ROCZNIKI HUMANISTYCZNE
Tom LXXI, zeszyt 6 – 2023
ZESZYT SPECJALNY / SPECIAL ISSUE
DOI: https://doi.org/10.18290/rh237106.13s

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"A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT": CROSSING THE MEUSE IN BATENBURG (THE NETHERLANDS)

A SMALL TOWN BY THE RIVER

When in 1989 I moved to the town of Batenburg upon the Meuse in the Dutch province of Gelderland, I had only a vague notion of the social networks connecting its less than seven hundred inhabitants to the larger region, called in Dutch *Land van Maas en Waal*, the land lying between the two rivers Meuse and Waal.[1] I naively assumed that for people living in Batenburg the primary point of administrative and social reference was Wijchen, the municipality lying only six miles away to the east to which it had belonged officially since 1984, with Nijmegen at a distance of twelve miles as secondary point of orientation, and that this had always been the case. But it hadn't.

On political maps from the early twentieth century the Land van Maas en Waal looks like a fairly contained region with clear boundaries, enclosed by two rivers that almost meet in the west, while in the east Wijchen and Nijmegen mark the transition to the region called *Rijk van Nijmegen*.

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[1] I am grateful to Jan van de Bovenkamp, Riek Strik-Groenen, Francine Roeffen-van de Wolk, Marita Roeffen, Hans Colijn-de Maat, Thijs Colijn, Bert van Boxtel, Riet van Boxtel-Hopman, and others, who kindly shared with me memories of their youth in Batenburg in the 1950s and 1960s. Special thanks are owed to Manfred Woidich, Henk Driessen, Frans Hinskens, Jan van de Bovenkamp, and Janus Kolen, and Yola de Lusenet, who generously helped me with their insights and advice. In the first years of my stay in Batenburg I profited much from conversations with the regretted Jo Hermsen, Jet Hermsen, and Truus Ernste, who taught me valuable lessons on how to behave as an outsider in a small community.

Map 1
Land van Maas en Waal Early 20th Century (Pieter R. Bosch & Jan F. Niermeyer, Schoolatlas der Geheele Aarde, *28th ed., Groningen: Wolters, 1923, Reproduced in Deurloo 2017, p. 95)*

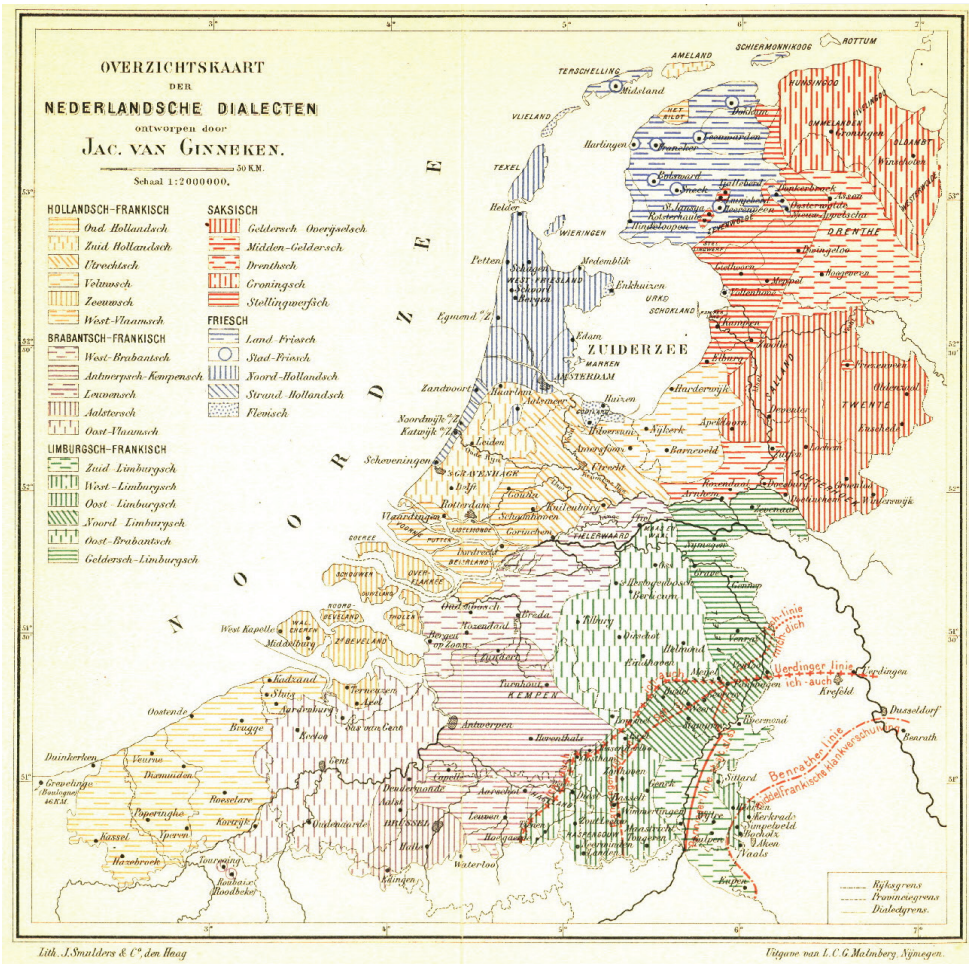
Traditional dialect maps, such as the one drawn in 1928 by Jacques van Ginneken (1877–1945), classify the dialects of the Land van Maas en Waal as East-Brabant dialects (see Map 2). In this classification, the Maas en Waal dialects border in the east on the North-Limburg dialects, which include those of Nijmegen and Wijchen.

