

## CONCLUSION



After the end of the First World War, Europe was mapped out in order to ensure peace. The decision-makers in Paris were guided by their visions of a just Europe and adhered to the vague and contentious principle of self-determination while re-spacing the continent with changed state border lines. However, they were also confronted with civil wars in Central and Eastern Europe that left little room for a supranational imposition of new state border lines. Whereas the League of Nations closely supervised borderland schooling in interwar Central and Eastern Europe, guided by the need to respect the region's diverse range of nationalities, ethnicities and languages, individual nation-states in Western Europe were granted unlimited control over the way in which they organised education. The borderlands upon which the Paris Treaties thrust their imagined notions of a peaceful Europe, but failed to support with an international relief plan, became the places where Europe's interwar order faced its greatest challenges. At a time of growing state involvement over the lives of individuals inhabiting the European continent, with nation-state representatives unambiguously defining their incentives in their measures for future citizens, borderland schools often became essential sites of interwar political struggle where nationalists clashed over the meaning of childhood. As a result, meaning often fragmented and collapsed. This book analysed and compared how language learning policies and practices within the context of the most important child space at the time in Polish Upper Silesia and the regions of Eupen, Sankt Vith and Malmedy were used to make and scape the border. Following the establishment and implementation of compulsory primary education in Poland and Belgium in 1919, when the primary school was designed to shape a universal space for children, there was considerable policy interest in the language learning conditions for borderland pupils.

A comparative historical methodology based on the selection of two case study borderlands was chosen as a means of discovering similarities

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and differences in the multidimensional and continuously changing dynamics involved in making and scaping the border. The analysis placed the investigation of borderland events and experiences within their national and transnational historical context and searched for linkages between them, thereby identifying a profile indicative of how characteristic a certain event or experience was, irrespective of the actual geographical location of a borderland. Arguing that organising or experiencing primary education as a teacher or pupil in one of the two case study borderlands continued to be significantly different experiences than elsewhere in Poland and Belgium throughout the interwar period, this book has distilled a set of common characteristics that demonstrate how different these experiences were. By means of a newly developed comparative spatiotemporal framework of analysis, composed of three axes – borders and human territoriality, power and multiple loyalties, and microhistory in a multi-layered context – the first profile of borderland schooling was developed. This book showed how crucial an element interwar borderland schooling was in the detaching of both the Polish-German and Belgian-German borderlands from Germany, as well as their integration within, respectively, the interwar Polish and Belgian nation-states. This process was not a teleological one of linear integration, but a relational one of continuous interactions between institutions and historical actors. Interwar borderland schooling in Polish Upper Silesia and the regions of Eupen, Sankt Vith and Malmedy had the following four characteristics in common.

First, borderland schools were more dependent on international and transnational changes. To start with, the borderlands changed state sovereignty out of a geopolitical concern for peace, and not as a result of the desires for self-determination of a considerable segment of borderland inhabitants. During the interwar years, changes at the international and transnational levels continued to affect the learning conditions in borderland schools. During the Locarno negotiations in the mid-1920s, which resulted in agreements ensuring the stability of Germany's western state border line, Belgian politicians explored the possibility of selling the border regions of Eupen and Sankt Vith to Germany. This caused confusion among borderland inhabitants about the kind of integration the Belgian state had in mind and undermined the efficacy of educational policies. On the other hand, when Germany left the League of Nations in 1933 and exchanged most of the supranational framework of control over Poland's western borderlands for a bilateral Polish-German agreement, the conditions in the borderland schools of Polish Upper Silesia sharply improved, especially when compared to those in schools for pupils with a mother tongue other than Polish who lived elsewhere in Poland. Moreover, because Germany never lost its interest in the children who had ended up

on the other side of its border following the Treaty of Versailles, an interest that became more pronounced after 1933, borderland pupils received opportunities for cultural development that, given Germany's longer experience with reform pedagogy, could seriously challenge or even surpass Polish and Belgian educational policy measures.

