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Does Education Help the Transition out of Power-Sharing in Plural Societies? A Comparative Study.

This paper investigates the relationship between education policy and transition out of power-sharing by comparing the archetypal case study of the Netherlands to five contemporary typical cases of deeply divided societies which adopted power-sharing to manage their conflicts (Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of North Macedonia, Iraq, Lebanon, and Northern Ireland). It shows that education systems generally reproduce rather than challenging power-sharing, particularly through separate and unequal schools. However, flexible institutional designs can accommodate shifting identities in education (as well as the wider political system), ultimately facilitating transition out of consociation over the long term.

Does Education Help the Transition out of Power-Sharing in Plural Societies? A Comparative Study.

Can formal education contribute to integration and transition to 'normal' politics in constituencies which adopt consociational power-sharing? An overview of the peace agreements concluded in the last two decades suggests that consociational power-sharing (hereafter, power-sharing)[1] is an increasingly common approach to manage deep, seemingly intractable and violent societal cleavages (UN Peacemaker Peace Agreements Database, 2014; McCulloch and McEvoy, 2018). The four core institutional provisions of consociations, identified in Arend Lijphart's analysis of the Dutch 'politics of accommodation' (1968; 1977), have informed the constitutional arrangements of deeply divided and conflict-affected societies including Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of North Macedonia (North Macedonia), Iraq, Lebanon, and Northern Ireland. In these societies, as in the early 20th Century Netherlands, antagonistic communities live side by side with minimal communication, communal membership is mutually exclusive, and political parties can rely on a stable voting base (Arblaster, 2006). Moreover, they all exhibit cross-community executive power-sharing; proportionality in electoral system, distribution of funding and political representation; extensive cultural autonomy for the local communities (segmental autonomy); and veto rights over issues of communal concern, making them typical cases of consociation (Daalder, 1989; Lijphart, 2000, 2013; O'Leary, 2005).

Despite its dissemination, power-sharing is far from uncontroversial. Debates largely revolve around what McCulloch (2017, p.2) calls 'the exit dilemma': whilst

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[1] The existing literature adopts a variety of definitions of power-sharing (Binninsgbø, 2013). This study will refer only to cases of consociational power-sharing, broadly exhibiting the four characteristics identified by Lijphart in his study of the Dutch politics of accommodation and refined in his later work (Lijphart, 1968; 1977; 2013).

some see transition out of the rigid structures of power-sharing as nearly impossible (Horowitz, 2014; Taylor, 2009), others maintain that transition is intrinsic to well-designed power-sharing pacts (McGarry, 2001; Lijphart, 1977).[2] Reference is often made to the archetypal case of the early 20th Century Netherlands, which adopted consociational power-sharing (locally known as *verzuiling*, pillarisation) and transitioned peacefully to an integrated and cohesive society through political reform (*ontzuiling,* depillarisation) (Horowitz, 2014; Lijphart, 2002; McCrudden and O'Leary, 2014; Noel, 2005). The literature implies that analysis of the Dutch case may provide useful insights for contemporary deeply divided societies which adopt power-sharing.

Education reform and other complementary mechanisms may have an important role in triggering and nurturing an incremental transition out of power-sharing as experienced in the Netherlands. Complementary mechanisms are central to the practice of complex power-sharing, which (in contrast to abstract models of consociation) relies on 'at least one other conflict-regulating strategy or principle' beyond consociation (O'Leary 2005, pp.34-35), from integration to power-dividing. Some have argued that these additional principles (including integration) may be embedded in education reform through – for example – mixed schooling (Fontana, 2016). Complementary mechanisms are also particularly relevant to burgeoning debates on the long-term impact of different varieties of power-sharing, on a spectrum between liberal and corporate power-sharing. Liberal power-sharing, which 'rewards whatever salient political identities emerge in democratic elections' (McGarry, O'Leary, 2007), is particularly susceptible to changes in individual and collective identities. Whilst the process of identity-building is complex and interactive, it has been shown that

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[2]A third group proposes that such transition is undesirable, as peace and reconciliation are possible within the broad structures of power-sharing (McCulloch, 2017). The implications of this possibility are explored in the conclusion.

institutions like education systems have a role in reproducing or reformulating existing antagonistic identities (Bush and Saltarelli, 2001). Thus, education reform may decisively contribute to transition out of liberal power-sharing, but have lesser effects in corporate power-sharing, which reflects pre-determined and ascriptive identifications (O'Leary, 2006; Wolff, 2011).

This paper investigates for the first time the extent to which formal education contributes to transition out of power-sharing. It compares the archetypal case of the Netherlands to five contemporary typical cases of consociation. As the Methods section explains, this comparison is not only feasible, but optimal for the purpose of shedding light on a previously under-investigated phenomena: the relationship between education and transition out of power-sharing.

This study has important implications for the theory and practice of conflict management. It lends some credit to the argument that flexible (i.e., liberal) power-sharing institutions contain the seeds of their own decay over the very long-term (over 50 years), regardless of their short-term impact. It also confirms that institutional and educational designs that reflect potentially shifting identities are more likely to accommodate and nurture a transition out of power-sharing (McGarry, 2017b; McCulloch, 2017).

This work also contributes to theories of education in conflict-affected societies. It shows that regardless of the extent of social change, it is very difficult to reform parallel institutions (such as separate education systems) in an integrationist direction. On the one hand, the Dutch case suggests that even separate schools, when they employ common curricula and encourage sustained inter-group contact, may be able to adapt to, and further facilitate, wider socio-political change. On the other hand, in most of the contemporary case studies considered here, separate schools are far from equal and

inclusive, and ultimately reproduce the mutually exclusive and antagonistic identities of the communities which participate in power-sharing. This undermines their potential transformative role.

