. When the SP.A. won the Antwerp elections in 2006, they did not appoint any councillor of migrant origin, to the resentment of many migrants that voted for the SP.A.

Policy aims	Operational aims	Expenditure	
		Investment	Exploitation
The Dutch language connects all of us.	The city will offer the Dutch language to adult non-native Dutch. This offer is demand driven.	€100.000	€1.465.220
	Antwerp is a language rich city where non-native Dutch inhabitants can practice the Dutch language.		€486.000
	Language barriers will be reduced for low lettered people.		€332.000
	More people will learn about the richness and history of the Dutch language.		€110.000

Table 2: Budget 2014<sup>4</sup>

In a country riven by the tensions between the Dutch- and the French-speaking communities, the status of the Dutch language increased significantly in recent decades as the Flemish region became economically more powerful. The importance of the Dutch language for the integration of immigrants was formalised by the Flemish parliament in the 2003 Incorporation Decree. The Incorporation Decree emphasised the individual responsibility of migrants to integrate into Flemish society by learning the language and the culture. The Decree also broadened the target group of integration policies from socio-economically disadvantaged migrants to all newcomers. Most importantly, the Incorporation Decree turned integration programmes from an optional right into a compulsory commitment for certain groups of migrants in order to create more social cohesion in a diverse society.

Regarding the city of Antwerp, the 2013-2018 government agreement states that the municipal government strives for ‘a harmonious city that aims at forming a unity as an urban community with respect for diversity and with the concern that everyone can join’ (Respect for A, p. 3). However, the Antwerp municipal government makes entry into the urban community conditional on proficiency in the Dutch language. Throughout issues ranging from housing, education and social services to employment, the knowledge of Dutch is presented as an indispensable condition to participate in the harmonious city. In line with the Flemish Housing Code, the willingness to learn Dutch is a condition to be entitled to social housing. In Antwerp, those who do not learn Dutch also risk to be sanctioned by losing their social benefits (Respect for A, p. 68).

Even if neo-assimilationist discourses are dominant today, the development towards neo-assimilationist policies can be traced back to the previous legislative session 2007-2012. In particular, the 2007 prohibition to wear religious symbols in municipal front-office positions was seen by many of our interviewees as a turning point in the diversity policies of the city. The former Antwerp municipal government argued that the neutrality and secularity of the state should be guaranteed in public services. The current municipal government reinforced this decision in the 2013-2018 government agreement:

*‘Employees working in direct contact with the public, customers or external partners, should be dressed decently and not ostentatiously. Wearing outward symbols of religious, political, union, sports and other convictions is not allowed during working hours, even not for charity purposes’* (Respect for A, p. 54).

This dress code for municipal employees in front-office positions was introduced by the previous municipal government on 7 March 2007. We argue that this policy measure marked a

<sup>4</sup> Based on: Stad Antwerpen (2014) Budget 2014. Antwerpen: Stad Antwerpen.

crucial moment in the transition from multicultural towards neo-assimilationist policies in Antwerp. In fact, the dress code contradicted and counteracted previous diversity policies that encouraged the recruitment of ethnocultural minorities in the municipal services. Diversity policies in Antwerp actually started with the aim to diversify municipal services and to make them more representative and accessible for the diverse urban population. Since the 1990s, municipal services have been criticised for not employing enough people of migrant origin. In particular, the near absence of people of migrant origin in the police forces was seen as a cause of the tensions between the police and migrant communities. Besides the idea that the employment of ethnic minorities in municipal services would be necessary to improve the relationship between the municipality and the migrants, the municipality as a large employer had also a socio-economic responsibility in the fight against the unemployment of minorities. Therefore, the first 'Policy Plan Ethnocultural Minorities 2000-2002' [*Beleidsplan etnisch-culturele minderheden 2000-2002*] proposed to raise the percentage of ethnocultural minorities working for the municipality from 0.5% to 12% over a period of 10 years (Van de Maele, 2003). To achieve this aim, the requirement of having the Belgian nationality in order to work for the municipality was abandoned, although this requirement remained in force for statutory functions. In addition, a diversity consultant was appointed to advise various municipal units and districts how to deal with migrant clients and diversity within the organisation. Despite the introduction of a dress code, the Antwerp government agreement 2007-2012 held on to the aim to raise the number of people from ethnic minority groups employed by the municipality. Against the critique that the new dress code would impede ethnic minorities to be employed in municipal services, the previous Mayor of Antwerp during the 2007-2012 legislative session argued that the prohibition to wear religious symbols would make civil servants of ethnic minority background 'more acceptable to the general public, and thus more likely to be employed' (Janssens, 2006). Defending the point of view of the majority population, this statement announced the neo-assimilationist discourses that would become dominant in the following years.

Many of our interviewees saw the introduction of the dress code as a breaking point that deteriorated to a great extent the relationship between the municipality and ethnocultural minorities in the city. A high-level policy-maker of the city stated that:

*"[The dress code] has haunted us enormously. In retrospect, I still defend our position in principle, but it has caused so much upheaval. I believe that it actually worked very much as a way to legitimate deprivation. While we based our argument on the neutrality of the state, we also legitimated a headscarf ban in the front-office positions of a bank and so on. Of course, the saliency of the headscarf increased enormously because of this. It became more important rather than less important, while the latter was actually our goal".*

Although the dress code was formulated in general terms, it originated as a measure against the Islamic headscarf and caused mainly protests among the Muslims in Antwerp. A group of women founded the action group 'Boss Over Own Head' [*BOEH!, Baas Over Eigen Hoofd*] that demonstrated on various occasions against the dress code. Around the same time, the Muslim Executive of Belgium wrote a letter that condemned the dress code as a discrimination against Muslims. Even within the ruling political parties, politicians with a Muslim background were critical of the dress code. The extreme-right party Vlaams Belang, that depicted the headscarf as a symbol of female oppression in Islam, applauded the policy measure because it would help to stop 'the rise of Islam' in Antwerp. In the end, the controversy about the municipal dress code became simply referred to as 'the headscarf debate'. Nevertheless, the municipal dress code also implied a prohibition for Jewish people to wear a yarmulke and for Catholics to wear a cross. Even if these communities remained more silent on the issue, the Minorities Forum

campaign in 2012 for more diversity in the workplace under the slogan ‘Headscarf, cross, yarmulke, Belgium is ready!’.

Despite the controversy, the municipal dress code soon became an example for other public and private institutions. In 2009, the Board of Education of the Flemish Community (GO!) extended a prohibition to wear religious and other symbols to students, teachers and anyone charged with pedagogical tasks within its schools. In schools like the Royal Athenaeum in Antwerp, with a large number of Muslim girls, this ban caused again lots of protests and controversy. Several of our interviewees saw the dress code decision of the previous municipal government as a miscalculation. As one civil servant of the municipal unit ‘Living Together’ confessed:

*“If we are honest, we have never embraced diversity in a sincere way under the previous legislative session. [...] We have underestimated, ignored and concealed diversity and above all the population growth of this city. Our facilities are not adjusted to this”.*

Another civil servant from the Office for Diversity Management claimed that the municipality underestimated the effects of the dress code on the diverse population in Antwerp:

*“Many young people felt that the municipality did not accept them the way they are. [...] It still hurts them. [...] [The municipality] only did a gesture towards the right-wing side of society, but not towards the left-wing side”.*

Despite the reconfirmation of the dress code, the current Antwerp municipal government assured in the 2013-2018 government agreement that a diversity policy would be followed to guarantee equal opportunities: ‘*Antwerp is a city for everyone regardless of colour, religion, sexual orientation or disability. The city sets an example for all and will therefore conduct a thorough diversity policy*’ (p. 54).