The problem with maps like van Ginneken's is that they present dialects areas as enclosed by strict boundaries, with abrupt transitions (for criticism of such maps see Taeldeman & Hinskens, 2013, pp. 133–135). In more recent classifications, the intermediate position of the dialects of the Land van Maas en Waal (*Maos-en-Waols*) between those of Gelderland and Brabant is emphasized, for instance by Berns (2002), who assigns them to the group of South-Gelderland dialects. According to De Schutter (2013, p. 278), they exhibit "markedly Southern characteristics," forming a dialect continuum with the dialects south of the Meuse.

The perceptual map drawn in 1968 by Jo Daan (1910–2006) presents a different picture, based on judgments of her informants about the relationship between their own dialect and that of neighboring settlements. It features a north/south contrast in the Land van Maas en Waal, the speakers in the south of the region reporting a connection with the dialects from across the Meuse in Brabant, whereas those in the north associate their dialect with the Gelderland dialects from across the Waal (see Map 3).

Map 2

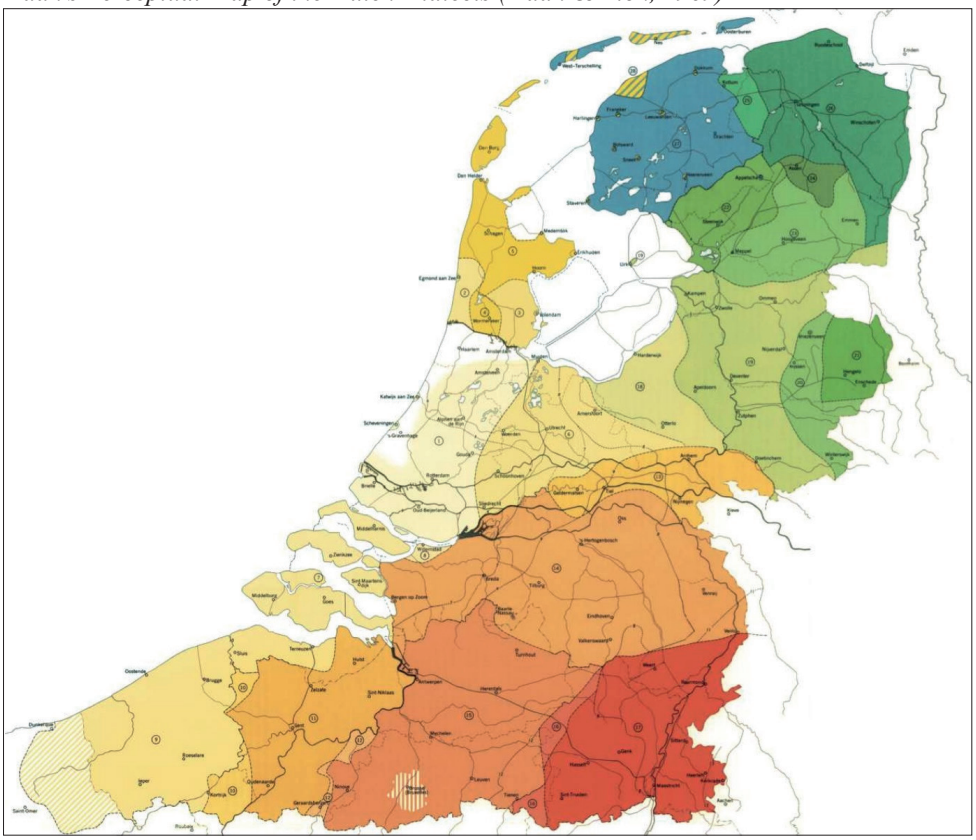
Van Ginneken's (1928) Map With the Classification of the Dutch Dialects



In his study of the dialect of Huisseling near Ravenstein, just across the Meuse in Brabant, Elemans (1958, pp. 20ff.) states explicitly that the river does not constitute a barrier between the dialects of Brabant and Gelderland. In Niftrik, on the northern bank of the Meuse, for instance, people are said to speak just like those in Brabant, contrasting with people living a few miles to the north, who speak *Oovermòsses* '[the dialect] across the Meuse'.