The article is structured as follows: The first section surveys the literature about consociational power-sharing and its 'exit dilemma' (McCulloch, 2017) and about education in plural societies to formulate three research sub-questions on the relationship between education and transition out of power-sharing. The second section illustrates the case selection and methods. The third, fourth and fifth sections explore the three research sub-questions, by examining the Dutch education system and drawing parallels with the experience of five contemporary consociations. The conclusion highlights the relevance of this study to contemporary debates above and beyond the niche of education policy.

Theory and Research Sub-Questions

States dealing with diversity have two options: to eliminate this diversity through assimilation or genocide, or to accommodate it through a variety of constitutional designs (Knippenberg, 2002; McGarry & O'Leary, 1994). Consociational power-sharing has proven appealing for a number of deeply divided societies emerging from violent conflicts since Lijphart's initial conceptualisation of the Dutch 'Politics of Accommodation' (1969). The four key institutional provisions of power-sharing inspired the constitutional arrangements of Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Iraq, Lebanon, and Northern Ireland among others.[3]

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[3] The dataset of Political Agreements in Internal Conflicts (Fontana et al., 2018) identifies eight further peace agreements as approaching the consociational model: Burundi (2000), Liberia (2003), Mali (1991), Philippines (1996), Rwanda (1993), Somalia (2008), Sudan (2006), Uganda (2008).

The debate over the long-term impact of power-sharing remains one of the most divisive issues in the theory and practice of conflict management. Some see transition out of the rigid structures of power-sharing as nearly impossible (Horowitz, 2014; Taylor, 2009). Accordingly, power-sharing hardens mutually exclusive communal identities, thereby perpetuating inter-communal conflicts (Rothchild & Roeder, 2005; Sisk, 2013). Beyond examining more explicitly political institutions, these authors point at the expansion or entrenchment of separate (or segregated) schools as a primary example of how power-sharing hinders long-term conflict management, reconciliation and transition to 'normal' politics (McCulloch 2017, p.1; Finlay, 2010; Gallagher, 2006; Nagle & Clancy, 2010). Others maintain that 'exit' out of power-sharing is intrinsic to well-designed pacts. As John McGarry (2001) explains, 'the institutional accommodation of rival groups and an extensive period of cooperation between them is more likely to transform identities in the long run than any of the integrationist options.' Dutch depillarisation is the archetypal example of how this transition: as Daalder (1996, p.11) puts it, Dutch power-sharing was characterised by a 'self-destructing logic'.

What is the role of education in transitions out of power-sharing? This topic is surprisingly under-researched, despite the prominence of education reforms in peace agreements which establish power-sharing (Fontana, 2018). Observing the proliferation of separate schools catering for children of different backgrounds in societies adopting power-sharing, some have proposed that education is an instrument to embed power-sharing rather than to challenge its values and practices (Fontana, 2016). Based on this narrative, the first sub-question asks: Does education reproduce or challenge power-sharing?

The existing educational literature suggests that separate schooling does not facilitate the transition towards an integrated society. In fact, it may even reproduce and

exacerbate inter-communal conflicts when separate schools adopt different curricula, offer a different quality of education, and do not provide opportunities for sustained and positive contact with 'the other' (Bush and Saltarelli, 2001; Gallagher, 2004; Hewstone & Hughes, 2015; Hughes, 2011; Niens & Cairns, 2005; Smith and Vaux, 2003). Thus, the second sub-question asks: Do separate schools entrench or erode the need for power-sharing?

Finally, the Dutch experience defies the expectation that separate schools, combined with power-sharing, hamper transition to a more integrated society and 'normal' democracy (McCulloch, 2017). In the late 1960s, the Dutch Communist newspaper De Waarheid confirmed that 'education is one of the oldest and most permeated territories of this politics of apartheid' (De Waarheid, 1957). Despite the erosion of the separate Calvinist, Catholic, Liberal and Socialist sub-cultures, to this day the institutional structure of the Dutch education system remains testament to the wider principles organising state-society relations in the early 20th Century: power-sharing (Sturm et al., 1998). On this basis, the third sub-question asks: How can separate schools nurture transition out of power-sharing?

Methods and Case Selection

This article employs a comparative case-study approach to deductively answer the three research sub-questions above. It relies on extensive analysis of the archetypal Dutch case and on comparison with five other contemporary typical case studies of consociation. It employs co-variation to investigate the extent to which formal education can contribute to the transition out of power-sharing.

The six cases considered in this article are all typical cases of consociational power-sharing (see, for example, McCulloch, 2017; McCulloch and McGarry, 2017; McEvoy, 2014; Horowitz, 2014). As Seawright and Gerring (2008) summarise,

comparison of typical cases is ideal for probing potential causal mechanisms, such as those linking education policy with transition out of power-sharing.

Out of the universe of typical cases of consociation, I selected the Netherlands, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Iraq, Lebanon, and Northern Ireland following the Most Different Systems Design (MDSD) method, which provides strong grounds for generalisation of the study's conclusions (Landman, 2008; Seawright and Gerring, 2008). Appendix 2 provides an overview of the six case studies considered in this article, including information on the main communities, the date of establishment of power-sharing, variety of power-sharing, basic structure of the education system and the main primary sources employed for each case study. As postulated by MDSD, the six case studies differ in most of their attributes, including their geographical location and temporal dimension (see also Appendix 2). Whilst the Netherlands is a case of plural society, the other cases are deeply divided constituencies: their communities are not only split along ethno-religious lines, but also in their allegiance to, or very acceptance of the legitimacy of the state. The origins of their power-sharing pacts also differ, with the powerful influence of foreign players crucial in contemporary case studies but not in the Netherlands. Moreover, in the Dutch case, the school war never degenerated into violence, but all the contemporary case studies experienced a violent conflict. Finally, the Netherlands differs from the other case studies in being the only existing example of peaceful transition out of power-sharing (McCulloch, 2017).

