

School choice regulation in practice: Lessons from Antwerp, Brussels and Ghent

Estelle Cantillon

Warning: This is a very preliminary and incomplete version of the background note for the presentation at the Re-Bel event on Dec 22. An updated version will be posted a couple of days before the event. In particular, most of the data analysis is still missing from this version but will be included in the updated version

12 December 2011

1. Introduction

School choice has been regulated in Belgium since 2003 (2008 as far as the French-speaking Community). While the main purpose of school enrolment policies put in place in Flanders and the French-speaking Community was initially simply to increase transparency and provide equitable access to schools to all children, the debates and practices have become more sophisticated over time.

The purpose of this note is to take stock of the experience with school enrolment in a few large cities of Belgium (namely, Antwerp, Brussels and Ghent) and discuss their design, their performance, and the more general lessons we can draw from them. Our analysis will take the objectives of such enrolment policies as given, and focus instead of their implementation, and their consequences.

In doing so, we will attempt to broaden the debate about school enrolment procedures and also consider their impact beyond the narrow question of how they assign pupils to schools. Thus, we will distinguish between direct effects - by which we mean the impact of school enrolment policies on the actual assignment of pupils to schools - and indirect effects - by which we mean the effects of the enrolment policy on the education system above and beyond the properties of the resulting assignment. These effects can be felt upstream, i.e. on activities that take place before the enrolment stage, downstream, i.e. on activities that take place after the enrolment stage, or in adjacent school zones.

Our analysis of the experience in Antwerp, Brussels and Ghent mainly relies at this stage on the evaluation reports submitted by the local coordination platforms (LOPs) for these cities as well as, for the French-speaking schools in Brussels, on the evaluation reports submitted by the central registration

commission (CIRI). These reports, while useful, do not always allow us to answer the questions we would like to ask. While we hope to be able to analyze more detailed data for these cities in the final version of this note (and certainly before the Dec 22 event), we will also complement the existing data with documented evidence from other cities abroad and recent advances in the research on school choice procedures.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. In section 2, we remind the reader about the reasons underlying school choice regulation. In section 3, we argue that cities are special and therefore beg for a specific approach when it comes to designing enrolment policies. In section 4, we provide a framework for analyzing school enrolment procedures and describe the procedures currently in place in Antwerp, Brussels and Ghent. A first assessment of these procedures is then given in section 5. In sections 6 and 7, we then move to a discussion of the potential *indirect* effects of these enrolment procedures. The analysis there is much more tentative as, often, insufficient time has elapsed to observe these effects and data to assess these effects are not always collected. Section 8 concludes.

2. Why regulate school choice?

There are usually two types of arguments for regulating parents' choice of a school for their kids. The first one is an equity argument in the presence of capacity constraints, or at least, congestion:¹ if the number of children who want to go to a particular school is higher than the capacity of that school, then we need to have objective and fair criteria for deciding whom to accept and whom to reject.

The second type of arguments consists in saying that, *even if there were no capacity or congestion problems*, there is some value in influencing the mix of pupils in classes beyond the mix that would result from individual uncoordinated choices. These arguments all rely on the presence of some "externality", i.e. the presence of an effect for the group that is not taken into account by individual parents when making their decisions. For example, Walzer (1983) has forcefully argued that schools are laboratories where children and thus future adults can learn to live in pluralistic societies. Put differently, there is a value for Society beyond and above the value that individual parents could attach to having some social diversity in schools. The presence of peer effects is another classic argument. [need expand and mention debate on evidence for such effects].