Secondly, special educational policies were a frequent phenomenon in interwar borderlands. Borderland schools often faced language learning policies that were especially developed for them, notwithstanding how differently power manifested itself within a specific borderland region. When power took the form of domination in Eupen-Malmedy, for example, Herman Baltia was able to prohibit free enrolment to the French-speaking school in the German language zone he had installed despite the fact that the Belgian Constitution granted guardians the freedom to choose the language of instruction of their children. In Polish Upper Silesia, on the other hand, a preventive power strategy turned out to have a decisive influence. The Geneva Agreement painstakingly detailed preventive measures for the school enrolment of pupils belonging to what had been constructed as the German national minority. The Pedagogical Institute in Katowice, meanwhile, constitutes an example of how power interrelated with knowledge. The specificities of Silesian styles of teaching and learning were discovered, researched and later influenced in order to underpin the ideology of state upbringing.

Arguing that special educational policies were a frequent phenomenon in interwar borderlands is not the same as saying that educational policies in borderlands were always special, or could not be the same as educational policies implemented in other parts of a country at a particular moment in time. By selecting one example of an identical educational measure in the centre and the periphery and using that example in order to argue that borderland schooling was not different from the schooling provided in other parts of a country, one underplays the dynamics of space and time. The changing borderscape of the geographical and social space affected by the drawing of the state border line could at specific moments include schools located outside of a borderland. In the case of Polish Upper Silesia, these were German-speaking schools in some areas of Western and Northern Poland, as well as schools providing teaching in Yiddish or Hebrew. In the case of the regions of Eupen, Sankt Vith and Malmedy, these were German-speaking schools in Wallonia and Dutch-speaking schools in Brussels. Following borderland schooling throughout the twenty-year interwar period, however, made it possible to move beyond a presentation of ad hoc examples and indicate the frequency of special educational policies over a longer period.

Third, within the borderlands, (language learning) policy measures were more negotiable. At those moments when power did not manifest itself predominantly through one dimension (whether dominative, such as in Eupen-Malmedy until 1925 and in Polish Upper Silesia since 1937, or preventive, such as in the regions of Eupen, Sankt Vith and Malmedy after 1932), state institutions and individuals could foreground the abnormalities and contradictions in language learning rules and aim to enlarge them. The borderlands became places where discussions with relevance for wider networks in Poland, Belgium, Germany and the League of Nations took place. Despite the differences in the systems of power that came into being in Polish Upper Silesia and in the regions of Eupen, Sankt Vith and Malmedy, they changed according to similar dynamics. This insight facilitates a reinterpretation of the battle over the existence and access to German-speaking schools in Polish Upper Silesia. Interestingly, within another power constellation and at other levels of decision-making, something similar happened to the children whose guardians proclaimed their mother tongue was French and wanted them to attend the French-speaking school in Eupen.

Finally, borderland schools experienced the excesses within changing systems of power. The interwar borderlands at times turned into places of excess, whether in terms of nationalist control or creative cultural production. The control measures applicable to Eupen-Malmedy perfectly encapsulated the crucial contradictions of the Belgian Kingdom. The Baltia government in the early 1920s was not only a colonial regime but also a transitional one, established with the aim of eventually enabling borderland inhabitants to enjoy all the freedoms of the Belgian Constitution. In addition, unlike anywhere else in Belgium, within eight years of the dissolution of the French-speaking zone Baltia had established, German-speaking children could once again receive most of their primary education in German. In Polish Upper Silesia in the late 1920s, meanwhile, a collective obsessive search to define the mother tongue of individual borderland pupils could not prevent legislation and jurisdiction from being incapable of encompassing normativity. Throughout the 1930s, however, scientists and teachers developed innovative research methodologies in order to provide creative cultural solutions to the challenges of education that were unique in Europe at the time. Efforts were put into typifying a Silesian child, understanding their language learning conditions and improving them.