Beyond being typical cases of power-sharing, the six case studies are similar in having capillary education systems. In fact, their education systems are characterised by the mushrooming of separate schools in different shapes and forms (separate schools, separate shifts, 'two schools under one roof', satellite schools etc.). International observers have expressed severe concern for the ultimate impact of fragmented

schooling on social cohesion and peace across the contemporary cases considered here (e.g., European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, 2017; United Nations Development Programme, 2009; Shanks, 2015; Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, 2009). It remains to be seen if they can erode the need for power-sharing.

Cross-case approaches are often criticised for their limited generalizability. This article's reliance on co-variation across most different cases aims to mitigate the risk of generalising from single, sui generis, cases. However, this study's findings rely heavily on the experience of the Netherlands and they should be further tested on future cases of transition out of power-sharing. Moreover, the rigour of case-based investigations depends on the criteria for the collection and selection of sources (Merriam, 2009). This study presented unique challenges in this respect, due to the different primary sources available for each of the case studies (see Appendix 2, further information about the original interviews is available in Appendix 1). In plural societies different communities can also have very different perceptions of events, as reflected in archival materials, interviews and reports. Therefore, I collected sources across the communal divide in each of the case studies, and systematically compared and examined the sources for inconsistencies.[4] This required extensive fieldwork[5] and generated a thorough collection

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[4] Where translation was needed (for interviews and archival material in Lebanon and The Netherlands, respectively), I employed long-term research assistants. All the assistants were native speakers, University-educated and trained in research methods. To prevent valuable information being overlooked, I had regular, in-depth discussions with the assistants, aiming to gather their general impressions on trends and patterns across different sources.

[5] Fieldwork was carried out in The Netherlands, Lebanon, FYR of Macedonia and Northern Ireland between 2012 and 2017.

of primary sources, ranging from newspaper clippings, to archival material, to original interviews, to official government and NGO reports.

Does education reproduce or challenge power-sharing?

In few countries was education policy as instrumental to shaping the political system as it was in the Netherlands. Debates continue as to the deep roots of the Dutch politics of accommodation, but there is widespread agreement that the *schoolstrijd* (school struggle) of the late 19th Century catalysed and embedded power-sharing and the underpinning social pillarisation (Blom, 2000; Kennedy & Zwemer, 2010; Lijphart, 1968; Wintle, 2000).

The school struggle never deteriorated into violent conflict but released so many centrifugal energies to appear as 'a kind of civil war' (Vanderstraeten 2002, p.140). As the liberal newspaper Algemeen Handesblad reflected, 'the school war [was] a religious war' because 'the school… cannot be neutral' (Algemeen Handesblad, 1955). To prevent its degeneration into violence, a pacification committee was created in 1913 and its recommendations were adopted by Parliament as constitutional amendments in 1917, marking the beginning of the Dutch power-sharing experiment (Lijphart, 1968). The new Constitution entrenched three key freedoms in regard to education in Article 23. First, it reiterated the freedom to found schools while also requiring state schools to be 'paying due respect to everyone's religion or belief'. Second, it allowed private schools to organise instruction according to their ethos, entrenching the 'freedom of private schools to choose their teaching aids and to appoint teachers as they see fit'. Most importantly, it settled the school war by establishing that 'private primary schools that satisfy the conditions laid down by Act of Parliament are financed from public funds according to the same standards as public-authority schools' (Constitution, 2008). Later

amendments extended full subsidies also to secondary schools and Universities (Dronkers, 1995).

As a consequence of the pacification, three state-subsidised, parallel education systems emerged in the Netherlands: Catholic, Calvinist and state institutions catered to different communities from kindergarten to university. The social democratic newspaper Het Vrije Volk confirmed that the post-1917 Dutch education system was 'completely pillarised' (Het Vrije Volk, 1965; "No Scots in the Children's World," 1957). Separate denominational schools boomed at the expenses of the state sector: 75 percent of students attended state primary schools in 1880, but by 1925 this proportion declined to about 50 percent, and by 1945 to only about 30 percent. The proportion is similar at the secondary level (James, 1984).

This formal education system helped shape the ground rules of the Dutch politics of accommodation, but it also reproduced them in wider society by entrenching, legitimising and reproducing power-sharing (Lijphart 1968, p.118).

Education helped *entrench power-sharing* in the Netherlands by reproducing its wider political economy. The 1917 pacification redefined the function of the state and its relationship to citizens, establishing the four communities as gatekeepers and mediators between the state and individuals. In this arrangement, much of the traditional functions of a state (such as providing education) were 'subcontracted' to the private denominational organisations (Blom, 2000; Daalder, 1996; Sturm et al., 1998). James suggests that this pattern of resource allocation allowed politicians to allocate financial aid so as to maximise their political benefits (James, 1984). Daalder similarly proposed that, with the 1917 compromise, 'the essence of political action has shifted from strife to distribution' (Quoted in Lijphart 1968, p.128).