In Belgium, the first type of arguments, i.e. equity, was initially the main driver for introducing school choice regulation. The *laissez-faire* system of free choice by schools and parents that prevailed until then was not transparent and did not guarantee a fair treatment to all children. In fact, social diversity was not an objective of the French-speaking Community's Arena decree (2008-2009) and when the Flemish GOK decree talks about « gelijkeonderwijskansen » (literally : equal education opportunity), it first

¹ Congestion can happen even in the absence of a capacity problem at the aggregate level when preferences are polarized and a few schools attract the bulk of applications. Enrolment policies cannot themselves solve a capacity problem.

means putting all children on an equal footing. Quotas for socially disadvantaged pupils are a possibility given by the decree, not an obligation.²

However, policy-makers on both sides of the linguistic border have soon realized how powerful instruments for regulating school choice can be: to the extent that criteria have to be chosen for deciding which child is accepted when there is excess demand, the temptation is great to become “social engineers.”³ In particular, social diversity has progressively risen on policymakers’ agendas, following the relative underperformance of our country in PISA studies and the suggestion that the high level of social segregation of our school system might be one of the reasons behind this.

Thus, enrolment policies in the French-speaking Community have introduced compulsory and across the board quotas for low socio-economic status (SES) children starting in 2009-2010. In addition, the enrolment procedure in the French-speaking Community has, since 2010-11, used a complex tie-breaking rule that takes various other “social goals” into account to decide which children to accept when demand exceeds supply. Likewise, the recently adopted decree in Flanders will impose from 2013-14 onwards that, in the presence of excess demand, the selection of applications bring the socio-economic composition of the school population as close as possible to the socio-economic composition of the neighborhood.

3. What is special about cities?

As far as the “education market” is concerned, cities share at least two specificities that exacerbate potential congestion problems, and thus call for a regulation of school choice. First, population and school densities are higher in cities than elsewhere. This means that every child has effectively several schools in its feasible choice set.

Second, city populations tend to be more polarized with respect to income and other socio-economic dimensions. Cities attract both high-level white collar workers and are very often the entry gates for immigrants. This polarization is also reflected in the characteristics of the school populations of Antwerp, Brussels and Ghent. [give data for Antwerp, Brussels and Ghent]

The combination of these two “demand-side” factors with a relatively high level of differentiation among schools tend to create sorting and segregation (because different schools attract different types of pupils), but also congestion (because some schools - the “good schools” - attract the bulk of applications), independently of capacity problems.⁴ These phenomena are further exacerbated in secondary schools where school differentiation is larger and constraints on the mobility of the pupils are lower (at age 12, many pupils use public transportation by themselves). This means that cities are natural application grounds for a regulation of school choice and school enrolment.

²This will change from 2012-13 onwards with the new approved GOK decree.

³ Belgian policy-makers are certainly not the only ones to use enrolment policies to influence school population composition.

⁴ In addition, capacity is a real issue both in Antwerp and in Brussels, and an increasing one in Ghent.

At the same time, cities and the school systems therein are not insulated islands. There are significant exchanges of pupils between Antwerp, Brussels, Ghent and their respective hinterlands. Moreover, there can be significant interactions between the “education market” and the housing market. These factors, which we will discuss when we discuss indirect effects, do not reduce the case for school regulation. They only make it more difficult to assess the full consequences of a school enrolment policy, and therefore identify the optimal policy.

4. An overview of enrolment procedures and their properties

In this section, we provide a brief overview of the main ingredients of any enrolment procedure and describe their properties.⁵ We describe the enrolment procedures implemented in the past few years in Belgium, with a special focus on Antwerp, Brussels and Ghent in the next sections.

An enrolment procedure matches pupils to schools. So there is a “demand side:” the parents and their children, and the preferences they hold over schools. And, there is a “supply side”: the schools, the different curricula they offer and their capacities (i.e. the number of seats they have). For now on, we will consider these as fixed and exogenous (we will revisit this question in section 8.1).

For our purpose, it is useful to distinguish between three ingredients that are shared by all enrolment procedures: (1) a set of rules for expressing the preferences over schools; (2) criteria and rules to determine which child has priority over another one, at each school; (3) a procedure that determines which child goes where, given his parents’ reported preferences and his priority status at each school.