It ought to be possible to situate the insights into the history of schools in the Polish-German and Belgian-German borderlands offered in this book within a broader European context. Painting an overview of educa-

tional state policies throughout Europe does not enable us to develop an understanding of – let alone compare – the multidimensional and continuously changing dynamics involved in making and scaping borders. It does, however, enable us to evaluate the political strategies of power in Polish Upper Silesia and the regions of Eupen, Sankt Vith and Malmedy as harsher or softer forms of domination in comparison to those issued towards German-speaking schools elsewhere in Europe. At one end of the spectrum are nation-states that offered their German-speaking inhabitants a great deal of decision-making power over the organisation and content of language learning. In Estonia, for instance, German-speaking inhabitants could design the contours of primary and secondary education themselves and received public funding both from Estonia and Germany.<sup>1</sup> In Southern Denmark, already from the early 1920s, the situation looked similar to what would be achieved in the regions of Eupen, Sankt Vith and Malmedy in the second half of the 1930s, the major difference being the establishment of private German-speaking schooling.<sup>2</sup> And in Czechoslovakia, not only did the German-speaking schools from the Habsburg era situated along its western state border line continue to provide a monolingual education in German, but a new German-speaking school system was also established in regions further east, such as Slovakia and Carpathian Rus.<sup>3</sup> At the other end of the spectrum we find nation-states that opted for a strategy of coercive domination, such as Italy and France. It is indeed true that Italian and French state officials did not hesitate to use force in order to demand adherence to their exclusive language learning rules in schools, while at the same time, through their involvement in the League of Nations, prohibiting states in Central and Eastern Europe from doing the same. Both in Southern Tyrol and in the regions of Alsace and Lorraine, German-speaking schools and teaching branches were forbidden in the early 1920s, and whereas French statesmen reopened them by the end of the 1920s, German-speaking schools in fascist Italy could only continue to operate in secret.<sup>4</sup> The middle of the spectrum is occupied by nation-states where more ambiguity and changes could be observed over the course of time, such as Latvia, Belgium, Poland and Hungary. Latvian politicians began by offering German-speaking inhabitants autonomy in decision-making over the organisation of language learning in German-speaking schools but abruptly ended this autonomy under the regime of Karlis Ulmanis in the 1930s.<sup>5</sup> Hungarian policies towards German-speaking pupils were more complicated. Whereas a significant part of the German-speaking population identified with the Hungarian state politically, Hungarian political leaders increasingly developed an ethnic understanding of what it meant to be a Hungarian. This was because they wished to include in their image of the nation the many pre-war inhab-

itants of the kingdom who found themselves in neighbouring countries after the signing of the Treaty of Trianon.<sup>6</sup>

While it is possible to display the content of educational policies directed towards inhabitants speaking a minority language in different European countries, comparing their effects is a less straightforward matter. Eriksen and others concluded that the intentions of state officials to use education as the primary tool in order to bring about more homogeneous collective entities within their geographical state border lines led to results that were 'only marginally significant and often even quite contrary to what originally had been intended and expected'.<sup>7</sup> This book offered a comparative analytical framework in order to dissect and understand the complex interrelationship of transient space, evolving time, power systems and strategies, as well as multiple loyalties, which enabled me to reveal a common profile of borderland schooling that points to the complex, contradictory and continuously changing results of national state policies in two case study borderlands. Rather than situating the findings within the context of a broad panoply of reactions to educational policies in other European borderlands, this conclusion focuses on two specific places in Europe. After the switch in state sovereignty in the aftermath of the First World War, the nation-building process here did not take the form of spreading a single codified language and culture of the core nation to the people living in the newly acquired and peripherally located regions. Even if some politicians in Poland had wanted to do this, the League of Nations prevented it from happening in Polish Upper Silesia. The Belgian Kingdom, meanwhile, respected the constitutional right to a free use of languages within its state border lines. The lens is trained on the Ukrainisation of Soviet Ukraine by means of a language many considered insufficiently codified to function as a standard language, as well as the development of Yugoslavian nationhood in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (since 1929 the Kingdom of Yugoslavia), among other means, by the creation and teaching of the Serbo-Croatian-Slovenian language.

Between 1917 and 1919, several separate Ukrainian republics manifested transient forms of independence. Whereas a smaller part of what we today know as Ukraine eventually joined Poland in 1920, the largest part was incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1924 and became known as Soviet Ukraine, the Soviet Union's second largest republic.<sup>8</sup> Soviet Ukraine is here understood as a borderland because it was a newly created administrative entity joining the Soviet Union at its southwestern state border line. From the mid-1920s onwards, a plan devised in Moscow was put into practice forcing inhabitants to learn and use the Ukrainian language and make themselves familiar with Ukrainian history and culture. Whereas historians have usually highlighted the generosity of Stalin

in supporting the use of a non-Russian language, something he did not do elsewhere in the Soviet Union, Matthew D. Pauly emphasises the pragmatism of that decision; the effectiveness of totalitarianism depended on citizens understanding its message.<sup>9</sup> Ukrainisation largely failed for the following reasons. Most importantly, Ukrainisation could not be orchestrated from above, as not enough people had a sufficient knowledge of the Ukrainian language, and too little resources were made available.<sup>10</sup> Teachers who knew Ukrainian and lived elsewhere in the Soviet Union were not transferred to Soviet Ukraine because that was considered too expensive, and most local schools provided language training without the use of the scarcely available new textbooks.<sup>11</sup>