The previous municipal government had launched the Office for Diversity Management in 2007, the same year as it introduced the dress code. The task of this new office was to support all municipal services and their partners to deal with broad diversity. In order to target broad diversity, the Office for Diversity Management combined policies for ethnocultural minorities with policies for the elderly, the young, the disabled and the poor. In 2008, the Office for Diversity Management wrote the 2008-2012 City Plan Diversity [*Stadsplan Diversiteit 2008-2012*] stating how the city should foster broad diversity. The City Plan outlined six challenges that the city was facing regarding broad diversity:

1. Antwerp is a city where people from different backgrounds have to understand each other better.
2. Everyone has to know the democratic and social rules and has to apply these rules to engage in dialogue and to negotiate disagreements.
3. In Antwerp, everyone has to have the space to develop his or her own identity.
4. All citizens of Antwerp have to be able to enforce their basic rights.
5. The municipality and the Public Centre for Social Welfare (OCMW) set a good example by maximising diversity among their staff.
6. The municipality encourages other actors (partners, enterprises, organisations) to implement more diversity among their staff.

Most of these statements were accepted without much debate, except for the last proposal. While the municipality and PCSW already had committed themselves to maximise diversity among their staff since the first diversity policy plans, the municipality now also wanted to encourage other partners, enterprises and organisations to implement more diversity among their staff. Therefore, the city council proposed a binding diversity clause in municipal contracts with private companies. In order to obtain a contract with the municipality, private companies would have to fulfil the requirement of employing people of diverse backgrounds. This diversity clause was heavily criticised by the private sector. It was argued that it is the quality of the product or the service that counts, not the characteristics of the person who provides them. When a juridical department investigated the proposal, the binding diversity clause turned out to be legally unenforceable in the private sector (Gazet van Antwerpen, 18.06.2008).

In the aftermath of the headscarf debate, the municipality published not only the 2008-2012 City Plan Diversity, but also the 2009-2011 Living Together in Diversity Policy Plan [*Samenleven in Diversiteit Beleidsplan 2009-2011*]. The 2009-2011 plan has been written within the framework of the Minorities Decree with a focus on ethnocultural diversity. In comparison to previous policy plans, however, the most important evolution was the shift in attention from ‘specific’ to ‘broad’ diversity. Beyond the specific focus on ethnocultural diversity, the new policy plans broadened their scope to diversity on the basis of age, gender, sexual preference, disability and socio-economic status. Institutionally, the categorical DIA Integration Service that used to be directed towards migrants was dissolved and became in 2008 part of a new, more generic unit called ‘Living Together in Diversity’. In 2009, this municipal service was again transformed and brought under an even larger municipal unit called ‘Living Together’. When asked why ‘diversity’ was left out of the new name of the municipal unit, a high-ranking civil servant of the unit answered that “[*Living Together in Diversity*] sounded too moralistic, it was too evident”.

With regard to the broadening of the diversity concept in the 2008-2012 City Plan Diversity, the high-ranking civil servant within the municipal unit ‘Living Together’ saw it as a strategy to deviate the attention away from ethnocultural minorities:

*“In that period, [the municipality] was surprised by the headscarf controversy. Therefore, they came up with the following trick. They opened up diversity from ethnocultural minorities to everybody: disabled people, older people, women, etc. Almost everybody became a target group except we ourselves [...] They were drowning everything into this broad diversity concept. I tell you, this has been the end of diversity policies. What does a disabled person have to do with an Algerian migrant? I was opposed to this plan [...] This diversity policy plan was full of platitudes nobody could disagree with”.*

In the same vein, the director of the Office for Diversity Management reflected on the shift towards broad diversity:

*“We were dealing with a great electoral victory for the [far-right] Vlaams Belang. I think [the municipal government] at that moment wanted to make less visible the issue of ethnocultural minorities in the objectives and in the organisation”.*

In official documents, the mainstreaming of diversity policies is often presented as an indication of the success of diversity policies and as a positive evolution towards more inclusive policies. In the case of Antwerp, however, the broadening of the diversity concept appears to be an attempt to counter the widespread perception amongst the Antwerp population (see e.g. the share of far right voters in Antwerp) that the categorical policy arrangements for ethnocultural minorities are an unfair form of privileging migrant communities over the autochthonous population. Besides the introduction of the dress code, the broadening of diversity policies

beyond ethnocultural minorities can be seen as another concession of the Social-Democrat Mayor for the right-wing electorate in the city of Antwerp.

When in 2013 the Flemish nationalist party N-VA came to power in Antwerp, they continued the process of making diversity less visible in policy discourses and urban governance structures. In 2013, the Flemish nationalist Councillor for Diversity and Integration announced several reforms in the Living Together municipal unit. By September 2013, the Office for Diversity Management was dissolved. Its tasks were spread over different municipal services. The director of the Office for Diversity Management became director of the Poverty and Welfare Cell. Despite the radical transformation of her municipal service, the director argued that she still deals with diversity and ethnocultural minorities, even if this is no longer stated explicitly in the name of her unit. According to her, this renaming resembles the strategy of the former municipal government to make policies for ethnocultural minorities less visible and more acceptable for the right-wing section of the population, i.e. a form of ‘mainstreaming’:

*“Moving away from diversity towards poverty and welfare is the same kind of shift. It is creating a terminology that is acceptable. [...] We did not lose [diversity], it only is turned invisible in our organisation”.*

According to another civil servant within the Living Together unit, the new municipal government sees urban tensions almost exclusively in terms of socio-economic differences. He states: *“They are extremely reinforcing the idea that there is no issue about colour but only about socio-economic deprivation”.* In this context, it is important to mention how the Flemish nationalist Councillor for Diversity and Integration caused a lot of controversy in the media when she minimised the role of racism as a social problem:

*‘Racism is a relative concept. I think it is a pity that the word is used so often nowadays. Is there racism? Maybe so. From the native population towards the immigrants? Maybe so. Conversely? Yes, that too. Today, however, racism is mainly used as an excuse for personal failure. [...] Yes, there is still a breeding ground for racism. But much less than we think. The more we talk about racism, the more we feed it’.* (De Standaard, 16.08.2013)

While the Councillor of Diversity and Integration caused heated debates by minimising racism as a structural social problem, the new conservative Flemish nationalist Mayor Bart De Wever provoked even more controversy. When the new Flemish nationalist Mayor came to power, one of his first political deeds was to remove the municipal slogan ‘The city belongs to everyone’, that was introduced by the former Social Democratic Mayor in 2004<sup>5</sup>. De Wever already promised to abandon the slogan in September 2012, when migrants in Antwerp demonstrated against the anti-Islam film ‘The Innocence of Muslims’. At that time, De Wever argued that *‘the city only belongs to the people who make an effort to belong to it’*. The slogan refers to rights, while De

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<sup>5</sup> In order to improve the image of Antwerp and break the polarised and negative political climate brought about by the relentless rise of the extreme right since the late 1980s, the new Mayor launched a strategic marketing and communication plan. Janssens acknowledged the dissatisfaction of many citizens with the city. At the same time, he warned of a divided city in which people talked too much about ‘them’ and not enough about ‘we’ (Stad Antwerpen, 2004). The new Mayor saw in marketing and communication strategies the means to bring people together. Through city marketing, the Mayor aimed to create a recognisable Antwerp identity. Instead of the divergent signs of municipal services, a new unitary logo consisting of a radiant capital “A”, the first letter of the city’s name, was launched in August 2004. The logo was accompanied by the slogan: ‘The City Belongs to Everyone’ [*t Stad is van iedereen*]. The idea behind this slogan was to unite all citizens around the city of Antwerp and to work towards a positive team spirit. The slogan and the logo had to express a positive feeling of belonging for everyone who has a relationship with the city. The city council had spent 230,000 euros by contracting an advertising agency to develop a communication plan and a new identity for the city (De Standaard, 28.08.2004).

Wever wanted to emphasise duties (Windels, 2012). For this reason, the government agreement 2013-2018 of the new Antwerp city council was named ‘Respect for A’.