In the Belgian context, parents’ preferences take precedence (a heritage of the School Pact). Therefore the main purpose of an enrolment policy is to determine how to decide among children when there is excess demand. This is a highly political question: whatever criterion we choose will favor some pupils over others. As we have argued elsewhere (Cantillon, 2009), the criteria and rules to determine which child has priority over another one, at each school, should ideally be the translation of the political objectives. In contrast, the set of rules for expressing preferences and the procedure should be “at the service” of these political objectives, in the sense that they should aim at ensuring that these objectives are implemented as effectively as possible, but should not themselves embody political objectives. The choice of a procedure can then be largely driven by good governance principle (transparency, efficiency, ease of use, ...).

4.1. Political objectives, priorities and tie-breaking

Which pupil has priority over which other pupil at school X, and under which conditions? Here the exercise comes down to listing objectives and associated criteria. Some objectives and criteria give rise to an absolute priority, i.e. a priority independently of the number of pupils benefiting from this priority.

⁵ There is a large literature in economics and mathematics, starting at least from the seminal article by Gale and Shapley (1962) that analyses the properties of matching procedures of the type used to “match” pupils to schools. [give the other main references]

Priorities for siblings are a common example. Other criteria give rise to a conditional priority and a quota: pupils who meet these criteria benefit from a priority up to the level of the quota.

When the enrolment policy has several objectives, it is essential to rank them in order to be able to make a choice when two objectives are incompatible. When there is indeed incompatibility between two objectives, the criterion associated with the subordinate objective influences the outcome at the margin only.

Finally, political objectives often result in priority classes, in the sense that they generate groups of pupils with a priority over another group, but do not pin down a full ordering over these pupils. When this is the case, a tie-breaking rule is needed.

4.2. Procedures

[Describe the Boston mechanism, the school-proposing deferred acceptance algorithm, the student-proposing deferred acceptance algorithm. Comment on their theoretical properties, including in large markets and in the presence of naïve players. Discuss how they can be adapted for quotas]

5. School enrolment in Flanders

Regulation of school enrolment was first introduced in Flanders during academic year 2003-2004. The Equal Education Opportunity decree (GOK decree) set general rules and principles that school enrolment policies, at all levels (preschool, primary school and secondary school) had to satisfy. The decree imposed absolute priorities for siblings and described the only other priorities that could be given (specifically: priorities for native Dutch-speakers in Dutch-speaking schools of Brussels, priorities for low SES children and, outside of Brussels priorities for high SES children if the proportion of low SES children in the school is 10% higher than in the reference area). A registration period was assigned to each priority class, and pupils had to register during the assigned registration period to benefit from the priority. Within each priority class, registrations were to be taken on a first-come first-served basis. Schools could not decline a pupil's registration unless they had reached capacity.

The GOK decree also created local coordination platforms ("locale overlegplatformen", LOPs) made up of representatives of all stakeholders (schools, parents, ...) within an area.⁶ LOPs' responsibilities include the analysis of the socio-economic characteristics of the school population within their areas, the coordination of the education supply, the encouragement of preschool attendance and, in particular, the coordination of enrolment practices in their areas within the margins of maneuver given by the decree.

Faced with parents' growing discontent over long queues in front of popular schools, a revision of the GOK decree in 2008 allowed for a two-year period (academic years 2009-10 and 2010-11) during which

⁶ There are currently 72 LOPs. These cover most of the territory (especially urban areas) and were initially designed to cover at least the areas where school enrolment was an issue. Within an area, there are usually a LOP for primary schools and another LOP for secondary schools.

local coordination platforms could experiment with other enrolment policies as long as they respected the principle of equal treatment of equals and did not create new priority categories. In particular, primary schools were allowed to use distance, instead of time, as a tie-breaker when demand exceeded supply. Several LOPs, including the LOPs for preschools and primary education (Basis Onderwijs) in Antwerp, Brussels and Ghent took advantage of this ability to experiment. We now describe the variants adopted in each of these cities. All of them share the features that they are (at least partially) centralized with parents applying online, and that they do not put any restrictions on the number of schools parents can apply to. These experiments, and the evaluation that followed, led to the adoption of a new decree in November 2011.