As a result, Soviet educational policy was a fairly irrelevant factor in the project of Ukrainisation, which largely depended on the practices of local historical actors.<sup>12</sup> A significant number of professionals interested in the Ukrainian language training of primary school children developed innovative activities.<sup>13</sup> Soviet Ukraine became a laboratory for research on reform pedagogy, in much the same way that Polish Upper Silesia did, but these initiatives never generated a wider impact. Soviet authorities did not have enough trust in teachers (owing to their supposed belonging to the intelligentsia) in order to mould them into a nationally loyal segment of the population, while many inhabitants considered Ukrainian too lacking in prestige to open up a path of opportunities for social advancement.<sup>14</sup>

Does the profile of borderland schooling hold for interwar Soviet Ukraine? Schooling in Soviet Ukraine was determined by its primary characteristic: its relatively greater dependence on international and transnational changes. Language learning conditions for Ukrainian differed fundamentally, depending on which side of the newly drawn Polish-Ukrainian interwar state border line inhabitants lived. Whereas in Poland, the state reduced the number of Ukrainian-speaking schools in its southeastern borderlands, in Soviet Ukraine, more pupils acquired a knowledge of the language. In the long term, this facilitated the standardisation and academic use of the Ukrainian language.<sup>15</sup> Once included into the Soviet Ukraine, moreover, a transnational flow of ideas arose in the form of a pedagogical trend for progressive education enthusiastically borrowing insights from abroad.<sup>16</sup> The fact both Polish Upper Silesia and Soviet Ukraine functioned as transnational laboratories of reform pedagogy corresponds to an insight put forward within Border Studies, namely that borderlands are likely to become hubs of cultural innovation. Equally true, however, is the fact that borderlands could turn into spaces of political control or cultural stagnation, as was frequently the case in the regions of Eupen, Sankt Vith and Malmedy.<sup>17</sup>

Special educational policies, which the profile of borderland schooling revealed to be a common phenomenon in interwar borderlands, were also implemented in Soviet Ukraine. Unlike in other places in the Soviet Union, the teaching of a non-Russian language was made compulsory. Moreover, whereas the primary school curriculum in the Soviet Union lasted for four years, the Soviet Ukrainian curriculum lasted for seven years, a result of the Civil War (1917–1922) which hit the region harder than elsewhere in the Soviet Union and meant that it took longer to restore school infrastructure and homogenise curricula.<sup>18</sup> The third characteristic of the profile of borderland schooling also applies to Soviet Ukraine. In the second half of the 1920s and the first half of the 1930s, when power manifested itself mostly through a preventive power strategy (prescribing primary school education in Ukrainian instead of in Russian) combined with the incentive to guide the behaviour of pupils through pedagogical knowledge, policy measures were highly negotiable precisely because the reality at the time (a lack of Ukrainian speakers and educational resources) made these measures almost irrelevant. Ukrainisation worked in schools with well-educated and well-motivated teachers, but could equally fail when teachers showed no interest or were opposed to the use of progressive methods.<sup>19</sup> The question remains open with regards to what we could learn if these negotiations were interpreted through the prism of human territoriality. The answer may be that the dynamics set in motion were less intense than in Polish Upper Silesia and the regions of Eupen, Sankt Vith and Malmédy, owing to the rulers' lack of knowledge of local circumstances, their mistrust of local teachers, as well as a lack of the resources invested in the endeavour. At a later time, and this brings us to the fourth characteristic, teachers in Soviet Ukraine experienced the excesses within changing systems of power. When terror accelerated in the second half of the 1930s, Ukrainisation policies in primary education were downsized because the regime believed it had not been careful enough in its recruitment of teachers more than a decade earlier. Those judged sympathetic to Bolshevism were now viewed with suspicion. How otherwise are we to interpret the fact that the Communist Party, with the collaboration of the Soviet security police, arrested and put on trial teachers for a crime no greater than following state directives?<sup>20</sup>