The question to be answered here is why the perceptual map shows this dichotomy as against the usual classification of the Land van Maas en Waal as one dialect group with mixed features. Why do speakers along the Meuse in Gelderland identify with dialects at the other side rather than with those in the northern part of the region? In

Map 3
Daan's Perceptual Map of the Dutch Dialects (Daan & Blok, 1969)



this paper, I sketch the geophysical history and present data from interviews with elderly inhabitants of Batenburg and from the marriage registry in the municipal archives in order to discover the patterns of interaction across the river.

The model of perceptual dialectology followed by Daan deals with perceived commonalities between dialects. It is based on the method of the so-called arrows map (*pijltjeskaart*), introduced by Weijnen (see also Montgomery, 2007, pp. 39–42; Taeldeman & Hinskens, 2013, pp. 135–136; Cramer, 2016, p. 5). Her methodology is not quite identical with any of Preston's (2010, p. 90) five ways of doing perceptual dialectology, all of which basically turn around the informants' ability to identify and characterize other dialects. In most perceptual studies people are asked to draw dialect maps and judge dialects within larger regions, to which they probably have never been exposed in real life. This forces them to rely on stereotypes, because they lack the experience to make a considered judgment about these dialects. By contrast, the purpose of Daan's map was solely to reproduce the informants' opinions about

where people speak the same way as they do; they were not asked to list differences with other dialects or to rate other dialects. Weijnen himself apparently believed the value of the perceptual map for professional dialectology to be limited, since he states that the investigation of subjective dialect boundaries "does not provide reliable data about the relationship to other dialect groups" (1999, p. 33). Others, too, stress the need to supplement the results of perceptual dialectology by "objective" dialect geographical research (Montgomery, 2007, p. 40). Auer (2005, pp. 13ff.; see also Auer & Hinskens, 2005) cites the contrast between these maps and "actual isoglosses" as evidence of the deficit of the interactional frequency model. It is true that Daan's perceptual methods cannot be used to establish a correspondence between perception and reality, but they can be used to represent the way people look at the context of their social life. To some extent, the results may be regarded as a means of mapping the social relations between the communities involved (Daan & Blok, 1969).

RIVERS AND MARSHES

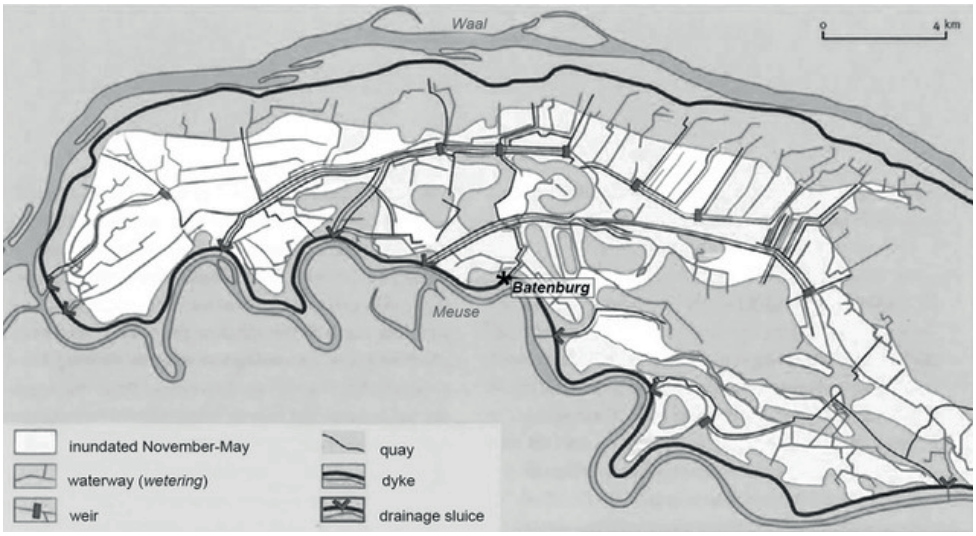
The Land van Maas en Waal is enclosed by the two rivers Meuse and Waal. Since prehistoric times, settlements in the Land van Maas en Waal were founded along the southern bank of the Waal, and the northern bank of the Meuse. Along the Waal, settlements such as Beuningen and Druten are found in a strip of land from Nijmegen to the west. Likewise, along the northern shore of the Meuse, settlements such as Niftrik, Batenburg, Appeltern are found, all the way to Zaltbommel, where the Waal used to flow into the Meuse until the two were separated by a canal. The interior of the Land van Maas en Waal is bisected by a corridor of higher grounds, acting as a boundary between the northern and southern parts of the region. These higher grounds derive from an old tributary of the Meuse that was active till about three thousand years ago. This so-called *Wijchens Maasje*, the Little Meuse of Wijchen, has left behind alluvial ridges at both sides of the river bed, where nowadays the villages of Bergharen and Horssen are located.