5.1. Antwerp

Antwerp uses a two stage procedure. The first stage, around January, is decentralized: siblings can directly register at the schools that their older sibling attends. The second stage, which happens between mid-February and mid-March, uses the school-proposing deferred acceptance algorithm with both time and distance as tie-breaking rule, and optional GOK or non-GOK quotas. Specifically:

1. Priorities: The LOP left the individual schools to decide whether to have a conditional priority for low or high SES children. 5.2% of the schools took advantage of the GOK quota possibility given by the decree and gave priority to GOK children (up to a quota). 10.4% of the schools took advantage of the non-GOK quota possibility and gave priority to non-GOK children (up to a quota).
2. Tie-breaking: Within the LOP it was decided that schools have to allocate at least 30% of their seats using the distance from home as a tie-breaker and the rest based on the time the parents submitted the request to the system. The exact percentage for the distance criterion is left for the schools to decide. In 2010-11, 64% of schools assigned 70% of their capacity using distance as a tie-breaker, and 27% assigned 30% of their capacity based using distance as a tie-breaker.

All applications received after the deadline are treated chronologically, and after the applications received during the enrolment period.

5.2. Brussels

Brussels uses a two-stage procedure. The first stage, around January, is decentralized: siblings can directly register at the schools that their older sibling attends. The second stage, which happens around February-March, uses the Boston mechanism, with a uniform quota for native Dutch-speakers of 55% and a quota for GOK children of 30% (a child that is both GOK and native Dutch-speaker is in priority assigned to the GOK quota). Schools can decide individually whether to use distance from work, from home or the number of months spent in a Dutch-speaking daycare (for admission to preschool) as a tie-breaker. In 2010-11, XXXX schools chose the daycare tie-breaker XXXX.

The online application platform contains detailed information about each school (address, network, pedagogy, extra-curricular activities, website, ...). It also contains information relative to the available capacity in each quota at the beginning of each stage, and the schools' chosen tie-breaker. All applications received after the deadline are treated chronologically.

5.3. Ghent

Ghent uses a three-stage procedure to allocate children to preschools and primary schools. Each stage corresponds to a priority class. Distance from home is used as a tie-breaker.

In the first stage, siblings can register to the school of their choice. This stage happens in a decentralized fashion around November.

In the second stage (January), parents whose child benefits from a GOK priority can apply to the schools giving priority to GOK children. Parents whose child benefits from the non GOK priority can apply to the schools offering a priority to non GOK children. These schools represent about 45% of the schools. Parents can apply to these schools through an online centralized system, which uses the school-proposing deferred acceptance algorithm, with distance from home as a tie-breaker.

In the third stage (March), parents can apply to all schools. Again this is done through the online centralized system, using the school-proposing deferred acceptance algorithm and distance as a primary tie-breaker.

Parents can participate in all stages (but can only apply to the schools for which they benefit from a priority at these respective stages). In particular, parents can register their kid in one stage, and participate in a later stage in the hope of getting a seat in a preferred school. Parents receive information about the schools (address, network and pedagogy) as well as the number of remaining places at the stage where they apply. The system keeps a record of children on schools' waiting lists. Registrations after that are taken chronologically but children on the school's waiting list keep their priority in case of a cancellations.

5.4. The new decree

On November 9, 2011, a new GOK decree was voted in the Flemish Parliament. It will apply starting from academic year 2013-14. The new decree takes stock of some of the lessons generated by the experiments. In particular, it nests the procedures found in Antwerp, Brussels and Ghent. It differs from current practice in the class of priorities it organizes. The main changes that the new decree introduces are the following:

1. Double quotas: starting in 2012-13, all schools will have two quotas: one for GOK children and the other (for the remaining capacity) for non GOK students. GOK children have priority for the seats in the GOK quotas, and non GOK children have priority for the seats in the non GOK quotas. The quota size must be determined to match the socio-economic composition of the neighborhood (to be defined by the LOP), with adjustments possible in case the current socio-economic composition of a school is very different from that of its neighborhood. The double quota systems aims to ensure that, when demand is larger than capacity, the socio-economic composition of schools are as close as possible to the socio-economic composition of the neighborhood.
2. In addition to the existing priorities for siblings and (in Brussels) for native Dutch-speakers, a priority is added for children of the school's personnel.