In the 2013-2018 government agreement, one proposition was particularly hostile towards foreigners. The Councillor for Diversity and Integration announced that the municipality would charge non-Belgians an administrative tax of 250 € to register themselves in the city of Antwerp. With this proposition, the municipal government argued they wanted newcomers to bear the extra costs of the registration. However, others claimed that the municipal government just wanted to please the extreme-right voters that contributed to the landslide victory of the Flemish nationalist party during the 2012 municipal elections (De Smet, 2013). Despite many protests from other political parties and non-governmental organisations like the League for Human Rights, the Antwerp municipal government approved of the proposition for a foreigners’ tax. After a complaint made by the opposition parties, however, the Governor of the Antwerp Province overruled the foreigners’ tax because it was in conflict with Belgian law and the European freedom of movement and settlement (Knack, 20.03.2013).

In sum, neo-assimilationist policy discourses have become dominant in Antwerp today, despite there being a history of multicultural policies in the city since the early 2000s. Several contemporary policy arrangements and institutions still bear the traces of earlier multicultural policy-making. Therefore, we could describe the current situation as ‘post-multicultural’. Under the 2007-2012 legislative session, for example, the recognition of diversity was broadened from ethnocultural minorities towards other social groups. This broadening of diversity policies, however, eventually led to straightforward neo-assimilationist policies.

#### *Spaces of encounter and democratic deliberation*

Besides policies that recognise diversity, planning for a ‘just diversity’ also requires policies that create spaces of encounter and democratic deliberation between groups (Fincher & Iveson, 2008). In the case of Antwerp, multicultural policy arrangements have stimulated in the early 2000s the participation of diverse ethnocultural groups in local decision-making (Van Puymbroeck, 2014). In recent years, however, policy-makers have reduced this participation of migrant organisations in municipal policy-making. At the same time, we observe an increased securitisation focusing on the problematic behaviour of certain individuals and social groups that are seen as a threat to the public order. Several of our interviewees argued that in recent years urban policies in Antwerp moved away from stimulating the democratic participation of ethnocultural groups to prioritising security measures and law enforcement.

In line with the 1998 Minorities Decree of the Flemish government, the democratic participation of ethnocultural minorities in municipal decision-making was recommended in the ‘Policy Plan Ethnocultural Minorities 2000-2002’ of the Antwerp Integration Service. While migrant self-organisations and migrant umbrella organisations used to receive financial support for organising socio-cultural activities, the policy plan also foresaw a political role for them. As migrants did not have voting rights, the migrant self-organisations were seen as the representatives of the diverse ethnocultural communities in Antwerp and were expected to act as interlocutors in negotiations with the municipality. In 2003, the Antwerp city council approved of a set of rules establishing the ‘Urban Advisory Board for Ethnocultural Minorities’. This Advisory Board consisted of representatives of migrant self-organisations, the migrant umbrella organisations and co-opted members with expertise about ethnic minorities.

While the Advisory Board became an influential partner in the municipal debates about diversity in Antwerp, the 2006-2008 policy plan ‘Living Together in a City of Everyone’ [*Samenleven in een stad van iedereen 2006-2008*], also known as the Atlas Document, no longer

assigned a political role to migrant self-organisations. It was argued that migrant self-organisations actually were not representative of the migrant population in Antwerp:

*Just like the local citizens, most migrants in Antwerp are not active members of an association. Or if they are, they only participate very sporadically in activities. The simplistic idea that migrant self-organisations would represent their community does not make sense'. ('Living Together in a City of Everyone 2006-2008', p. 57)*

This way, the legitimacy of the Advisory Board was put into question. The 2006-2008 Atlas Document proposed the creation of a broader 'Deliberation Council for Diversity and Equal Opportunities Policies' that would consist of representatives of more social groups, not only migrants, in order to reflect all diversity in society. After serving for two years as the president of the Deliberation Council for Diversity, Georges Kamanayo complained that the municipality did not take seriously the advices of the Deliberation Council (Kif Kif, 2007). Kamanayo lamented the absence of firm anti-racism and anti-discrimination policies and the insufficient collaboration between the municipal Integration Service and the migrant self-organisations. According to him, inclusive diversity policies spread over all municipal services were creating too much fragmentation. For these reasons, Kamanayo resigned in May 2007 as president of the Deliberation Council for Diversity and Equal Opportunities. After his resignation, the Deliberation Council eventually dissolved and was never reinstated. According to a policy advisor of the municipality, the diversity of the advisory board made it impossible to reach an agreement because all members had different priorities:

*"The mistake we made was that we actually brought these various diversities together around the table asking them to give just one advice to the city. [...] Now, what did we see? The Latin-American Federation put an emphasis on cultural and artistic expression, but within the Moroccan community education was highly regarded, and for the Turks the elderly were a high priority. All those around the table had different priorities. I can tell you I have been beating my head against the wall with all that diversity".*

In the end, the municipality was no longer willing to organise again a diversity council. In the words of the policy advisor:

*"Why are we organising something so old-fashioned? There are many other ways to get advice and to hear multiple voices about the policies you want to conduct. It is not necessary to use the method of an advisory board. We finally managed to convince the Flemish government not to oblige us anymore to organise such a diversity council".*

After the Deliberation Council had ceased to exist, the municipality invited the migrant umbrella organisations to meet again, but this was perceived by these organisations as an electoral strategy for the 2012 municipal elections (see 3.2 for more detail). When the Flemish nationalist party came to power in 2013, however, contacts between the migrant umbrella organisations and the municipality deteriorated further. The presidents of the umbrella organisations mentioned during our interviews that until today they have not been in contact at all with the Councillor for Diversity and Integration.

Moreover, the current Antwerp municipal government decided in the context of the 2014-2019 multi-years budget plan to cut 7 million € in contracts with subsidised organisations in the social and cultural sector. In particular, the municipality stopped financing migrant umbrella organisations like the Federation of Moroccan Organisations and the Union of Turkish Organisations. At the same time, the municipality also stopped funding subsidised non-

governmental organisations dealing with migrants like the Minorities Forum in Antwerp and Integration Centre De8 (De Standaard, 25.06.2013).

Even if the municipality withdrew the structural funding of the migrant umbrella organisations, there still remain support schemes for the projects, activities and logistics of intercultural, youth, seniors, disabled and poverty alleviation associations. Regarding intercultural associations, however, the 2009-2011 Living Together in Diversity Policy Plan proposed to evaluate project applications according to their compliance with the requirement to build bridges with mainstream society. This is a departure from the original multicultural policies that saw the bonding and empowering of ethnocultural communities as the most important social functions of migrant self-organisations. Today, only some limited funds of 750 euro per organisation or activity are still available for migrant self-organisations that target only their own ethnic group<sup>6</sup>.

Regarding spaces of encounter, we can also briefly mention that the Antwerp municipality conducts a social mix policy in social housing. In order to create more diversity in social housing projects with disabled and unemployed people, the municipality aims to privilege renters with jobs and seniors (Respect voor A, p. 68). While the social mix policy is based on the assumption that disadvantaged people will benefit from the presence of higher-income people, we can ask ourselves whether the privileging of people with jobs in social housing is not merely a municipal strategy to create more income for social housing.