Evidence from the Netherlands resonates with recent research proposing that power-sharing facilitates a political economy of corruption and patronage, which in turn entrenches the political system (Haass & Ottmann, 2015). Far from being confined to the Dutch case, this account echoes the dynamics in contemporary Lebanon. In this textbook case of corporate consociation, education is one of the many ways in which political/communal parties channel state resources to their followers. For example, private free schools (private institutions which receive governmental subsidies to provide free education) cater for about 17 percent of students (Central Administration of Statistics, 2012) and were identified as major channels for patronage by several interviewees (Interview 6; Interview 28; Interview 8). Interviewees pointed out that the procedure for the allocation of state subsidies is unclear, and anecdotal evidence suggests that it follows personal and political connections (Interview 6; Interview 8). Politicians and charitable organisations also control individual children's access to private free school. In fact, a 2009 report suggests that citizens are not aware of state subsidies, and view private free schools as charity provided by political parties and religious organisations (United Nations Development Programme, 2009). Thus, Lebanon's political and religious leaders are able to 'repackage' individual rights to free education as 'favours' provided by one's community (United Nations Development Programme 2009, p.133; Interview 8). Echoing Haass and Ottmann (2015), several interviewees reflected that this dynamic entrenches the role of communal leaders as intermediaries between the state and its citizens, legitimising and reproducing power-sharing in the long term (Interview 22; Interview 7; Interview 8; Interview 28).

Education policy also helped *legitimate power-sharing* by reproducing patterns of consensual and inclusive decision-making in the Netherlands. The elites of the four pillars, as well as the private denominational organisations providing schooling, were all

involved in the formulation and implementation of the state education policies (Daalder, 1989). This provided opportunities to practice accommodation and compromise (Lijphart, 1968) but reform of the education system became very complex. In fact, Het Vrije Volk suggested that pillarisation constrained the potential for transformative reforms like a 'corset' ("Education in Emergency" 1956).

This is also the case in contemporary plural societies. For example, in Northern Ireland – a case of liberal power-sharing - the attempt to establish an Education and Skills Authority was undermined by the 'zero-sum mistrust' among communal representatives (Interview 35; Interview 34). The Education and Skills Authority (ESA) was envisaged to replace the multiple bodies representing the different school sectors in Northern Ireland (Interview 35; Interview 34). Lack of consensus and years of political wrangling between the major political parties in the power-sharing executive resulted in the establishment of the more modest Education Authority, which only manages the controlled schools in Northern Ireland (Education Act, 2014). Even in this new, ostensibly technocratic body, the main political and religious forces gained proportional representation on the governing board (Interview 36). On the one hand, this provides opportunities for inclusive and consensual decision-making. On the other hand, this provision was denounced as entrenching or even deepening 'the planned separate development of our schools' (Interview 17; Interview 18).

Finally, formal education helped *reproduce power-sharing* by disseminating the separate cultures of the Catholic, Protestant, Liberal and Socialist sub-communities which participated in power-sharing in the Netherlands. As Catholic school board put it in the late 1960s, in denominational schools all the staff and educators 'openly share[d] the same worldview' (Samenwerkingsschool, 1970). Educationalists were deeply conscious of their socialising mission: as the annual report of a Protestant primary

school puts it, 'the main theme of this school should be the Gospel… if there is a time when a child is most receptive, it is during early childhood' (Annual Report, 1963; See also: Association for Christian Preparatory Primary Education, 1948). Catholic children attended mass every day, whilst Protestant schools emphasised prayer and the reading of psalms (Van Rooden, 2010). Inspection reports highlight that denominational schools weaved religion into every subject, from history to natural science, so as to 'teach the gospel' (Curriculum for School with the Bible, 1950). Thus, the Dutch Communist daily drew the distressed conclusion that when children attended schools affiliated with a different sub-culture, they heard 'that their parents are "pagans" or "apostates of the true religion"' ("Tolerance or Apartheid?," 1957).

Similarly to the Dutch case, schools in contemporary consociations also cement and disseminate the separate and mutually exclusive cultures crystallised during conflict. For example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, after the war several schools were named after military or political figures associated with the Bosniak, Croat or Serb constituent people. They sometimes displayed religious images and even 'pictures of indicted war criminals' such as Radovan Karadzic (Alic, 2008; Magill, 2010). Serb- and Croat-language schools often used reprints of textbooks from Serbia and Croatia, respectively (Torsti, 2009). As a result, history textbooks emphasised different events, employed different interpretations and used value-laden language to convey mutually hostile narratives of the past (Bartulovic, 2006; Magill, 2010; Pašalic-Kreso, 2008). A local agreement to erode the discriminatory content of curricula and textbooks, finalised in 1999, was implemented unevenly: Torsti (2009, p.74) reports that in one school the passages removed from textbooks were 'exhibited on a bulletin board so that pupils could read them there'. If new textbooks partly reduced 'the nationalist bias of earlier books' (Bieber 2006, p.119), they still used an 'us-them' terminology (Magill, 2010;

Pašalic-Kreso, 2008, Torsti 2009, p.68). The dissemination of widely different, mutually exclusive and antagonistic identity-forming narratives entrench communal boundaries, perpetuating the need for power-sharing at the central level in contemporary consociations.

The Dutch experience, and the three examples from contemporary consociations above, challenge Lijphart's assertion that power-sharing depoliticises education policy (1968). Indeed, the above analysis confirms that education entrenches, legitimates and reproduces power-sharing. Rather than depoliticising education, power-sharing arrangements drag schooling to the heart of the negotiations for tangible and symbolic resources in plural societies. As the Catholic De Tijd (1968a) put it, education 'is without a doubt the most important expression, if not the cornerstone and promoter of pillarisation'. It becomes apparent that this is the case across contemporary plural societies – irrespective of the variety of power-sharing adopted on the liberal-corporate spectrum.