The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes arose in the aftermath of the First World War and was composed of parts of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire and the formerly independent Kingdom of Serbia. Initially, a pluralistic understanding of Yugoslav nationhood legitimising the commonalities among its inhabitants through an inclusion of political, regional or religious particularities was pursued.<sup>21</sup> Because the state ideology of Yugoslavism was developed at a moment in time when iden-

tities such as being Serbian, Slovenian or Croatian were still contingent and dynamic, it could eventually have generated a hybrid but vernacular Yugoslav identity. Negotiations on the meaning of Yugoslav nationhood took place in various local settings regardless of their geographical proximity to a state border line. In the process of making the border, however, the endeavour failed because of the centralisation and politicisation of Yugoslav nationhood undertaken by Belgrade authorities during the authoritarian rule that characterised the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (created in 1929). State authorities increasingly doubted whether their citizens were willing enough to place their regional identities within the larger idea of Yugoslav ideology. That it would be the dissociation of Croatian Catholic inhabitants from the Yugoslavian national idea, which imploded the whole endeavour after the assassination of King Alexander in 1934, could never have been foreseen in the early 1920s. In the initial understanding of a pluralistic Yugoslav national identity, more space was foreseen for Serbian and Croat discourses than for other regional or religious affiliations. Only at a later stage did Croatian national belonging come to be understood as incompatible with Yugoslav national belonging.<sup>22</sup> This does not mean, however, that no other verbal battles about language and belonging were fought in border regions, such as Slovenia or Macedonia, or around another religious group, such as South Slav Muslims.<sup>23</sup> Despite the inclusion of Slovenian words in the newly created Serbo-Croatian-Slovenian language, 'educational authorities', Pieter Troch wrote, 'saw Slovenes as a peripheral part of Yugoslav national history and failed to take advantage of Slovenian intellectuals to integrate their historical memory within an overarching Yugoslav narrative'.<sup>24</sup> Other regions or groups were considered even less central to Yugoslav state ideology. Because a considerable number of local teachers in Macedonia were considered to feel more affinity with Bulgarian than with Yugoslav state ideology, they were hindered from continuing their profession, leaving their schools at times empty. The special incentives designed to attract teachers in favour of the Yugoslav cause failed to fill the gaps in the teaching corps.<sup>25</sup> And whereas religious diversity was propagated and concessions were granted to groups such as South Slav Muslims, these initiatives were kept small enough to ensure that Islam could not compete with the presumed Christian understanding of Yugoslav nationhood, a construction facilitating a clear distinction with the newly founded Republic of Turkey.<sup>26</sup>

Belgian nationalism, which had been strengthened during the First World War, was equally incapable of encompassing the feelings of belonging of the inhabitants of the Belgian Kingdom, and imploded from within. As the outcome of a democratic decision-making process initiated by politicians fighting for the Flemish case, a preventive power strategy

was articulated in the language laws of 1932 which granted the German-speaking border regions the right to decide the language of instruction in local schools. By contrast, the dictatorship in Yugoslavia preferred to execute its power as prohibition, domination and repression. The results of that decision are visible in the border city of Caribrod, which had belonged to Bulgaria and switched sovereignty to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in the aftermath of the First World War. As was the case with Eupen, it was situated in an isogloss zone without major religious differences among the local population, and was of no particular interest for the Great Powers. In the autumn of 1921, the language of education in primary schools switched to Serbian, and in 1923, the Bulgarian school system ceased to exist and Bulgarian teachers were required to leave.<sup>27</sup> Increasingly, local inhabitants were seen as nationally disloyal and the Yugoslav police repressed everything related to Bulgarian culture.<sup>28</sup>