3. Within priority classes and quotas, preschools and primary schools can only use the distance between the home or the workplace of the parents and the school, the position of the school in the child's rank-order-list, or a lottery, as tie-breakers. Secondary schools for primary schools the only tie-breakers allowed are the distance between the home or the workplace of the parents and the school, the position of the school in the child's rank-order-list, or a lottery. Secondary schools must use chronology (in combination with a call-center) or the position of the school in the child's rank-order-list as tie-breakers.
4. LOPs must use the school-proposing differed algorithm.⁷

6. School enrolment in the French-speaking Community

The French-speaking Community does not regulate enrolment for preschools and primary schools beyond the general principles that a school should accept a pupil as long as this pupil meets the condition to attend preschool / primary school, his/her parents agree with the pedagogical project of the school and there is space.

Regulation of school choice for secondary schools was introduced in academic year 2008-09. The decree set a common starting date for registrations, which were taken at the school level on a first-come first-served. The resulting queues in front of popular schools highlighted the polarization of the school system in the French-speaking community, Brussels in particular, and eventually led to the resignation of the minister in charge. The second attempt of the French-speaking community with school choice regulation was not more successful since a decentralized version of the school-proposing differed acceptance mechanism (parents could apply to as many schools as they wanted, and schools accepted applications in the order of their priorities) led to congestion and a bubble of multiple registrations that took months to deflate.

The current enrolment policy has been in place since academic year 2010-11, with only minor yearly changes since then. Unlike its Flemish counterpart, it fully specifies the procedure and does not leave any scope for adjustments at the local level. The procedure combines decentralized aspects (parents submit their applications in person at the school of their first choice; schools can allocate some of their seats directly to the applicants) with centralized aspects (common priority criteria, common quotas, a centralized algorithm to match applications to seats). Specifically:

1. In February, parents receive a **single form** for each of their children in age to register in secondary school. Parents can rank up to 10 schools on the form. The form contains a visible part (individual data and name of the most preferred school) and an invisible part (names of schools rank 2 and lower) that is only open if needed.
2. Parents must submit the form in person at their first choice school during a two-week period in the Spring

⁷ But notice that, unlike the original version of this algorithm introduced by Gale and Shapley (1962), the position of the school in the rank order list can be used as a tie-breaker. Thus it is compatible with the Boston mechanism as well.

3. First stage matching – matching of first choices at the school level:
 - a. If the number of applications received during the enrolment period is lower than 102% of the reported school capacity, the school can confirm all applications received to parents. The school reports the number of remaining places, including the number of children coming from a socially-disadvantaged primary school, to the CFB.
 - b. If the number of applications received is higher than 102% of reported capacity, then the school allocates 80% of places to students using the following criteria:
 - i. 20.4% quota for students coming from a socially disadvantaged primary school (such students have priority over all other students for these quota places, they are allocated first)
 - ii. Priority classes (in decreasing order): (1) student has a sibling in the school; (2) student lives in a care-taker facility; (3) special need student; (4) boarding school student; (4) children of teachers; (5) student comes from a partner primary school.
 - iii. Within each of these priority classes, ties are broken using a student-specific index based on 4 geographical criteria and 3 pedagogical criteria.
 - iv. The school confirms these registrations for 80% of its places to the parents and sends the unmatched wish-lists, together with data on the accepted applications, to the CFB
4. Second stage matching – centralized matching by the CFB
 - a. As in the first stage, a quota of 20.4% for students coming from socially disadvantaged primary schools applies. Students are ranked at each school which they list according to the following criteria:
 - i. Priorities: Students can benefit from the above priorities (sibling, special need, ...) only at the school of their first choice. These priorities do not apply at schools ranked 2 and lower.
 - ii. Tie-breaking within each priority class: The tie-breaking rule uses the same 4 geographical criteria and 3 pedagogical criteria as in the first stage but, in addition, gives different weights according to the position of the school in the list (from 1.5 to the first choice to 1 for the 6th and below choices).
 - b. The matching algorithm is the student-proposing deferred acceptance algorithm (except for the fact that priorities are in part determined by the rank of the school in the rank-order list).
 - c. Students whose request is handled by the CFB are told the result in May