#### *From spaces of encounter to securitisation*

Rather than highlighting the positive aspects of diversity, political debates in Antwerp focus on the problems associated with ethnocultural diversity and immigration. Exploiting the feelings of insecurity among many local citizens, the extreme-right party Vlaams Belang has been blaming immigrants for high crime rates, unemployment and other social evils already since the 1980s. In recent years, the party has been warning of the clash of cultures and of the threat of Muslim extremism in particular. In response to these issues, the extreme-right party proposes migration restrictions and a severe enforcement of law and order<sup>7</sup>. Even if the extreme-right VB never came to power, their influence on Antwerp municipal policies cannot be underestimated. Aware of the fact that a large part of the Antwerp population voted for the extreme-right VB, the ruling coalition lead by the Social Democrat party conducted policies that took into account right-wing concerns like security and the negative aspects of diversity. In the foreword of the 'Living Together in Diversity Policy Plan 2009-2011', the then Councillor for Diversity explicitly links diversity with conflicts:

*'Urban diversity is exciting, but sometimes exhausting. It generates new insights, but unfortunately also leads to conflicts. We do not want to claim that living together in diversity is easy. As long as such conflicts can be discussed and resolved within the framework of democracy, there is no difficulty'.* (Living Together in Diversity Policy Plan 2009-2011, p. 2)

This quote implies the idea that diversity can also transgress the borders of democracy. In this sense, the mission statement of the 'Living Together in Diversity Policy Plan 2009-2011' firmly asserts that '*diversity is endless, but not boundless*' (p. 74). Explaining this quote, a leading officer of the 'Living Together' service states:

<sup>6</sup> Subsidies for intercultural initiatives, Municipality of Antwerp:  
<http://www.antwerpen.be/eCache/ABE/80/25/200.Y29udGV4dD04MDM0MDUz.html>

<sup>7</sup> [www.vlaamsbelang.org](http://www.vlaamsbelang.org)

*“This is of course the narrative of rights and duties. Endless means that diversity is about more than just Moroccan and Turkish immigrants. In Antwerp, we still don’t understand that it is increasingly about people from all over the world. [...] The boundaries of diversity are in the first place determined by the rule of law. There is no discussion about that. [...] We need pure assimilation when it comes to the rule of law”.*

In line with the discourse on rights and duties, the previous municipal government introduced far-reaching institutional reforms that combined social policies with security measures. In 2009, the Antwerp city council launched the ‘Living Together’ unit, which was the result of a merger between the two large municipal units ‘Social Affairs’ and ‘Integral Security’. While the Social Affairs unit already existed for a long time, the Integral Security unit was created in 2004 with the City Plan Security [*Stadsplan Veilig*] in response to the feelings of insecurity among many Antwerp citizens. The merger of these two large municipal units has been named the ‘Living Together’ unit, similar to the preceding but smaller service ‘Living Together in Diversity’. The enlarged ‘Living Together’ unit brought together three social services (Integration, Encounter and Housing) and three integral security entities (Social Intervention, Administrative Enforcement and City Surveillance). This institutional marriage of social services with security entities can be seen as the start of a securitisation process, the practice of turning social issues into security problems that need to be surveilled and even sanctioned if necessary. The vision behind the combination of social services with surveillance, sanctions and interventions in the ‘Living Together’ unit was expressed by one of its founders as follows:

*“The city has a pedagogic task. We have to educate people to behave properly in the public domain. As the public domain is no longer divided by different class distinctions, we are increasingly confronted with each other. The idea was to create one municipal service for this, in order to synchronise caretaking and sanctioning”.*

Given the hybrid composition of the ‘Living Together’ unit, the question arises how the social services and the security entities relate to each other. One of the leading officers of the ‘Living Together’ unit confirmed the securitisation of the social services:

*“It is true that security policies have absorbed large parts of social policies. Safety is a human right. [...] People really want to feel safe. We have to accept this. Obviously, safety has become dominant in the whole discourse of the new municipal government”.*

When the Flemish nationalist party came to power in 2013, security turned even more than before into a priority. While the municipality increased the budget for security measures, diversity became less of a policy objective. This is visible in the long-term budget plans of the municipality. Whereas in the former budget plans until 2013, ‘diversity’ was still mentioned as a separate policy theme among 33 other themes, ‘diversity’ even disappeared as a separate theme in the ‘multiyear plan 2014-2019’. In this plan the former 33 themes were reduced to 7 themes, with ‘diversity’ disappearing and safety becoming one of the seven main themes under the heading ‘The Safe City’. The diversity theme was picked up under another theme in the current multi-year plan called ‘The Harmonious City’, which deals with social policies and the integration of immigrants. Table 1 shows the budgets for the themes ‘The Safe City’ and ‘The Harmonious City’. While the incoming resources are nearly the same for the two policy themes, we notice how the expenditure for ‘The Safe City’ is higher than that for ‘The Harmonious City’ and this difference will only increase in the next 5 years.

	2014		2019	
	Expenditure	Income	Expenditure	Income
The Safe City	€276.449.895	€11.494.281	€301.757.532	€9.573.455
The Harmonious City	€208.563.375	€11.813.110	€218.962.207	€9.416.543

**Table 1: Budgets 2014-2019<sup>8</sup>**

As we can see, the largest allocation in the municipal budget goes to security measures. In the government agreement 2013-2018, the ‘war on drugs’ and related crimes became one of the spearheads of the new municipal policies. Resembling the discourse of the extreme-right, the Flemish nationalist Mayor of Antwerp stated in an interview that he wanted to expulse illegal drugs dealers to their countries of origin:

*‘Currently, there are almost 1.200 Moroccans in Belgian prisons. [...] If I was Minister of Justice, I would try to build a prison in Morocco’.* (Humo, 24.09.2013, p. 25-26)

According to one policy advisor in the Living Together unit, the shift from diversity policies to securitisation has to do with the widespread association of migrants with nuisance and crime. Even the Councillor for Diversity and Integration understands racism as the consequence of problems with migrants:

*‘Today, 87 percent of the minimum income beneficiaries in Antwerp is not able to speak Dutch. They represent the largest group benefitting from social housing, often at the expense of seniors who, despite having contributed all their life, end up on long waiting lists. In our prisons, some nationalities are disproportionately present. Whether we want this or not. Right or not. These are the facts that nurture racism. We cannot deny this’.* (Homans, 2014)

Through a system of municipal administrative sanctions, the municipality has the legal tools to deal in a quick and repressive way with public nuisance. While officially the municipality and the police deny that they would target people on the basis of their origin, the policy advisor mentions the demonstrations during the Giants Parade [*Reuzenstoet*] in Borgerhout in September 2012:

*‘Look at the demonstration in Borgerhout last year. They say that the municipal administrative sanctions are not targeting coloured people. During the Giants Parade however, 200 youngsters with a migrant background have been arrested’.*

Another example of the securitisation of ethnocultural diversity is the anti-radicalisation plan launched in 2013 by the Mayor of Antwerp together with the Mayors of three other Flemish cities. In response to the news that several youngsters from Antwerp, Mechelen, Vilvoorde and Maaseik went to fight in the Syrian civil war on the side of radical Muslim organisations, the Mayors of these cities published a manual titled ‘Controlling Muslim Radicalisation’ [*Beheersen van moslimradicalisering*]. In the media, the Mayor of Antwerp announced that he would remove the Syria-fighters from the Antwerp population register or sanction them when they would return to the city (GvA, 14.06.2013). In line with the securitisation paradigm, the Mayor of Antwerp saw also a new role for the migrant self-organisations by asking them to reflect about what they could do against the radicalisation of migrant youngsters. One of the civil servants

<sup>8</sup> Based on: Stad Antwerpen (2014) Meerjarenplan 2014-2019. Antwerpen: Stad Antwerpen.

that was working in the anti-radicalisation programme declared that the security discourse had created a huge gap between people of migrant origin and the municipality:

*“I see a huge gap between a number of key institutions in this society and the people. There are parents for example who distrust the police to the extent that they do not even dare to report that their son is missing. This happens even if the police should be there for the safety of every citizen. [...] In the shadows of the radicalisation discourse, I have to work on that gap. I have to take care that no security language is used. The security discourse puts off people”.*

Rather than fostering places of encounter and democratic deliberation, the municipal government in Antwerp has shifted the attention to security policies and repressive measures. While this securitisation process already started under the previous municipal government, the Flemish nationalist party that recently came to power reinforced the security discourse, disregarding the risk of polarising the relations with diverse communities in the city.