Do separate schools entrench or erode the need for power-sharing?
The existing literature on education in conflict-affected societies suggests that schools fostering mutually exclusive communal identities (through their structure, content and governance) do not have the capacity to erode the need for power-sharing (Hewstone & Hughes, 2015; Hughes, 2011; Niens & Cairns, 2005). The Dutch case questions this view. On the one hand, Dutch schools were overwhelmed with the pace of social change: as the Dutch liberal newspaper NRC put it 'the school, formerly an island outside society and an extension of the family and church, now is flooded with [the] external influences [of] world politics, secularisation, democratisation' (NRC, 1972). On the other hand, existing studies of the Netherlands attribute a subtle and indirect role to separate schools in the transition out of power-sharing. They maintain that – over the

long term - the thriving of multiple education sectors educating children in accordance with their parents' preferred ethos contributed to 'subjective depillarisation', 'the erosion of traditionally pillarised perceptions and attitudes at the micro- or individual level' (Bracke 2013, p.220).

The archival evidence points at two ways in which separate schools may have contributed to 'subjective depillarisation' in the 20th Century Netherlands. First, the literature suggests they may have helped *contribute to inter-communal equality*. The provision of equal education for children of all backgrounds emerged as an essential tile in the complex mosaic of emancipation and ultimate integration of Catholics and Calvinists into wider Dutch society (Coleman, 1978; Driessen & van der Slik, 2001; Shetter, 1971; Wintle, 2000). Following the 1917 compromise, the Dutch government started paying all teacher salaries directly, providing lump-sum grants to each school in proportion to the number of students enrolled, and providing buildings for all schools (Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2016). The Ministry of Education started to prescribe attainment targets and the content of the national exams at the end of primary and secondary school (Ladd et al., 2009; Lutz, 1996). The central government also started enforcing common educational standards across different sectors through increasingly frequent and rigorous inspections (James, 1984; Lutz, 1996).

Multiple interviewees of minority background in contemporary plural societies framed the need for separate schooling in terms of providing for socio-economic mobility for children of formerly marginalised groups (Interview 29; Interview 32; Interview 25; Interview 3; Interview 1; Interview 2). Yet, equal educational standards across sectors catering for different communities are the exception rather than the norm in contemporary consociations. For example, despite the introduction of a common funding formula in 2008, Albanians in North Macedonia are vocal about the lower

quality of Albanian-language instruction (Interview 31; Interview 16; Interview 20). This disparity is partly due to increasing numbers of students in Albanian-medium classes since 2001, and the resulting pressure on infrastructure, which leads many schools to operate in two or even three daily shifts. Schools operating in shifts have shorter lessons, and larger class sizes of up to 40 pupils (Interview 16; Interview 31; Lyon, 2011). The lower quality of education for Albanians in North Macedonia is also due to a lack of qualified teachers, which is being slowly addressed.

Moreover, international observers warn that the creation of a full educational pathway in the Albanian language may hamper the emancipation of ethnic Albanian youth and their inclusion in the Macedonian-dominated labour market (Interview 14; Interview 21; Interview 15). This underlines an important difference between the Netherlands and many of the contemporary plural societies considered here: the presence of linguistic cleavages. Despite the documented benefits of mother-tongue education (Cummins, 2008; Ouane, 2003), teaching in the mother tongue without adequate training in the dominant state language may hamper employment opportunities. The combination of unequal education quality and lack of training in the state language partly explains the continuing disparities in employment levels between ethnic communities in North Macedonia, with Roma and Albanians most likely to be unemployed (Gerovska-Mitev 2016, p.504). Thus, in contrast to the Dutch experience, separate schools in many contemporary cases of consociation can exacerbate the grievances that led to conflict by entrenching socio-economic marginalisation and thus perpetuate the need for power-sharing.

The archival evidence underscores a second way in which separate schools nurtured 'subjective depillarisation' in the Netherlands: by providing *communal security*. Accordingly, separate schools were necessary 'because religious people felt

threatened' ("Need for a Private School is Clearly Less," 1968). In fact, up to the early 1950s, the founding of new schools often led to bitter confrontations between the political representatives of different communities in the Netherlands (Mellink, 2013). Dutch historical newspapers suggest that this is because the establishment of new denominational schools remained perceived as an existential challenge for 'more than half of the Dutch people' ("School Struggle Revives in Hardegarijp," 1952). Once security was established, *De Telegraaf* (1968b) proposed that 'the need for one's own school became clearly less'. It is important to note that if separate communal schools helped provide security for the Catholics and Calvinists, they did so in the context of decades of peace and economic growth, which also nurtured European-wide processes of secularisation.

The case of Iraq underscores the importance of a broad context of peace and economic growth for transition out of power-sharing. Shanks reports that mother-tongue education in Iraq is key to 'safeguard the continued "existence of families in their rightful homes and villages"' (Shanks, 2016). In the strategically and politically unstable context of Kirkuk and other disputed territories, communal and political actors by-pass the state to finance different school sectors catering for children from different ethno-linguistic communities. This erodes state legitimacy and feeds the perception that needs are best met by communal leaders (Shanks, 2018). Far from triggering transition out of power-sharing by providing communal security, these dynamics entrench the school as a bulwark of mutually exclusive communal identities, and communities as the intermediaries between the state and individual. This entrenches the need for power-sharing.