When the Romans left the region in the third century CE, the Land van Maas en Waal was almost entirely depopulated because of the lack of protection against the water (Deurloo, 2017, pp. 18–19). From the fourteenth century onwards, the area was gradually protected by dykes against inundation from the rivers, but this only aggravated the problems inland because it increased the volume of seepage water, for which the drainage capacity was woefully insufficient. The digging of artificial waterways (*weteringen*) did not suffice to drain the area. The hollows (*komgronden*), wetlands between the levees, turned into marshes for most of the year, which made it impossible to traverse the area between November and May, effectively precluding

contacts on the south-north axis. Van Heiningen (1971, p. 304) calculates that before 1918 roughly 10,000 acres inland used to be inundated half the year (see Map 4). Because of the geographical conditions, the obvious orientation for people living along the Meuse was to the south, across the river, where Ravenstein was the nearest economic center (Schulte, 1986, p. 7).

Map 4

Water Management Land van Maas en Waal, Showing the Hollows That Were Inundated From November Till May (Driessen & van de Ven, 2004)



In his introduction to English dialectology, Wakelin (1977, p. 10) affirms that "it is held that rivers (at least when navigable) act more often as a means of communication than as obstacles" (see also Krogull, 2021). This is echoed by Tabouret-Keller (2014, p. 313), who states that "un fleuve peut constituer une limite, mais pas nécessairement".[2] Wakelin (1977, p. 10) concludes: "As far as dialectal divisions are con-

[2] Undoubtedly, rivers sometimes do constitute a veritable barrier to communication. A clear example is that of the Nile in Egypt, where north/south traffic is concentrated on the west bank of the river, along an old highway that runs from Cairo to as far south as Aswan. The east bank is sparsely populated, has hardly any agriculture, and opportunities to cross the river are few and far between: the only motor ferry used to operate in Minya, and the only bridges used to be in Asyut and Esna far to the south. As Woidich (p.c.) expresses it, for people living on the east bank the west bank represents a different world they are not in touch with. No wonder, then, that on the west bank the influence of standard Cairene Egyptian stretches much farther south than on the east bank (Woidich, 1996, p. 347). Likewise, in some places along the Upper Rhine, the lack of navigability used to restrict contacts between people living on both sides, for instance between the Bodensee and Rheinfelden. This was only remedied in modern times (Steiner, 2005).

cerned, political and administrative boundaries appear to be of greater significance than geographical ones."

Wakelin's view is confirmed by Seidelmann's (1989) study of the twin cities of Laufenburg in German Baden and Swiss Aargau. He rejects the possibility that the Rhine acted as a physical barrier. As a matter of fact, there has been a bridge connecting the two parts of Laufenburg since 1208, and people living on both sides of the river used to belong to one community. Seidelmann argues that any differences between the two almost identical dialects are recent and must be ascribed to the fact that the two parts of the city became separated by the Rhine as a political border after the Treaty of Lunéville (1801). Likewise, Erhart's (2019) study of the language attitude of speakers of Alsatian dialects in Germany and France on both sides of the Rhine shows that speakers regarded the dialects across the river as similar, though not identical. She ascribes the tendency to see the communities on both sides of the river as separate to the growing influence of the national border and the difference in standard language on both sides. Increasingly often, people have started to use national stereotypes to refer to the "other side" (Erhart, 2019, p. 325).

According to Weijnen, in the Dutch context geographical factors are only relevant for the study of dialect boundaries inasmuch as they prevent social contacts, as is the case with dense forests or marshes (1966, pp. 74–75). Rivers, on the other hand, often serve as channels for the introduction of innovations (1966, pp. 76–77). In a study of communities along the Meuse in Limburg, Renes (1999, p. 124) finds that almost nowhere did people see the river as a barrier, since numerous ferries, some of them going back to the fifteenth century, provided easy transportation between the two sides. The real barriers to communication and interaction were the vast marshes and moorlands (Weijnen, 1938, p. 205), which made the interior well-nigh inaccessible. Thus, it was the river that facilitated contact with other communities. In the case of Batenburg, this is reflected by the traveling times quoted in van der Aa's geographical dictionary (1840, p. 172): in the middle of the nineteenth century, the walking distance from Batenburg to Nijmegen was three hours and a quarter, to Druten on the Waal two and a half hours, not counting delays because of high water, while to Ravenstein across the river it was only half an hour with the ferry.