Nevertheless, even during the dictatorship, as the cases of the German-speaking *Donauschwabern* and Romanian-speaking *Vlachs* will now illustrate, educational policies and practices within Yugoslavia's borderlands were negotiable. The home grounds of the *Donauschwabern*, today largely included in the Vojvodina, became a space where these negotiations not only foregrounded the complexities, contradictions and excesses of the system of power but also amplified them. Just as happened in Polish Upper Silesia, state authorities were obliged to respect the rights for minorities laid down in supranational law (in this case the Treaty of Saint-Germain). Yugoslav state authorities had a variety of reasons for adhering to these requirements, depending on the region. In Slovenia, which had belonged to the Austrian part of the Dual Monarchy and where German had been widely practiced, they chose to close German-speaking schools in order to weaken German influence. In the Vojvodina, on the other hand, the regime chose to transform formerly Hungarian-speaking schools into German-speaking schools in order to weaken Hungarian influence.<sup>29</sup> The language learning opportunities for *Donauschwabern* remained less favourable than in Polish Upper Silesia because the Treaty of Saint-Germain had been signed three years before the Geneva Convention, a period in which the League of Nations had further developed supranational protection measures. The measures taken to diminish the scope of minority schools here were more brutal than in Poland. State authorities decided on the basis of children's names who was entitled to be educated in German, with the result that German-speaking children with Slavic or Hungarian names were deprived of the opportunity to learn in their mother tongue.<sup>30</sup>

And yet, *Donauschwabern* managed to change the power dynamics that applied to them. They learned that by framing themselves as a national minority, and not merely a cultural one, their cultural and linguistic needs

could be met. As a national minority, they were able to attract the attention of a powerful transnational actor, Germany, and have their concerns addressed by the League of Nations in Geneva. This strategy was not as obvious a choice for them as it was for German speakers in Polish Upper Silesia because the *Donauschwabern* had never been part of Germany. What followed were intense negotiations at different levels of decision making along the logic of human territoriality, eventually including the involvement of the German Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gustav Stresemann, who pleaded their case in Geneva, and leading to a change in the enrolment policy for German-speaking minority schools. Name analysis was exchanged for a procedure similar to the one practised in Polish Upper Silesia, based on what a parent declared their child's mother tongue to be. Germany was thus able to play a decisive role in changing the minds of these borderland inhabitants (whom Yugoslav state authorities had merely been using to de-Hungarianise a region) to such an extent that they eventually also supported National Socialism and voluntarily joined the German Army.<sup>31</sup> Although Romanian authorities never invested the same amount of money as German decision makers, and could not lean on a vast history of pedagogical knowledge, through a bilateral Romanian-Yugoslavian agreement, they could influence the curriculum of schools teaching in Romanian.<sup>32</sup> These schools were located in the north of the kingdom, close to the Romanian state border line, as well as within a more centrally located part of Eastern Serbia where the Romans had been present since antiquity.<sup>33</sup> This observation indicates that when applying the profile of borderland schooling to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (later the Kingdom of Yugoslavia), it is important to follow where the change of state border lines generated its effects. Following the borderscape means tracing how, after the drawing of such lines, transient space was given meaning to through the interaction between the rulers and the ruled throughout a country and at various levels of decision making.

The Third Reich's annexation of Polish Upper Silesia and the regions of Eupen, Sankt Vith and Malmedy caused a dramatic upheaval in borderland schooling. Although the German nationalisation campaign was necessarily more severe in the east as a result of Nazi racial ideology, similarities can be detected in the way in which education was organised in former Polish Upper Silesia and the regions of Eupen, Sankt Vith and Malmedy. In order to provide a monolingual German school curriculum on both sides of the Reich, a majority of the teachers were brought in from the mainland.<sup>34</sup> The immigrant teachers held the highest positions and were responsible for the proliferation of National Socialist ideology in schools. Whereas loyal Belgian teachers had been transferred to the Belgian mainland before the establishment of the German occupation, loyal

Polish teachers became the target of an elimination campaign directed against the pre-war intelligentsia.<sup>35</sup> Those locals who remained needed to confirm their loyalty to the Third Reich by accepting German citizenship (and often enrolling to the NSDAP) in the case of the regions of Eupen, Sankt Vith and Malmedy, or by signing the *Volksliste* (a list classifying borderland inhabitants into categories of Germanness according to National Socialist criteria) in the case of Polish Upper Silesia.<sup>36</sup>