In sum, echoing the existing educational literature (Gallagher, 2004; Hewstone & Hughes, 2015; Hughes, 2011; Niens & Cairns, 2005), this comparative overview

confirms that separate schools do not erode the need for consociation even in cases of liberal power-sharing (as in North Macedonia and Iraq). Common educational quality standards and the provision of communal security through separate schools may have indirectly contributed to the inclusion of Catholics and Calvinists in the Dutch state and economy over the five decades following the 1917 Compromise. However, education's indirect contribution to transition out of power-sharing in the Netherlands occurred over more than half a Century. None of the contemporary cases has had functioning power-sharing institutions for such a long period. Moreover, education's contribution to the Dutch exit from power-sharing occurred under specific conditions which are absent in other contemporary societies, including equal funding and quality standards and decades of peace and economic growth. In the Netherlands, these conditions underpinned a momentous trend of secularisation, which affected both the Protestant and the Catholic churches and was in turn accelerated by religious reforms of the 1960s (Blom, 2000; Mellink, 2013). In contrast, the Syrian civil war, continuing violence in Iraq and the simmering Israeli-Palestinian conflict question the stability and even viability of a Lebanese and Iraqi state based on power-sharing. If the Western Balkans have not experienced major violence, they have nonetheless been affected by decades of economic stagnation, with over a fifth of the population unemployed. Finally, the UK's decision to leave the European Union is problematizing the constitutional status of Northern Ireland, its geopolitical role and its economic future. This strategic instability may partly explain the limited impact of education reform as well as the continuing reliance on power-sharing to manage inter-communal cleavages in the contemporary case studies.

How Can Separate Schools Nurture Transition out of Power-Sharing?

Mirroring arguments on the self-destructive nature of power-sharing arrangements, a Catholic school board reflected in 1970 that:

> We should not forget that pillarised education was born out of a need for emancipation... If we are of the opinion that we as Roman Catholics are emancipated, [then] the need for the existence of this institution… has become obsolete, and needs to make way for a larger, broader structure, that presumes the fundamental equality of all people (Samenwerkingsschool, 1970).

In fact, the Netherlands took the leap to an integrated society, and out of power-sharing, while its education system remained characterised by 'voluntary apartheid' (Lechner 1989, p.143). On the one hand, newspapers reiterated that 'one cannot see depillarisation in Catholic education' (De Tijd, 1968). On the other hand, archival material shows that separate schools were overwhelmed with change. Subjective depillarisation - 'the erosion of traditionally pillarised perceptions and attitudes at the micro- or individual level' (Bracke 2013, p.220) - altered the drivers of school choice, shifting from religious affiliation to quality and proximity and increasing competition for the provision of better quality of education (Association for Christian Preparatory Primary Education, 1963; Dronkers, 1995; Karsten, 1994; Ladd et al., 2009; Van Rooden, 2010). School boards across the religious divide realised that society was likely to 'keep striving towards more tolerance and acceptance of different opinions in the years to come' (Samenwerkingsschool, 1970). In this context, separate schools were 'not at all a realistic expression of the mature plural society… [so] it is worth the trouble to exchange thoughts with "dissenters" on the possibilities of cooperation' (Samenwerkingsschool, 1970).

The previous sections have confirmed that separate schools entrench rather than challenging the need for power-sharing in contemporary plural societies. The educational literature also suggests that separate schooling hinders transition towards a cohesive society, particularly when they offer different curricula and do not provide opportunities for sustained and positive contact with 'the other' (Gallagher, 2004; Hewstone & Hughes, 2015; Hughes, 2011; Niens & Cairns, 2005). However, according to studies of depillarisation, even separate schools were able to adapt to wider social change and further facilitate the 'hollowing out of voluntary apartheid' in the Netherlands (Driessen and van der Slik 2001, p.570). How did they do so?

Education policy from the late 1940s enhanced the ability of Dutch schools to accommodate and reproduce a wider transition out of power-sharing in two ways. First, increasingly rigorous inspections ensured the *implementation of the centrally prescribed curriculum*, which included a list of subjects and even the number of hours to be spent on each subject every year (Blom, 2000). The common curricular and assessment standards constrained the influence of each school's ethos and equalised educational quality across different sectors (James, 1984; Karsten, 1994; Smit, 2014; Vanderstraeten, 2002). Differences remained between the school sectors. For example, the teaching of religious education was not subject to central inspections due to the resistance of Christian-democratic parties (Dronkers, 1995; Monsma & Soper, 2009) and some Calvinist schools integrated a 'religious perspective' in the whole curriculum, leading to tensions with the state over the teaching of topics like evolution (Monsma & Soper, 2009). However, the standardisation of the contents of education, alongside the religious reforms of the 1950s and 1960s, helped erode the doctrinal content of education turning most denominational schools into 'secularised religious schools' (Mellink 2013, p.141).

The formulation and enforcement of common curricula can be deeply controversial in plural societies, as exemplified by the experience of Lebanon. Here, successive administrations since the end of the civil war tackled the 'impossible mission' of formulating common history textbooks and curricula which would gather the consensus of all the representatives of Lebanon's 18 religious communities (Interview 11; Interview 9; Interview 13; Frayha, 2004). Repeated efforts failed because of deep disagreements over Lebanon's historical identity (Arab or otherwise) and place in a world increasingly polarised along the Iranian-Saudi axis (Interview 19; Interview 10; Interview 12; Fontana, 2016), as well as because of politicians' ambitions to 'add points to the book to support *[their]* sect' (Interview 13; Interview 19). Therefore, up to the present, schools are free to choose from over twenty book series to teach history, with minimal official supervision of the contents of these books (Interview 19). Depending on the confessional and political affiliation of the authors, different books emphasise different events and interpretations while rhetorically emphasising peaceful coexistence (Abouchedid and Nasser, 2000; Bashshour, 2005). If common curricula allowed Dutch schools to adapt to, and facilitate, transition out of power-sharing, it has been argued that the lack of common history curricula protects the integrity and stability of Lebanon's consociational political system (Fontana, 2016).