The precarious situation in the Land van Maas en Waal with the constant threat of inundations made much of the land unsuitable for permanent settlement. At the beginning of the twentieth century, this was one of the poorest regions of the Netherlands (Deurloo, 2017, p. 8). It took the authorities until the twentieth century to solve the problem of water management and to make the lands between the rivers dry enough for permanent cultivation and settlement, putting an end to countless conflicts between communities up river and down river about the costs of the dykes

and the opening and closing of locks and weirs.[3] At the end of the 1920s, the water level in the hollows could be more or less regulated by means of steam-powered pumping stations, which eliminated the problem of accumulated seepage and made it possible at long last to seed the land and get the cattle out of the stables in spring. The risk of dyke breaches, however, did not entirely disappear and by the 1950s the Land van Maas en Waal was still a backward region. Batenburg was an isolated community with ties only with the direct surroundings, lacking a central water system and having only gravel roads. Child mortality here was one of the highest in the country, which may partly explain the constancy in the population numbers: numerically, the present-day population of Batenburg does not deviate much from that in earlier centuries.[4]

THE RELIGIOUS FACTOR

In the tribulations of the Eighty-Years' war (1568–1648), when the Netherlands fought for independence from Habsburg Spain, the Land van Maas en Waal was a contested area between the Spanish and the insurgents. After 1607, the young Republic controlled the country north of the Waal, but the region between the rivers was controlled alternatingly by both warring factions, leading to the migration of many inhabitants. After the Eighty-Years War, the Land van Maas en Waal was incorporated into the Republic of the United Netherlands, which entailed the introduction of Protestantism as the state religion.[5] At the most, Catholicism was tolerated, but its public practice had been prohibited already in 1581 by the authorities in Gelderland, who ordered all churches to be ceded to Protestants. Still, the majority of the inhabitants remained Catholic. In Batenburg, they had to wait until the founding of the Batavian Republic (*Bataafsche Republiek*) in 1796 to receive the right to practise their religion in public (van Heiningen, 1971, pp. 111–112). Their original church building was not returned to them, however, so that they had to worship either across

[3] The central point in van Heiningen's (1971) study of the endless conflicts about water management in this region is that it took the quarreling settlements six centuries before they managed to realize the detailed plan to put an end to the inundations that had already been devised in 1321 by the Duke of Guelders.

[4] According to van der Aa's geographical dictionary (1840, p. 172), in the middle of the nineteenth century, Batenburg had 630 inhabitants. In 2021, the number of inhabitants was 650, distributed over 270 households (source: https://allecijfers.nl/woonplaats/batenburg).

[5] In this connection, 'Protestantism' indicates the Dutch Reformed Church (*Nederduits Gereformeerd*). Apparently, other brands of Protestantism were not common in the Land van Maas en Waal.

the river in Megen or Dieden, or — from 1674 onward — in barn churches in Hernen or Appeltern (Schulte, 1986, pp. 9, 328).

Through the centuries, the numerical distribution of the two religious denominations remained more or less the same: the number usually cited is fifteen percent Protestants against eighty-five percent Catholics.[6] After the new constitution of 1848, municipal councils started to reflect the numerical relations of the inhabitants, which in Batenburg resulted in a municipal council consisting of six Catholics and one Protestant (van Heiningen, 1987, p. 255). The majoritarian Catholic villages and towns in the area started a massive movement of emancipation, including the building of new churches (see Schulte, 1986, p. 12). The new Catholic church in Batenburg in Neo-Gothic style was finished in 1875. In reaction, a concerted effort was made by some Protestant organizations to import Protestant families as a counterweight to the prevailing Catholic majority. In 1822, the *Maatschappij van Welstand* had been founded with the explicit aim to support the settling of Protestant families, specifically in the majoritarian Catholic southern provinces (Hamoen & van Dijk, 1997, p. 57). The foundation bought arable lands and farms and leased or sold these at an affordable price to Protestant farmers from elsewhere, often from the northern provinces, who were required to believe in the Protestant cause and to play an active role in the life of their new community. Despite this effort, Protestants remained numerically a minority in the region, who sometimes even referred to their situation as a diaspora (Hamoen & van Dijk, 1997, p. 92). I was told that in Batenburg in the 1950s there were on average forty people in the Protestant church on Sundays, which tallies with the percentage of ten to fifteen percent Protestants in the population.