After the liberation, life was difficult in the borderlands. The regions of Sankt Vith and Malmedy had suffered greatly during the Ardennes Offensive, while in Polish Upper Silesia, many could not identify with the new communist regime.<sup>37</sup> In addition, the obsession with ethnically pure nation-states meant that there was no longer any political will to supervise the treatment of non-dominant groups. The successor of the League of Nations, the United Nations, focused on individual freedoms instead of on rights for what had in the interwar years been called minorities.<sup>38</sup> This change put an end to the special conditions that minorities in Central and Eastern Europe had enjoyed and heralded the comprehensive integration of the borderlands within their nation-states. The reintegration of the border regions to, respectively, the Belgian and Polish states had much in common with each other. First, there was an overall conviction that Germans needed to leave. Whereas most Germans had left the regions of Eupen, Sankt Vith and Malmedy before the end of the war, many Germans moved out of Polish Upper Silesia within a year of the end of the war.<sup>39</sup> And second, those who were considered to have been too sympathetic to the German military cause lost – temporarily or not – their civil rights.<sup>40</sup> Both Belgian and Polish authorities also believed that offering children the perspective of a meaningful future within the post-war national set-up could secure the post-war borders and integrate the borderlands with the mainland. Policy measures were therefore introduced to reach more children, to have them in school for a longer time, and to offer them a carefully selected corps of teachers, often brought in from the mainland.<sup>41</sup> The relative tolerance that characterised the interwar years was replaced by a monolingual French or Polish language policy, involving the screening of textbooks and teaching materials.<sup>42</sup> Special measures for the borderlands were considered a temporary solution, since the main aim was to make them soon an undifferentiable part of the mainland.<sup>43</sup>

The early post-war renationalisation campaign in Eupen, Sankt Vith and Malmedy was more easily realised than in Poland for a number of reasons. The region was smaller, had a longer history of national political stabilisation, and had suffered less serious devastation during the war. But the effects of this campaign were later softened.<sup>44</sup> The differences in entrance fees for Catholic and non-Catholic secondary schools became the

central topic of a significant national debate in Belgium on the role of religion in society. By subsidising both systems, the so-called School Pact from 1958 consolidated confessional peace and institutionalised segmented societal pluralism.<sup>45</sup> After confessional peace had been attained, the Belgian political agenda moved on to language disputes between Flemish and Walloons. The first compromise was reached in 1962, when a law established four language areas within Belgium (a Dutch-speaking area in the north, a French-speaking area in the south, a German-speaking area in the east and a bilingual area in Brussels), a decision later consolidated in the Belgian Constitution.<sup>46</sup> In the nine municipalities comprising the German-speaking area, the rights of French speakers, including the existence of French-speaking primary schools, were to be guaranteed, and in two municipalities in the French-speaking area, Malmedy and Waimes, the same applied to German-speaking inhabitants. Since 1970, borderland inhabitants have greatly benefitted from the six Belgian state reforms initiated by Flemish politicians designed to steadily replace the centralised state with a regionalised structure composed of three communities responsible for policy areas such as education (the Flemish-, French- and German-speaking communities) and three regions responsible for policy areas such as roads (the Flemish, Walloon and Brussels-Capital Region).<sup>47</sup> The regions of Eupen and Sankt Vith were granted cultural autonomy at the beginning of the 1970s, establishing the first Board of German Cultural Society in 1973.<sup>48</sup> This would last until 1989, when the government of the German-speaking community was given responsibility for the organisation of the local educational system, and until 1997, when it could also decide upon language training within their schools.<sup>49</sup> Currently, borderland pupils receive foreign language training (either in French or German) for at least two hours a week from the beginning of their primary school career, an amount that steadily increases as they progress through the educational system.<sup>50</sup> In addition, every pupil is given the right to be taught their religion. In the school year 2019–2020, 72 per cent of pupils received an education in Roman Catholicism, 13 per cent in Islam, 10 per cent in ethics, and 4 per cent in Protestantism.<sup>51</sup> A survey on the foreign language competencies of pupils conducted in several European countries in 2012 indicated that the German-speaking community was exceptional for starting foreign language training that early. The results of that policy in the long run, however, are somehow surprising. By the fourth year of secondary school, the survey concluded, the knowledge of pupils of their first foreign language (whether German or French) was nevertheless average in European terms, whereas the knowledge of their second foreign language (English) scored significantly above average.<sup>52</sup>