*The (re)distribution of resources: activation and responsabilisation*

A ‘just diversity’ demands not only policies that recognise diversity and create spaces of encounter, but also policies that seek to redress material inequalities (Fincher & Iveson, 2008). In the ‘multiyear plan 2014–2019’, the first policy aim under the heading ‘The Harmonious City’ states that ‘the basic social rights of all inhabitants of Antwerp, and especially of those living in poverty, should be guaranteed’ (p. 15). To achieve this purpose several operational aims are set up. One of them is that ‘people with a migrant background will get support to realise their social basic rights’. The budget foreseen to implement this policy is €297.740. The implementation of policies that seek to redress material inequalities are mainly the domain of the Public Centre for Social Welfare (OCMW in Dutch). In Antwerp, the Councillor for Social Affairs and Diversity is currently also the President of the PCSW. The PCSW has the task to guarantee the basic material well-being of disadvantaged people by offering financial aid, health care, housing and legal advice. Although the PCSW is open to all citizens, many of its clients are people of migrant origin.

In response to the federal regularisation of irregular migrants in 2009, the former Antwerp city council pointed out that the regularisation would have serious consequences for the city of Antwerp. Not only would the city have to deal with an increased number of applications for regularisation, also the Public Centres for Social Welfare (OCMWs) would have to digest increased aid applications and deploy many more social workers, while the city’s budget was not prepared for all these additional costs (De Morgen, 4.09.2009). Therefore, the Antwerp municipality was opposed to the regularisation if it would not receive sufficient means from the federal government to deal with these costs.

With regard to the social welfare offered to disadvantaged people of diverse origins, the narrative of ‘rights and duties’ has become dominant in recent years. In July 2011, the penultimate year of his tenure, the former Social-Democratic Mayor Patrick Janssens published a small book ‘Tit for Tat’ [*Voor wat hoort wat*]. The title of this book was chosen to complement his first slogan ‘The city belongs to everyone’ [*’t Stad is van Iedereen*]. In the book, the Mayor underlined that becoming a citizen of Antwerp was not for free but implied certain duties. The catchphrase ‘Tit for Tat’ highlighted the contractual relationship between an individual and the welfare state from a socio-economic point of view. In the context of growing immigration from Eastern Europe, in particular from Poland and Romania, the Mayor worried about the reception capacity of the city and explicitly called immigration – as far as it leads to an increase of people who receive social benefits without paying taxes or contributions – a threat to the

social welfare system (Janssens, 2011, p. 13). In this way, the Mayor justified calls to restrict immigration and the promotion of the activation policy in the Antwerp Public Centre for Social Welfare (OCMW). In sum, the Antwerp city council saw migration and regularisation as threats not only for the social cohesion but also for the budgetary stability of the city.

In order to diminish the costs for the city, the Antwerp municipal government conducts an activation policy that aims to reduce poverty by leading more people to a job. The new municipal government founded an activation department within the Public Centre for Social Welfare (OCMW). This department is expected to lead more people to a (regular) job. According to the summary of the 2014-2019 multiyear plan, *'the best guarantee to avoid ending up in poverty or to get out of poverty is having an income through employment'*<sup>9</sup>. In its activation policies, the current municipal government has shifted the attention from ethnocultural diversity to socio-economic inequalities, most notably by transforming the Office for Diversity Management into the Poverty & Welfare Cell. Within this socio-economic perspective, however, the municipal council puts a strong emphasis on the individual responsibility of those who benefit from the social system without questioning structural inequalities. Although there is not yet a local social policy plan available for the current legislative session, a policy advisor of the 'Living Together' unit told us:

*"At this time, the municipal government puts an emphasis on poverty and welfare policies. The definition of poverty and welfare, and how to deal with deprivation, however, is still unclear... As far as I know the Councillor is looking for a balance between offering opportunities and letting people themselves seize opportunities. The Theodore Dalrymple idea that everyone is responsible for him or herself is strongly present. I have to admit that this puts the whole poverty and welfare policy in a different perspective".*

In line with rights and duties narrative, the Antwerp PCSW president announced the introduction of the obligation for minimum income beneficiaries to work for the money they receive from the state. The plan also added that a person on social welfare who refuses to do voluntary work would lose his or her living allowance (Gazet van Antwerpen, 18.11.2013). Another controversy emerged when the same Councillor and President of the Public Centre for Social Welfare refused to grant automatically treatment to HIV/AIDS-infected irregular migrants.

While there is not yet a local social policy plan for the current legislative session, we can already see that the municipal government puts the emphasis on the individual responsibility and activation policies. In line with its neo-assimilationist policies, the knowledge of Dutch is seen as an indispensable condition for migrants to enter the labour market, social services and housing. In short, even if the current municipal government shifted its attention from the recognition of diversity to socio-economic inequalities, this does not mean that it tackles these inequalities through a (re)distribution of resources. In the following section, we take a look at the actual resource allocations of the diversity policies in Antwerp.

### 3.2. Non-governmental views on diversity policy

The main focus of Antwerp's diversity policy is ethnocultural diversity. The different umbrella organisations of migrant self-organisations play an important role in understanding non-governmental views on diversity policy. The migrant self-organisations were officially

<sup>9</sup>[http://www.antwerpen.be/docs/Stad/Bedrijven/Marketing\\_en\\_communicatie/MC\\_Com/20130918\\_samenvatting\\_meerjarenplanning.pdf](http://www.antwerpen.be/docs/Stad/Bedrijven/Marketing_en_communicatie/MC_Com/20130918_samenvatting_meerjarenplanning.pdf)

recognised in Flanders in 1993, their umbrella organisations in 1995. Migrant umbrella organisations were specifically set up to support and represent migrant self-organisations. In 1995 the Union of Turkish Organisations (UTV) and the Federation of Moroccan Organisations (FMV) were established in Antwerp, but in order to obtain official recognition they had to become active in other provinces as well. Later, other migrant umbrella organisations were established, like the Platform of African Communities (PAG) and the International Committee (IC).

Between 1992 and 1999, a Migrant Council existed in different compositions. Several key figures from ethnic minorities had a seat in this council, but the migrant umbrella organisations did not participate in this council. To address this problem the city council established a new Urban Advisory Board for Ethnocultural Minorities in 2003 which consisted for one third of the migrant umbrella organisations, for one third of other migrant organisations and for one third of key figures with expertise about ethnic minorities. In 2005 this Advisory Board was turned into a Deliberation Council, which eventually was abolished in 2007. We will argue that the decision of the city council to abolish this last Deliberation Council is a symbol of the reduced role of migrant organisations in policy-making around diversity. Around this time, the municipal government shifted its diversity policies from categorical policies with special services for ethnic minorities towards inclusive policies that spread diversity as a key objective over different policy domains. Within this inclusive policy there was no room for a categorical institution like the Deliberation Council. Furthermore, it was questioned if the Deliberation Council did really represented different migrant groups. As the former Mayor of Antwerp told us:

*“After 2006 we reduced the role of [migrant deliberation councils]. We might have thrown out the baby with the bath water, but we felt that we were talking to people who did not represent their respective population groups. We were talking to professionals, people who defended their own position. You can’t make a binding agreement with them which affects the whole population group. Also, you cannot even expect this from them, because they are not legitimated for that. So we started to work more pragmatically and where necessary we worked with bilateral contacts, which actually was much more time-consuming”.*

Moreover, as the diversity concept was broadened to include other social groups as well, the Deliberation Council had to represent the whole diverse population of Antwerp, not only migrants. Eventually, the Deliberation Council was abandoned in 2007.