The religious division was paralleled by a social division: Protestants were not only more influential as representatives of the religion of the state, but also on average wealthier since they owned eighty percent of the land (van Heiningen, 1987, pp. 275–276). Many Catholic Batenburgers worked as day labourers or servants or craftsmen. Religious differences pervaded all aspects of daily life and were matched by a social and cultural distance. Protestants could more often afford to send their children to school for a longer time or to schools farther away. This pattern persisted into the 1950s. The father of one of the Protestants I interviewed was seen by the community as a literate man because he read books. In 1946, he sent his son, who was then six years old, at first to the predominantly Catholic school in Batenburg,

[6] According to the lemma Batenburg in van der Aa's geographical dictionary (1840, p. 172), of the 630 inhabitants 530 were Catholic, 110 Protestant, and 5 Jewish. This is considerably more than the statistics from 1808, when 428 Catholics were counted as against 81 Protestants (van Heiningen, 1987, p. 180). I have no figures for the present-day distribution of religious affiliation, but the number of practising Catholics and Protestants together has dwindled to a handful of elderly people.

but after half a year he decided to switch to the Protestant school in Bergharen, at a distance of about three and a half miles, supposedly because the standards of that school were higher than those of the school in Batenburg. About eight children from Protestant families in Batenburg used to go there together.

The social and cultural distance created a *de facto* segregation between the two religious groups in Batenburg, even in the 1950s. While this situation does not seem to have led to any open conflicts, it did affect daily life: there was a Protestant and a Catholic bakery, there were separate youth clubs for Protestants and for Catholics, their children went to different schools, there was one pub with a predominantly Protestant clientele, and another one for Catholics, and of course they worshipped with a different ritual in different churches. The yearly fair in Batenburg could have provided an occasion for both groups to meet and fraternize, but such fairs included dancing and, although some Protestant youngsters did visit the fair, this was mostly frowned upon by their parents. Thus, for young adults from the two denominations there were few opportunities to meet, even when as small children they might have been playing together in the street. Or, as one Catholic woman I spoke with stated, referring to the Protestant children: "We didn't know those kids." Religious mixed marriages were not strictly forbidden, but certainly disapproved of and in fact very rare.[7] Contact between neighbours with different religions often remained restricted to casual greetings, as one Catholic told me.

For the Protestant minority, social contacts were organized by regional organizations that had been set up for the benefit of Protestant youths. Their activities included organizing the so-called *Landdagen*, where youths from all over the Land van Maas en Waal had an opportunity to meet. As one of the people I interviewed assured me, the entire Protestant population of the Land van Maas en Waal used to know each other. The Catholics maintained their own networks, which included Catholic communities across the river. Catholic boys from Batenburg used to cross the river with the ferry, or in winter by walking over the ice, as some of the older Batenburgers still remember, in order to visit the pubs and attend the fair in Ravenstein.

Cross-river contacts were connected with the natural attraction of the thriving Catholic culture in Brabant for the Catholic inhabitants of Batenburg, a culture rejected by the Protestants as alien: in the south people celebrated Carnival,[8] they did not wear orange cockades at the monarch's birthday celebrations, and they prayed

[7] I know of one such case in Batenburg, where a Catholic man was allowed to marry a Protestant girl, but only after he had converted to Protestantism.

[8] One of my interlocutors told me that when she came from Ravenstein to Batenburg in the 1950s as a twenty-three year old girl to marry a local man, the people there did not know how to celebrate Carnival properly, so she started a Carnival association to show them how it should be done.

before statues of the Virgin Mary. Thus, cross-river mobility came to symbolize the distinction between Catholics and Protestants. As late as the first half of the twentieth century, religio-social oppositions persisted between river-crossing Catholics, some of whom worked in Ravenstein and visited the other side for church, school, fair, pub, and, if they were lucky, for marriage, and resident Protestants, who only crossed the river occasionally for practical reasons.

FINDING A MARRIAGE PARTNER

For a long time, Batenburg used to be a rather isolated community. Within this community, the two denominations formed two distinct "communities of practice" (Meyerhof, 2002), each with its own cultural norms and, as we shall see below, each with its own linguistic attitudes. Both maintained a close-knit social network, whose members were interconnected in multiple roles (L. Milroy, 1991, pp. 20–21, 135–137, 169; Trudgill, 2011, pp. 101–104). According to L. Milroy (1991, p. 179), such networks function as a norm-enforcing mechanism, inhibiting change and helping to withstand the pressure of the standard language. Yet, its presence does not preclude demographic changes: the smaller the community, the greater the need to find marriage partners elsewhere, which automatically leads to changes in the composition of the population. Terracher (2014, p. 242) highlights the fact that in the old days people used to be more mobile than commonly assumed.[9] Even when communities lived a more secluded life, contacts with other communities, including the exchange of marriage partners, were never entirely absent. Within a community of less than seven hundred people like Batenburg there could never be a state of complete homogeneity because of the constant influx of people from outside for work or marriage. Within the existing network, there was considerable pressure on the members to act like their parents or peers, but at the same time there were enough different models available to prevent complete stability.