After the first and second stage allocation, schools with remaining capacity accept applications on a first-come first-served-basis. In the remainder, I will refer to this procedure as the Simonet procedure, after the name of the education minister that introduced it.

7. A first assessment

7.1. Similarities and differences

Despite the variety of procedures observed across Antwerp, Brussels and Ghent, it is useful to first stress the many similarities, both in objectives and design.

1. Equal opportunity as a political objective
The first motivation for regulating school enrolment on both sides of the linguistic border is the same: giving all children an equal chance to enroll by clarifying the rules of the game and leveling off the playing field.
2. Priorities for siblings
Siblings get absolute priority in both systems, though this priority is reserved for the school ranked first by students in the French-speaking Community.
3. Social diversity as a political objective
Social diversity is mentioned as a political objective in both regulations, with some slight nuances (diversity is more seen as a mean to an end – greater performance – in the Simonet decree)
4. Trend towards increasing centralization of the procedure
This move has been very pragmatic (as a way to solve the problems created by earlier decentralized procedure). Due to resistance by parents and schools, this move has also been very progressive. The Simonet procedure is an interesting example of this tension. Parents must still have a physical contact with the school of their first choice at the beginning of the procedure, and schools can allocate up to 80% of their capacity directly to these first choices.

There are however two important differences regarding their implementation.

1. Tailoring to the local context versus top-down one-size-fits-all
The GOK decree leaves important margins of maneuver to LOPs and individual schools in setting quotas for the priority groups defined by the decree. This contrasts with the one-size-fits-all of the Simonet decree. Both approaches have their merit. The partial delegation of school enrolment policy to LOPs and schools leverages the local knowledge of stakeholders and allows them to better tailor enrolment policy to the specificities of their local context. It also fosters buy-in by the local stakeholders, the schools in particular. However, coordination among schools can be problematic, even in the presence of a formal coordination body such as the LOPs. [expand]
The top-down approach of the Simonet overcomes this coordination problem since it imposes the same quotas to all schools across the board. This may have come at the cost of a lower buy-in from schools (there are reports of schools trying to circumvent the decree). In my view, it has also come with unnecessary standardization: the quota for low SES children is the same for all schools in the French-speaking community, despite very large differences across regions and, symptomatically, in Brussels (see e.g. a recent study by the parents' federation, FAPEO (2011))

2. Measures for low socio-economic status (SES)
[discuss differences between low SES indices in Flanders and in the French-speaking Community]

7.2. Design issues

1. Strategic complexity of the Brussels and the Simonet procedure -> does not generate reliable data on preferences and create possibilities for mistakes
2. Sequential assignment by priority class is unnecessary and creates inefficiencies
Historical evolution of procedure
Talk about Ghent LOP BaO, secondary schools