Polish national policies towards education in the borderlands softened after the 1956 protests, but hardened again later. A further divergence between Polish Upper Silesia and the regions of Eupen, Sankt Vith and Malmedy materialised in the years to follow. The first primary school in Poland after the war offering a bilingual Polish-German curriculum was the Willy-Brandt-Schule in Warsaw, which was established in 1978 as a diplomatic school and was financially supported by the German state.<sup>53</sup> Whereas German language training eventually returned to school curricula in Poland, a greater emphasis was always put on the knowledge of Russian. After the collapse of communism, the public educational sector was rapidly privatised. A private bilingual Polish-German primary school in Szczecin was opened in the early 1990s, and a second one later followed in Wrocław.<sup>54</sup> In Katowice, the gap was filled by a private English international school, offering teaching in the native tongue of a child, which could be German 'if resources allowed for it'.<sup>55</sup> For a long time, public schools in Poland could not offer foreign language teachers competitive labour conditions. In the Silesian District (including the cities Katowice and Lubliniec), it was recently decided to start English foreign language training from the first grade. German language training follows in the fifth or seventh grade (after the school reforms of 2017, primary school education in Poland now lasts for eight years).<sup>56</sup> It wasn't until 2018 that a public school in Katowice opened a bilingual Polish-German teaching branch for the seventh and eighth grade.<sup>57</sup> A petition launched by the German-speaking radio station in Katowice in 2019 to provide comprehensive public bilingual Polish-German primary education has yet to make any headway.<sup>58</sup>

This conclusion has argued that borderlands in interwar Europe did not always have a distinct liminal position. They could vary in spatial extent, and the meaning of what was peripheral and what was central could change. Consequently, the relevance and relative importance of the four characteristics within the profile of borderland schooling can also differ from case to case, or change within a case over time. What unites the cases discussed in the conclusion is that the spaces and lives of children in the interwar years were influenced by the institutional power of borders. Using the framework of comparison offered in this book for the analysis of other case study borderlands on the European continent during and beyond the interwar years would not only enable us to assess the impact of contextual factors and other spaces on the profile of borderland schooling, but also reveal under which conditions borderland children were more likely to be transformed from spoken children into speaking children, thereby participating in and co-creating their environment.<sup>59</sup> These insights could open up new possibilities for an understanding of the rise of state involvement

in the recent European past and, indeed, of the European continent as an entity actively constituted by space.

## Notes

1. Eser, *Volk, Staat, Gott!*, 664.
2. Wung-Sung, 'We Remain What We Are', 142–44; Nørr, 'Nationalpolitik', 235–87.
3. Rexheuser, *Kulturen und Gedächtnis*, 138–39.
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22. Troch, *Nationalism*, 94 and 223.
23. Boškowska, *Das Jugoslawische Makedonien*; Giomi, 'Reforma'.
24. Troch, *Nationalism*, 94.
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29. Wehler, *Nationalitätenpolitik*, 22–23.
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31. Mezger, *Forging Germans*, 29–68.
32. Koljanin et al., 'The Role of History', 9.
33. Fifer, 'Assimilation'.
34. Schärer, *Deutsche Annexionspolitik*, vol. 38, 217; Kaczmarek, 'Województwo', 28.
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46. Witte and Meynen, *De Geschiedenis van België na 1945*, 98–104.
47. Keirse and Gerard. 'Decretale stappen', 85–104; Dujardin and Scheid, 'De communautarisering', 105–29.
48. Fickers, 'Generational Conflicts', 171.
49. See the website of the Parliament der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft Belgiens, *Deutschsprachige Gemeinschaft*.
50. Ministerium der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft Belgiens, *Unterricht*, 31.
51. Ministerium der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft Belgiens, *Schülerzahlen*.
52. Ministerium der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft Belgiens, *European Survey*.
53. See website Willy-Brandt-Schule Warschau.
54. See websites of Deutsch-Polnische Grundschule im Evangelischen Martin-Luther-Zentrum für Diakonie und Bildung and Polsko-Niemiecka Szkoła Podstawowa 'Nasza Szkoła'.
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