In view of the difference in their mobility patterns, it is hardly surprising that Catholics and Protestants in Batenburg found their marriage partners in different places and at different occasions. Many Protestants found a partner through Protestant youth clubs and yearly gatherings organized by the church throughout the

[9] Is it a coincidence that the province of Noord-Brabant is the only province in the Netherlands where the thirty percent family names containing a place name are the most frequent type? Possibly, but the idea of a connection with people's mobility is intriguing. Such names are only appropriate for migrants from elsewhere, otherwise it would make no sense using the name to point to the place of origin (Marynissen, 2011, p. 315).

Land van Maas en Waal. Catholics had youth clubs, too, but boys and girls could also meet at fairs in Batenburg or Ravenstein or elsewhere along both sides of the Meuse. In the 1950s, new opportunities were provided by the popular dance lessons in Wijchen: at least two people told me that this was where they met their partner when they were still teens.

The impact of people coming from outside partly depended on the status of their place of origin. In the case of Ravenstein, for instance, its prestige determined the direction of influence, when a mixed marriage brought a girl from there to a Batenburg household. One of the persons I spoke with was born in Ravenstein; she recalls how she came to Batenburg in the 1960s as a young woman to marry a Batenburger. In her perception, it was a backward peasant village where time stood still. She herself was regarded as a lady because on weekdays she used to wear a dress rather than an apron. Her status as a newcomer is bound to have had an impact, even beyond the immediate family, and even in small things like the use of certain words or the adoption of certain customs. The ties with her family across the river remained strong. Her daughter told me that she regularly visited her grandparents in Ravenstein.

For practical reasons marriages, whether Catholic or Protestant, were usually registered in Batenburg's Protestant church up till the 1810s (van Heiningen, 1987, p. 149). The data from the registry show that the homogeneity of the community was indeed a fiction, since in the majority of the marriages at least one of the partners came from outside.[10] In the period between 1772 and 1792, a total of 94 marriages is mentioned in the registers. The relatively low number of 23 marriages in which both partners were born in Batenburg,[11] shows to what extent even then people migrated and moved. In 24 marriages, the man came from outside, against 29 marriages with a woman who was not born in Batenburg. In 18 marriages, both partners came from elsewhere. These figures show that there was a constant influx of people from different regions. In-marrying by people across the river frequently occurred: in 13 cases the man was born across the river in Brabant, in 22 cases the woman.

[10] The category of outsiders is relative. In one of my first years in Batenburg I spoke with someone, who was rather curt to me; when he became aware that I was living in Batenburg, he exclaimed: "Why didn't you say so? I thought you came from outside, from Wijchen!"

[11] The marriage register of the Protestant church in Batenburg is kept at the Gelders Archief in Arnhem; it is available online at https://www.geldersarchief.nl/bronnen/archieven?mivast=37&mizig=158&miadt=37&miaet=14&micode=0176&minr=36168634&miview=ldt. For the purpose of this statistic marriage partners from the hamlet of Lienden, as well as those from Niftrik, Appeltern, and Hernen, have been included in the group of people from Batenburg. Only the period 1772–1797 could be consulted, the period 1793–1810 is unavailable.

For the period 1823–1940 municipal marriage registers for Batenburg are available. In this period 422 marriages were registered.[12] Only 55 marriages were between people who were both born in Batenburg; in less than half (169) of the marriages the couple were both living in Batenburg (see Table 1).

Table 1
Marriages: Batenburg 1823–1940 (Source: Regionaal Archief, Nijmegen)

	Number of marriages	Both partners born in Batenburg	Both partners residing in Batenburg
1823–1842	64	8	39
1843–1862	94	11	45
1863–1882	81	11	31
1883–1902	60	11	19
1903–1922	66	10	22
1923–1940	57	4	13
	422	55	169

We do not know where the married couples went to live but, given the traditional residence patterns, in the majority of those cases where the bridegroom came from outside, the bride was likely to have followed her husband, leaving Batenburg.[13] When the wife came from outside, she moved to Batenburg and became one of the new inhabitants.

Combined, Batenburg and the adjacent area,[14] including the area across the Meuse, account for the vast majority of marriage partners. About 25% of the men were living outside this larger area at the time of their marriage, as against only 3% of the women (see Tables 2a, 2b).

[12] The registers of the municipality of Batenburg for the period up till 1983 are kept at the Regionaal Archief Nijmegen (794.833-843, 1702, 1704). The data provided in the registers include name, place of residence, occupation, and place of birth of the marriage partners; religious affiliation is not mentioned. The first ledger for the years 1813–1822 turned out to be unusable since the ink on the pages had completely faded. For the period 1940–1983 (the last year of Batenburg as an independent municipality), the marriage registers have not been turned over yet to the Regionaal Archief for reasons of privacy.