The second way in which Dutch schools accommodated wider transition out of power-sharing was by providing opportunities for *sustained and positive inter-group contact*. Since the 1960s, the government made financial support and subsidies conditional on minimal standards of inclusivity (Further Amended Law, 1962; Coleman, 1978; Monsma & Soper, 2009; Harkema, 2013). This encouraged schools to appeal beyond their traditional base, to individuals from different backgrounds. School boards expressed concern that mixed schools would make faith development harder and

potentially weaken the individual religiosity of children (Samenwerkingsschool, 1970; Discussion paper on the structure of the future school community in Nieuwegein, 1970). Yet, they also recognised that separate education was 'effectively discriminatory' and that it did not prepare children for 'their place in society, which, after all, is not pillarised' (Samenwerkingsschool, 1970).

The recent mainstreaming of 'shared education' across all state-funded schools in Northern Ireland echoes powerfully the Dutch experience (Shared Education Act, 2016). With the introduction of shared education as the new *modus operandi* across all school sectors, Northern Ireland's Department of Education encourages schools to collaborate across different sectors for the primary purposes of making economies and providing a better quality of education (Interview 33). The scheme is premised on the common curricular and quality standards across all school sectors and is backed by powerful financial incentives. Shared education is providing the opportunity for sustained and positive inter-group contact to children from different backgrounds, who effectively attend at least some of their classes together (Interview 26; Interview 27). In contrast to the Dutch experience, principals were adamant that shared education had no discenible impact on the separate ethos of their schools (Interview 23; Interview 24), at least in the short term.

This brief comparison shows that education policies have an important role in making schools flexible enough to reproduce and amplify wider socio-political change, including transition out of power-sharing, if and when it occurs. Specifically, common curricular standards and opportunities for sustained and positive inter-group contact (if embedded in policy and backed by financial incentives) help accommodate and even facilitate transition out of power-sharing. In the Netherlands, these policies encouraged confessional schools to reach out to wider pools of students and turn into 'pillarised

institutional shells' (Dronkers, 1995), through which citizens can freely move. However, contemporary case studies of both liberal and corporate power-sharing underscore the powerful challenges to the introduction of common curricula and the provision of opportunities for sustained and positive contact. In the absence of these reforms, it is unlikely that separate schools will depillarise 'from within' (Blom 2000, p.161) and facilitate a transition out of power-sharing.

Conclusion

Lijphart reflects that

> 'if consociational democracy is seen as the response to the needs of a plural or deeply divided society, this does not imply that consociationalism will vanish when the society becomes less plural' (Qtd. in Bracke 2013, p.20).

The Netherlands made the leap out of power-sharing with a fragmented education system. As such, it defies the expectation that power-sharing and separate education prevent the transition towards an integrated society. Comparing education in this historical case study and five contemporary deeply divided societies offers an opportunity to refine and expand on current debates over transition out of power-sharing and over the contribution of schools to this process.

This study found that in the Netherlands and other contemporary plural societies, the education system typically entrenches, legitimates and reproduces power-sharing. It also confirmed that separate schools, regardless of their shape and form (separate institutions, separate shifts, 'two schools under one roof', satellite schools etc.) do not typically erode the need for power-sharing. If they did so in the Netherlands, this was primarily due to uniform standards of schooling in the context of wider strategic

and economic stability and secularisation. These factors are absent in contemporary case studies. Finally, this article showed that separate schools with common curricula and sustained opportunities for inter-group contact do not hinder transition out of power-sharing. However, many contemporary divided societies societies face overwhelming challenges to educational reforms promoting common curricula and inter-group contact.

This has important implications for the theory of power-sharing. On the one hand, this study lends some credit to the argument that the adoption of consociational power-sharing does not obstruct integration over the long term. The hard guarantees provided by constitutional arrangements which accommodate diversity may ease the existential fears of the local religious, ethnic, linguistic and national groups, and promote their symbolic and practical equality, paving the way for subjective depillarisation under positive strategic and economic conditions (Blom, 2000; Lijphart, 1968; Lijphart, 1981). On the other hand, the findings question the 'self-destructive logic' of power-sharing and of its parallel institutions (van Dam 2015, p.306). it is clear that in the short-term, separate schools harden religious, ethnic and linguistic divisions, so transition out of power-sharing is not intrinsic to well-designed pacts. In fact, the Dutch experience lends credit to Toonen's assertion that pillarisation should be viewed as a 'dynamic condition with phases of institutionalisation and de-institutionalisation of consensual solutions' (Daalder 1996, p.11). In other words, once a society has embraced the accommodation of religious, linguistic and ethnic differences through power-sharing, it is unlikely to peacefully revert to political and social arrangements aiming at the elimination of differences both in politics and education.

Thus, power-sharing, and the separate educational system it engenders, may become a long-term feature of divided societies, questioning 'the unwarranted

assumption that a change in political culture will necessarily lead to changes in political structure' (Lijphart 1968, p.182). Under the adversarial pressures of economic failure and of domestic and regional instability, power-sharing may become 'a permanent device that can fulfil the long-term goals of peacebuilding' (McCulloch 2017, p.406; McCrudden and O'Leary, 2014). In this case, education's tendency to entrench, legitimate and reproduce consociationalism may facilitate the stable and smooth operation of the political system, as in the Lebanese case (see also Fontana, 2016).

Even where the transition out of power-sharing occurs, this process is necessarily slow and incremental. Most crucially, the experience of the Netherlands shows that subjective depillarisation (and societal integration) need not follow the integration of separate institutions. Five decades of stable and functioning power-sharing may have contributed to the Dutch transition from a parallel to an integrated society, but 'voluntary apartheid' remains 'a dominant feature of the Dutch education system' up to the present (Sturm, Groenendijk, Kruithof, & Rens 1998, p.290). This suggests that in a peaceful and stable society regulated by power-sharing, identities may be more malleable than institutions. Flexible institutional designs which accommodate shifting identities (such as liberal power-sharing) are better placed to adapt to – and even amplify – wider social change than their rigid corporate counterpart (McGarry, O'Leary, 2007).