Another organisation that plays an important role in the diversity policies of Antwerp is the Integration Centre De8. De8 grew out of the Centre for Foreign Workers [*Centrum voor Buitenlandse Werknemers*] and seven local integration centres. The CBW was founded to support foreign workers and became the official deliberative body for the province government. Nowadays Integration Centre De8 is committed *‘to a society that sees diversity as an added value, does not tolerate discrimination, ensures equal participation of ethnocultural minorities and guarantees basic social rights’*.<sup>10</sup> De8 explicitly states that diversity is more than only ethnocultural diversity. Although De8 used to have a lot of autonomy as an independent specialist organisation, it is losing its autonomy as institutional reforms by the Flemish Ministry of Integration enable the municipal government to exercise more direct control over De8. Eight full-time employees of De8 have already been transferred to the municipality in 2006. In the long run, it is expected that the De8

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.de8.be/content.php>

will become a municipal service. This supports the argument that the influence of non-governmental organisations in the diversity policies of Antwerp are being reduced.

*The reduced influence of non-governmental organisations*

In 2007 the Antwerp city council decided not to continue the Deliberation Council after the dismissal of its president. Omar Ba, coordinator of the umbrella organisation PAG and Mohammed Chakkar, chairman of umbrella organisation FMV, argued that the city came to this decision after the ‘White March’. This march was organised by the umbrella organisations after two racist murders in 2006 in Antwerp. With this march the organisers wanted to show their solidarity with the families of the victims. Through the organisation of the ‘White March’, the migrant umbrella organisations joined their forces for the first time under the leadership of Georges Kamanayo. As the president of the Deliberation Council, Georges Kamanayo wanted to create a distinct and active profile for the Deliberation Council. According to the umbrella organisations, the city council did not support the idea of a distinct and active Deliberation Council. However, the way the White March was organised was seen by some at the city council as creating divisions and as a missed opportunity to unite the urban population in its grief about the murder.

Since the Flemish government obliged the city to organise the participation of ethnic minorities in urban policy-making, the city council decided in 2008 to start a local antenna of the Minorities Forum [*Minderhedenforum*] in Antwerp, which represented ethnocultural minorities. Among others, the migrant umbrella organisations FMV, UTV, PAG and IC became associated with this local antenna of the Minorities Forum. Contrary to the Deliberation Council, however, the local antenna of the Minorities Forums provided no direct contact anymore between the migrant umbrella organisations and the city council. Therefore the relation between the Antwerp city government and the umbrella organisations deteriorated. Since 1 January 2014 the local antenna of the Minorities Forum has also been abolished. The migrant umbrella organisations feel that the municipal government of Antwerp does not listen to them anymore. This is reflected in the following quotes from the presidents of UTV and FMV:

*“What are our problems, education and so on. On these themes we play an important role. [...] At that time we were not strong in policy terms. We had several problems and we could raise these issues, there was a ‘big ear’. Nowadays, the situation changed. We still want to do it, but there is a very ‘small ear’”. [Interview President UTV, 23 October 2013]*

*“The city meant a lot to us [...] for example the IQRA-project, our education project. Thanks to the city, it was possible to do a lot for the children. [...] When Patrick Janssens [Mayor of Antwerp since 2006] came to power with his government, a new phase started. They thought we were partners and we said: no, we are not partners, we are a civil society organisation and we take that role, either you give us resources or not. At that time we had two and a half full-timers, that was a lot of money for a small organisation, and then they stopped it. They thought it [the organisation] would collapse. The politicians thought: these guys are just making a fuss, we take over control. [...] And then a cold war atmosphere arose. The headscarf ban destroyed the relationship definitively”. [Interview President FMV, 30 October 2013]*

According to Omar Ba from PAG, the previous Social-Democratic Mayor made several decisions that hurt ethnocultural minorities, while migrants traditionally make up a significant part of the electorate of the Social-Democratic party SP.A. As a consequence, during the elections in 2012 some minorities explicitly called not to vote for the SP.A, mainly referring to

the ban on headscarves in front-office functions in public institutions. Omar Ba claimed that “*there were places in Antwerp where the SP.A could not campaign*”. This situation contributed to the loss of SP.A in the last elections. This illustrates how bad the relationship between the urban government and the ethnic minorities was at that moment.

The deteriorated relation between different migrant umbrella organisations and the municipality expressed itself in other ways as well. Since 1999 it became possible for migrant self-organisations to apply for subsidy for specific activities. Most strikingly, the Union of Turkish Organisations (UTV) did no longer encourage its member organisations to apply for these subsidies after 2007. While the IC and the PAG supported their member organisations to apply for these subsidies, the UTV told their organisations not to apply. The president of UTV explains why:

*“That is a conscious decision. We had a quarrel with Antwerp. [...] Nowadays, we are not part of anything. We were in a process [before 2006] and where are we now? [...] We send a message, if you act like this, we do not need it [the money]”.*

From 2008 the umbrella organisations were enabled to make an agreement with the city to get financial resources for a long-term (1 year) project. An important difference with ordinary subsidies is that the city exerts more control over the content of the project. During one year, the city in fact supervises the project. In this sense, the umbrella organisations and the city had to agree about the whole project. Because the relation between the city and the umbrella organisations was not good, it was difficult to cooperate. The president of the Platform of African Communities stated:

*“In 2010-2011 we stopped our agreement with the city. There was a youth project and the city thought we should use a specific method. In our opinion this would cause more problems than it was going to solve. [...] The city wanted to give us € 50.000 for the project, we said, you can have the money back. [...] It was clear to me, we did not accept the money and we did not want an agreement with the city anymore”.*

Overall the migrant umbrella organisations criticised the policy of the former Social-Democratic Mayor, because of the absence of a deliberation structure. At the same time, the policy-making was experienced as centralistic. Migrant organisations argued that the Mayor did not give enough space to non-governmental organisations and did not listen to their views on diversity. The deep distrust between the city government and some migrant organisations was also evident when the city council decided in 2011 to start consulting different migrant organisations again in a structural way. The Platform of African Communities (PAG), among others, decided not to join these monthly meetings. Omar Ba perceived the move as an opportunistic strategy to anticipate on the elections. The International Committee (IC), however, joined the meetings. The president of IC explained:

*“They very often presented projects that were already decided upon. The reasoning was that the city had the right to implement several projects and to decide on how they wanted to implement them. I say: that is ok, but then the city does not have to come to us and ask us why our members are not participating and tell us that we have to ensure they will participate. Either we have to be involved from the beginning or we are not involved at all”.*

When the Flemish nationalist party came to power in 2013, these consultation meetings between the city and migrant umbrella organisations were again abandoned. The umbrella

organisations tried to speak with the new Councillor for Diversity and Integration, but they did not succeed.

Not only did the relation between the city council and the umbrella organisations change over the last couple of years, the autonomy of the Integration Centre De8 has been significantly reduced as well. Their financial resources were cut and the city council took more control over De8. Although this was formally decided by the Flemish government, the municipal government asked for more control and argued in favour of a transfer of financial resources from De8 to the governmental Integration service. The municipal government seemed keen on taking control over the whole integration process. At this moment, it is not yet clear what the role of De8 will be in the future, but in all likelihood the control of the city council will increase. The director of Integration Centre De8 said:

*“Until a few years ago we always had a lot of freedom to interpret the tasks that were set by policy-makers. (...) In recent years we noticed that the policy-makers gave us more and more directions, but so far we were able to avoid these attempts at steering. (...) We are now put in a more intense relationship with the city, especially with the reforms underway. The tendency to direct us has increased. If the reforms take place like this we will simply be executing policies. For me that is a bridge too far”.*

#### *Towards an inclusive policy*

The previous municipal government chose to shift from a categorical policy for migrants to a more inclusive policy over various policy domains. At the same time, they broadened the concept of diversity, which made ethnic diversity invisible as argued in part 3.1. Most migrant organisations did not consider the broad and inclusive diversity policies as an improvement. Some organisations even felt that the new policy is not really inclusive, but a strategy to hide ethnocultural diversity. The president of the Federation of Moroccan Organisations (FMV) explained his critical view on diversity policies as follows:

*“Yes, diversity is a fashionable term and serves especially to blur social problems. Policy-makers do not want to work on the real problems from which groups suffer, for example education, racism ... police racism or racism with the city as employer. The relation between the group [migrants] and the city is very bad, but that is not because of the current municipal government. There is no difference, then and now, the N-V-A continues what already was”.*

The president of the Union of Turkish Organisations (UTV) agrees with the idea that it is better to stop labelling people with an immigrant background as migrants. People from the second and third generation are Flemish citizens, not migrants. In his opinion, however, the municipality closes its eyes for the problems the second and third generation Turks face:

*“We do not want a separate situation, but we want to be heard in Flanders, that there is a group here. My daughter is born here and she is not a migrant. It is framed as if she is. (...) When my daughter is born here and I am Belgian, she is Belgian. But when she starts to apply for a job, she is confronted with this issue”.*

The director of Integration Centre De8 argued that the municipal government maybe focused too much on inclusive policies, leaving no room anymore for categorical policies, while the latter may work better on some occasions. The space for bonding policy and bonding activities is reduced. Nowadays, everything has to be inclusive. According to some people in civil society, this is certainly not always better than a categorical approach. The coordinator of the

International Committee in Antwerp told us why she thought bonding activities are still important:

*“Very often people say that organisations work inclusive, but I think that is wrong. Very often, when people come to these organisations, the things, expectations and rules here [in Flanders] are translated according to the context and the experiences people have. These experiences, the mentality and the recognition is the same for these people. So, we translate in such a way that people understand it”.*

According to the coordinator of the International Committee in Antwerp, the goal of bonding activities is to ensure that migrants will integrate in the Antwerp society as good as possible. Through bonding initiatives, migrants would create more social capital, learn to understand the cultural differences, integrate successfully and therefore increase their social mobility. The International Committee in Antwerp agreed that bonding would increase social mobility. The municipal government by contrast seemed to argue that bridging would contribute to a more successful integration and therefore increase social mobility.

Furthermore, the president of the Union of Turkish Organisations argued that bridging activities between organisations with people of different origins do not work effectively when they are forced to work together. For example, in order to qualify for subsidies to organise an activity, the municipality demands to organise a bridging activity. This was also the reason why Turkish organisations did not apply anymore for subsidies from the municipality. These bridging activities should bring together not only migrants, as they did in the past, but also Flemish citizens in order to create more contact between the different cultural groups in Flemish society. About the bridging projects with Flemish organisations, the president of the Union of Turkish Organisations stated:

*“We found each other because we wanted subsidies. That is not the right way. You should not have to force people to cooperate, but you need to develop structures in which people can cooperate. [...] Forced marriages do not work. (...) Nor the Flemish, nor the Turkish organisations, nor the integration service believes in it at the moment”.*

In sum, we have seen that migrant umbrella organisations were not in favour of the municipal policy to broaden the concept diversity and to follow an inclusive policy. As a result of the broadening of diversity policies, they feel they do not have any influence on diversity policies anymore and that their voice is not heard anymore.

While we discussed the relation between the city and migrant umbrella organisations of Turkish, Moroccan, African and other immigrants, it is remarkable that two other ethnic minorities in Antwerp, the Jews and the Indians, have received much less attention in diversity policy debates. Historically, the Jews played an important role in the Antwerp diamond industry, while nowadays the Indians, mostly Jain, took over this role. These groups live segregated and are less concerned with the diversity policies of the city. One of our interviewees explained why:

*“The Jewish don’t consider themselves as immigrants. They feel they belong here. (...) The Jewish also have power. You notice the same in the way they treat the Jains in Antwerp. They are very wealthy and receive lots of respect. They are generous donors for God knows what. Everyone from the municipality will be there if something happens”.*

This last quote illustrates the importance of the socio-economic position of ethnic minorities in diversity policy debates and the relationship with the municipality. When it comes to wealthy minorities, their segregated presence has been less problematised by the city council.

#### 4. Conclusion

In this chapter we have explored the governance structures and the policy discourses concerning diversity in Antwerp, the largest city of the Flemish Region in Belgium. We have started our discussion with a brief overview of the political system and the key shifts in the federal Belgian and regional Flemish policy approaches to migration, citizenship and diversity. We then critically examined the dominant governmental policy discourses and strategies regarding diversity in Antwerp. We have analysed these policy discourses and strategies through the lens of the recognition, encounter, and (re)distribution framework proposed by Fincher & Iveson (2008). After analysing the municipal policy discourses and strategies, we have shed a light on the non-governmental perspectives on diversity policies in Antwerp.

With regard to the recognition of diversity, we can conclude that neo-assimilationism has become the dominant policy discourse in Flanders as well as in Antwerp today. In order to achieve social cohesion in the city, everyone who settles in Antwerp is expected to make efforts to learn the Dutch language, the local customs and culture. The Flemish nationalist party N-VA that recently came to power in Antwerp sees the knowledge of Dutch as an indispensable condition for the social cohesion of the city and the social mobility of migrants in the labour market. Even if neo-assimilationist discourses are dominant today, the development towards neo-assimilationism can be traced back to the previous legislative session 2007-2012. In particular, the 2007 dress code that prohibited wearing religious symbols in municipal front-office positions was seen by many of our interviewees as a turning point in the diversity policies of the city. In fact, diversity policies in Antwerp started with the aim to diversify municipal services and to make them more representative and accessible for the diverse urban population. In this sense, the ban on religious and other symbols contradicted earlier multicultural policies that encouraged the recruitment of ethnocultural minorities in the municipal services (Van Puymbroeck, 2014). While the debate became centred on the Islamic headscarf ban and the many protests from Muslims, the dress code also affected other ethnocultural groups like the Jews and Catholics even if they remained more silent on the issue. Therefore, we argue that the dress code marked a crucial moment in the transition from multicultural towards neo-assimilationist policies in Antwerp.

During the 2007-2012 legislative session, municipal policy discourses moved away from ethnocultural diversity towards broad diversity. Beyond the specific focus on ethnocultural diversity, the new policy plans broadened their scope to diversity on the basis of age, gender, sexual preference, disability and socio-economic status. Our interviewees, however, declared that the broadening of the diversity concept appears to be a move driven by the fear that a sizeable part of the electorate did not appreciate the provision of special governance arrangements for ethnocultural minorities. Because of the electoral success of the extreme-right party Vlaams Belang, policy-makers feared that too much attention for ethnocultural minorities would further broaden the support of the population for the extreme-right party. Therefore, we argue that the former municipal government strategically chose to diminish the attention for ethnocultural minorities by opening up diversity policies to all kinds of social groups. When the Flemish nationalist party came to office in 2013, they continued phasing out facilities to empower ethnocultural minority groups in favour of individual assimilation trajectories.

While we talked about ‘neo-assimilationist’ policies, we could also describe current policy discourses as ‘post-multicultural’, given the existence of multicultural policies in Antwerp since the early 2000s. Several contemporary policy arrangements and institutions still bear the traces of earlier multicultural policy-making. The first policy plans regarding ethnic minorities in Antwerp were in line with the multicultural philosophy of the 1998 Minorities Decree. This implied that migrant umbrella organisations received structural funding and were involved in

policy-making. As migrants did not have voting rights, migrant umbrella organisations were appointed as the representatives of the diverse ethnocultural communities in Antwerp. With the launch of the Advisory Board for Ethnocultural Minorities in 2003, migrant umbrella organisations became influential partners in negotiations with the municipality. With the shift towards broad diversity policies, however, the role of migrant organisations was put into question by municipal policy-makers. The 2006-2008 policy plan 'Living Together in a City of Everyone' no longer assigned a political role to migrant organisations. It was argued that migrant organisations actually were not representative of the migrant populations in Antwerp. After the Advisory Board was transformed into a broader Deliberation Council for Diversity and Equal Opportunities Policies, the relationship between the municipality and the migrant umbrella organisations soon deteriorated and by 2007 the Diversity Council ceased to exist. In this sense, we can argue that the shift towards broad diversity policies lead to the end of these particular spaces of encounter and democratic deliberation for migrant organisations. With the coming to power of the Flemish nationalist party in 2013, migrant umbrella organisations even lost financial support from the city and were no longer taken into account for policy-making.