a. Adequacy between political objectives and their implementation

1. Strategic complexity of the Brussels and the Simonet procedure is not neutral socially and they hamper the “social diversity” objectives
Neither the Simonet procedure, nor the procedure implemented for Dutch-speaking primary schools in Brussels is strategyproof. In fact, it is in the interest of parents in both procedures to be strategic since higher choices carry more “weight”. This incentive is particularly strong in the procedure used in Dutch-speaking preschools and primary schools: given the level of excess demand, not getting your first choice is very costly since many schools reach their capacity after the allocation of the “first choices”.
[discuss evidence from Boston and LOP Brussels and paper by Pathak and Sonmez]
2. The higher weight on top choices in the Simonet and Brussels procedures reduce the role of parent’s preferences, in contradiction with the principles that parent’s preferences take priority
[discuss intuition + evidence from Barcelona]
3. Double quotas are best to implement social diversity objectives under the constraint of respecting parents’ preferences
[argue that current practices in all 3 cities come closest to implementing “positive discrimination” than social diversity, argue that new decree – double quotas - in Flanders is better]

b. Outcome

[discuss measures of performance, participation rates, social diversity, capacity constraints and congestion, issues raised by stakeholders, based on the evaluations reports from the LOPs and the CIRI]

c. Preliminary conclusions

3. Beyond the procedure: indirect effects of school enrolment procedures

So far, we have focused on the enrolment procedures, the quality of their design given the objectives pursued, and their performance in allocating pupils to schools. In this section, we take a broader view and consider the likely or potential effects of the procedures on markets and activities upstream, i.e. before the procedure, on markets and activities downstream, and on other coexisting education markets.

8.1. Indirect effects upstream

1. Impact on sorting and composition upstream

[discuss extreme example of Texas' 10% rule for public universities which led to a reallocation of students across high schools. No evidence for Belgium but the criteria used for tie-breaking in the CFB and in LOP BaO (nb of months in a Dutch-speaking daycare) have similar potential effects on the "primary school market" (for the Simonet rule) and on the daycare market (for LOP BaO)]

2. Parents' preferences

[argue that in practice preferences are not exogenous and that parents form their preferences also through their interactions with the procedure and with other parents. Impact of procedure and on the information revealed ex-post on this preference formation. Discuss impact of voluntary quotas and voluntary tie-breaking rules in Brussels, Ghent and Antwerp on this. Compare the patterns of full schools in the CFB between 2010 and 2011 to see whether there is any sign for preference polarization]

3. Neighborhood composition, including housing market

[discuss evidence from US and France, argument for why distance-based criteria could have such effects and discuss findings from little study for LOP BaO Brussel which suggest that this is unlikely, discuss incentives in the Simonet procedure]

8.2. Indirect effects downstream

1. Academic performance: drop-out and failure rates

[Discuss evidence from LOP SO Gent and Antwerp. Idea is to look at impact of changes in rules on the drop-out and failure rates, as schools resort to selection ex-post, now that they can no longer select ex-ante; evidence from the US – Pathak's paper]

2. Strategic repositioning by schools

[only anecdotal evidence for now; not clear I'll be able to say more]

3. Capacity manipulation

[discuss literature on the subject, incentives present in the procedures used in Brussels, Antwerp and Ghent, new Flemish decree]

8.3. Other indirect effects

1. Interactions between Antwerp, Brussels and Ghent and their hinterlands

[argue that there are interactions between the schools in these cities – whose enrolment policies are coordinated by the local LOP – and schools outside. These interactions depend on (1) the differences across enrolment procedures between the city schools and the schools in the suburbs, (2) the level of congestion of city schools, (3) the level of congruence between parents’ preferences over school composition and the school composition resulting from the enrolment policy.

Discuss statistics on the inflows and outflows of children from and to Antwerp and Ghent in the past 4 years. I will look at the trend – although 4 years is very short – and at the characteristics of the inflow and outflow children]

2. Interactions between school systems in Brussels

[argue that choice of school system is as relevant as choice of school for a non-negligible subset of the Brussels population and that school enrolment policies in each system has an impact on allocation of pupils across the three systems and on the flows between the systems. Discuss the native Dutch-speaker quota and likely impact of their recent rise, discuss anecdotal evidence on the impact of the Simonet decree on flow between the Dutch-speaking primary schools and French-speaking schools]

9. Conclusions

[to be written]