Beyond accommodating subjective depillarisation, education reform may also nurture the erosion of the mutually exclusive identities of antagonistic communities. Educational experts have long recognised the challenges of reforming a fragmented education system in an integrationist direction after violent conflicts (Smith & Vaux, 2003). This study suggests that the provision of robust financial incentives to implement common curricular and governance standards, combined with emphasis on inclusivity

and intra-school cooperation and mergers, can generate powerful centripetal pressures and ultimately erode the differences between separate schools. These reforms would not result in an integrated education system, but they would allow citizens to move freely within the institutional shells of separate schools (if they want to).

Finally, it is crucial to remember that the findings of this study are heavily influenced by the Dutch experience. They should be further tested on future cases of peaceful transition out of power-sharing, when they occur. This will help refine existing theories as well as inform policymaking in contemporary plural societies, where communities still perceive strong existential threats and view their separate institutional shells as precious defensive and defensible fortresses.

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Appendix 1: Interview List and Information

ID	Description	Information
Interview 1	Albanian Historian	Interview with the Author, Skopje, 2012
Interview 2	Albanian NGO worker	Interview with the Author, Skopje, 2012
Interview 3	Director of Albanian Research Centre	Interview with the Author, Skopje, 2017
Interview 4	Education expert in Think Tank	Interview with the Author, Skopje, 2017
Interview 5	Education Specialist in NGO	Interview with the Author, Skopje, 2017
Interview 6	Educational Expert and Professor	Interview with the Author, Beirut, 2012
Interview 7	Educational Expert in International Donor	Telephone Interview with the Author, 2012
Interview 8	Educational Expert in International Organisation	Interview with the Author, Beirut, 2012
Interview 9	Former Education Minister 1	Interview with the Author, Beirut, 2012
Interview 10	Former Education Minister 2	Interview with the Author, Beirut, 2012
Interview 11	Former Head of the Centre for Educational Research and Development 1	Telephone Interview with the Author, 2013
Interview 12	Former Head of the Centre for Educational Research and Development 2	Interview with the Author, Beirut, 2012
Interview 13	Former Member of Curriculum Drafting Committee	Interview with the Author, Beirut, 2012
Interview 14	International Consultant	Interview with the Author, Skopje, 2012
Interview 15	Journalist	Interview with the Author, Skopje, 2012
Interview 16	NGO Founder	Interview with the Author, Skopje, 2017

Interview 17	Official in Integrated Education Fund	Interview with the Author, Belfast, 2012
Interview 18	Official in Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education	Interview with the Author, Belfast, 2012
Interview 19	Official at the Centre for Educational Research and Development	Interview with the Author, Beirut, 2012
Interview 20	Official in International Donor	Interview with the Author, Skopje, 2012
Interview 21	Official in International Mission	Interview with the Author, Skopje, 2012
Interview 22	Official in International Organisation	Interview with the Author, Beirut, 2012
Interview 23	Principal 1	Telephone Interview with the Author, 2017
Interview 24	Principal 2	Telephone Interview with the Author, 2017
Interview 25	Professor at Lebanese University	Interview with the Author, Beirut, 2012
Interview 26	Professor of Education 1	Interview with the Author, Belfast, 2017
Interview 27	Professor of Education 2	Interview with the Author, Belfast, 2012
Interview 28	Professor of Education at the American University of Beirut	Interview with the Author, Beirut, 2012
Interview 29	Prominent Official, Council for Catholic Maintained Schools	Interview with the Author, Belfast, 2017
Interview 30	Senior Educationalist in Controlled Schools' Support Council	Interview with the Author, Belfast, 2017
Interview 31	Senior Expert in Education NGO	Interview with the Author, Skopje, 2017
Interview 32	Senior Official, Council for Catholic Maintained Schools	Interview with the Author, Belfast, 2012
Interview 33	Senior Official, Department of Education	Interview with the Author, Belfast, 2017
Interview 34	Senior Official, Education and Skills Authority	Interview with the Author, Belfast, 2012

Interview 35	Senior Official, Education Authority	Interview with the Author, Belfast, 2017
Interview 36	Unionist Politician	Interview with the Author, Belfast 2012
Interview 37	Nationalist Politician	Interview with the Author, Belfast 2013

Appendix 2: Case Selection

Case	Region	Cleavages	Power-sharing	Education System					Sources
				Separate Schools	Equal Management	Equal Funding	Equal Curricula	Equal Quality	
The Netherlands (1917-1975)	Western Europe	Religious (Catholics; Calvinists; Liberal)	1917-1970s Liberal	x	x	x	x	x	News Archives[6]
Bosnia and Herzegovina (1995-present)	Western Balkans	Overlapping National, Religious and Linguistic (Bosniaks; Croats; Serbs)	1995-present Corporate	x	x	x			News Official Reports
Iraq (2005-present)	Middle East	Overlapping National, Linguistic and Religious (Kurds; Shia; Sunni)	2005-present Liberal	x					News Official Reports
Lebanon (1989-present)	Middle East	Religious (Christians; Sunni; Shia)	1989-present Corporate	x					Official Reports Original Interviews
Northern Ireland (1998-present)	Western Europe	Overlapping National and Religious (Catholic/Irish; Protestant/British)	1998-present Liberal	x			x		News Official Reports Original Interviews
Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (2001-present)	Western Balkans	Overlapping National, Linguistic and Religious (Macedonians; Albanians)	2001-present Liberal	x	x				Official Reports Original Interviews