Rather than fostering spaces of encounter and democratic deliberation between groups, we observe how the present but also the former Antwerp municipal government has emphasised the need for security and the enforcement of the law. In times of austerity, the current municipality has increased the budget for security measures. Instead of investing in recognition and encounter, political debates in Antwerp focus on the negative aspects of ethnocultural diversity and immigration. Through an institutional marriage of social services with security entities, we can see the start of a securitisation process, the practice of turning social issues into security problems that need to be surveilled and even sanctioned if necessary. In this process, migration and ethnocultural diversity are increasingly considered as a problem or even as a threat to the public order. Through a system of municipal administrative sanctions, the municipality has the legal tools to deal in a quick and repressive way with public nuisance, all too often associated with youngsters of migrant origin. At the same time, the municipality invests in anti-radicalisation plans in order to control Muslim extremism in the city. The shift from diversity policies to securitisation has to do with the widespread association of migrants with nuisance and crime. While this securitisation process already started under the previous municipal government, the Flemish nationalist party that recently came to power reinforced the security discourse and repressive actions even if these would disturb the social cohesion in the city and polarise the relations between diverse communities.

Finally, we notice how the current Councillor for Diversity and Integration shifted the emphasis from diversity towards socio-economic inequalities while at the same time stressing the individual responsibility to achieve upward social mobility and to contribute to the economic performance of the city. Therefore, the Antwerp municipal government conducts an activation policy that aims to reduce poverty by leading more people to a job. From a neoliberal perspective, the municipal government puts the emphasis on the responsabilisation of disadvantaged groups without questioning structural inequalities. In line with the neo-assimilationist policies, the knowledge of Dutch is seen as an indispensable condition to benefit from the social services. Those who do not make enough efforts to learn the language risk to be punished by losing their social benefits.

In sum, when we evaluate the current policy discourses in Antwerp in terms of recognition, encounter and (re)distribution, we can say that these policy discourses do not fulfil the requirements of a 'just diversity' in the sense of Fincher & Iveson (2008). Rather, it seems that diversity policies in Antwerp made way for a neoliberal, repressive and assimilationist regime.

## Appendix 1. List of Interviewees

Respondent	Organisation	Position	Level of governance
1	Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism	Director	Federal government
2	Ministry of Integration	Adjunct Head of Cabinet	Flemish government
3	City of Antwerp	Former Mayor	Municipal government
4	City of Antwerp 'Living Together' Business Unit	High-ranking Officer	Municipal government
5	City of Antwerp 'Diversity Management'/'Poverty & Welfare Cell'	Head of Poverty & Welfare Cell	Municipal government
6	City of Antwerp 'Living Together' Encounter Service	Policy Advisor Encounter Cell	Municipal government
7	City of Antwerp Councillor for Diversity Office	Collaborator Councillor of Diversity	Municipal government
8	Minorities Forum	Director	Non-governmental
9	Integration Centre De8	Director	Non-governmental
10	Centre for Foreign Workers (CBW)	Founder	Non-governmental
11	Federation of Moroccan Organisations (FMV)	President	Non-governmental
12	Union of Turkish Organisations (UTV)	President	Non-governmental
13	Platform of African Communities (PAG)	President	Non-governmental
14	International Committee	Coordinator	Non-governmental
15	Gemstar bvba	Indian businessman	Non-governmental
16	University of Antwerp	Professor	Non-governmental
17	VOKA (Flemish Network of Enterprises)	Jobkanaal Coordinator	Non-governmental

## Appendix 2. List of Policy Documents Analysed

<b>List of Policy Documents</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiyear plan 2014-2019 City of Antwerp [Meerjarenplan 2014-2019 Stad Antwerpen]</li> <li>• Budget 2014</li> <li>• Respect for A. Governance Agreement Antwerp 2013-2018 [Respect voor A. Bestuursakkoord Antwerpen 2013-2018]</li> <li>• Local Social Policy Plan Antwerp 2008-2013 [Lokaal Sociaal Beleidsplan Antwerpen 2008-2013]</li> <li>• Public Centre for Social Welfare Policy Plan 2008-2013 [OCMW Beleidsplan 2008-2013]</li> <li>• 2009-2011 Policy Plan Living Together in Diversity [Samenleven in Diversiteit Beleidsplan 2009-2011]</li> <li>• 2008-2012 City Plan Diversity [Stadsplan Diversiteit 2008-2012]</li> <li>• 2006-2008 Living Together in a City of Everyone [Samenleven in een Stad van Iedereen 2006-2008]</li> <li>• 2004-2010 Strategic Plan Minorities Policy - Living Together in Diversity. Shared Citizenship and Equal Opportunities in a Colourful Flanders [Samenleven in Diversiteit. Gedeeld burgerschap en gelijke kansen in een kleurrijk Vlaanderen 2004-2010]</li> <li>• 2004 City Plan Security [Stadsplan Veilig]</li> <li>• 2003-2006 Minority Policy Report Antwerp Colourful for All [Antwerpen voor iedereen kleurrijk]</li> <li>• 2003 Step-by-Step Integration Plan [Stappenplan Integratie 2003]</li> <li>• 2000-2002 Policy Plan Ethnocultural Minorities [Beleidsplan etnisch-culturele minderheden 2000-2002]</li> <li>• 1999 All Antwerpians [Allemaal Antwerpenaars]</li> </ul>

<b>Category of policies</b>	<b>Examples of Policies</b>	<b>Targeted objective(s)</b>
<b>Policies for diversity/recognition of multiple voices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2009-2011 Policy Plan Living Together in Diversity [Samenleven in Diversiteit Beleidsplan]</li> <li>• 2008-2012 City Plan Diversity [Stadsplan Diversiteit]</li> <li>• 2006-2008 Living Together in a City of Everyone [Samenleven in een Stad van Iedereen]</li> <li>• 2004-2010 Strategic Plan Minorities Policy - Living Together in Diversity. Shared Citizenship and Equal Opportunities in a Colourful Flanders [Samenleven in Diversiteit. Gedeeld burgerschap en gelijke kansen in een kleurrijk Vlaanderen]</li> <li>• 2003-2006 Minority Policy Report Antwerp Colourful for All [Antwerpen voor iedereen kleurrijk]</li> <li>• 2000-2002 Policy Plan Ethnocultural Minorities [Beleidsplan etnisch-culturele minderheden]</li> <li>• 1999 All Antwerpians [Allemaal Antwerpenaars]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social cohesion (primarily)</li> <li>• Socio-economic opportunities and social mobility (primarily)</li> <li>• Economic performance (as a consequence)</li> </ul>
<b>Policies to create spaces of</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Social Policy Plan Antwerp 2008-2013 [Lokaal Sociaal Beleidsplan Antwerpen 2008-2013]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social cohesion (primarily)</li> </ul>

<p><b>encounter and spaces of democratic deliberation</b> <i>between groups</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2004: City Plan Security [Stadsplan Veilig]</li> <li>• 2003: Step-by-Step Integration Plan [Stappenplan Integratie 2003]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Socio-economic opportunities and social mobility</li> <li>• Economic performance (as a consequence)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Policies for equity/(re)distribution of resources</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Social Policy Plan Antwerp 2008-2013 [Lokaal Sociaal Beleidsplan Antwerpen 2008-2013]</li> <li>• Public Centre for Social Welfare Policy Plan 2008-2013 [OCMW Beleidsplan 2008-2013]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Socio-economic opportunities and social mobility (primarily)</li> <li>• Economic performance (primarily)</li> <li>• Social cohesion (as a consequence)</li> </ul>

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