[13] The exception are men who came to Batenburg for professional reasons, such as school teachers, policemen, or vicars.

[14] With "adjacent area" I refer to settlements within a range of one hour walking from Batenburg (Bergharen, Horssen, Hernen, Appeltern, Altforst, Leur, Niftrik).

Table 2a
Place of Residence: Groom (Source: Regionaal Archief, Nijmegen)

	Residing in Batenburg	Residing in adjacent area	Residing across the Meuse	Residing elsewhere	
1823–1842	46	5	8	5	64
1843–1862	48	22	10	14	94
1863–1882	35	14	15	17	81
1883–1902	25	8	7	20	60
1903–1922	30	6	14	26	76
1923–1940	19	9	7	22	57
	203	64	61	104	422

Table 2b
Place of Residence: Bride (Source: Regionaal Archief, Nijmegen)

	Residing in Batenburg	Residing in adjacent area	Residing across the Meuse	Residing elsewhere	
1823–1842	58	3	1	2	64
1843–1862	86	4	2	2	94
1863–1882	76	0	4	1	81
1883–1902	54	3	1	2	60
1903–1922	70	2	2	2	76
1923–1940	52	0	1	4	57
	396	12	11	13	422

If we look at the place of birth, it turns out that roughly 35% of the men were born elsewhere, as against 21% of the women (see Tables 3a, 3b).[15]

[15] In the period 1903–1940 the number of marriage partners from the northern part of the region grew: 18 men and 6 women born in places like Beuningen, Ewijk, Druten, Wamel, Dreumel upon the Waal, married in Batenburg, which perhaps demonstrates the improvement in connection between the different parts of the Land van Maas en Waal after the relatively successful changes in water management at the beginning of the century. In the entire preceding period 1823–1902 only 7 men and 8 women came from this area.

Table 3a
Place of Birth: Groom (Source: Regionaal Archief, Nijmegen)

	Born in Batenburg	Born in adjacent area	Born across the Meuse	Born elsewhere	
1823–1842	25	12	11	16	64
1843–1862	26	19	19	30	94
1863–1882	25	12	15	29	81
1883–1902	20	12	10	18	60
1903–1922	20	8	10	28	66
1923–1940	11	10	9	27	57
	127	73	74	148	422

Table 3b
Place of Birth: Bride (Source: Regionaal Archief, Nijmegen)

	Born in Batenburg	Born in adjacent area	Born across the Meuse	Born elsewhere	
1823–1842	30	12	8	14	64
1843–1862	52	5	10	27	94
1863–1882	48	8	13	12	81
1883–1902	41	4	5	10	60
1903–1922	44	7	6	9	66
1923–1940	31	4	4	18	57
	246	40	46	90	422

The frequent interaction led to an increase in family ties within this larger area. This was noted by Turner (in a letter cited by Bott, 1971, p. 284) as a typical trait of farming families with a close-knit network. They prefer to find their partners in other farming families, while in-marrying partners mostly hail from adjacent areas. As a result, ties between these areas are strengthened, or, as Bott (1971, p. 302) expresses it: "If people stay in one place for several generations they are likely to become kin to one another."

Thus, the ties between Batenburg and Brabant result from a long existing pattern of partner exchange between Catholic families, each new marriage strengthening the community's network. One of the people I spoke with told me that his father was born across the Meuse in Dieden, but he then bought his own farm in the hamlet of Lienden which is part of Batenburg. When he himself married a girl from Nijmegen, they went to live in Batenburg, but retained their ties with his father's relatives across the Meuse. They often went to Ravenstein for shopping, and even for visits to their

GP. This demonstrates how family links with "the other side' could continue to have an impact on social mobility even in the next generations. Such ties are naturally strong, though lying outside the local network of the community. The family bonds may also contribute to the persistence of other mobility patterns, as in the case of one woman, whose mother's family lived in Ravenstein. Her visits to them in the 1970s often included trips to the local shops there, when she could just as easily have gone to Wijchen.

WHAT DID THEY SPEAK AT HOME?

Networks and contacts determine the choice of marriage partners, and thereby indirectly affect the way people speak. Auer and Hinskens' observation (2005, p. 352) that for youngsters the speech of their peers has more appeal than the speech of their mothers no doubt reflects what these youngsters themselves believe. Investigations into their speech pattern, at least in their adolescent years, demonstrate the impact of peer groups (Hazen, 2002, pp. 500–501). Nonetheless, for young children mother's speech is the single most important model in their language acquisition process. Bott's (1971) classic study of conjugal roles and social networks has shown the relation between close-knit networks and segregation of roles in the family. Families in Batenburg shared a roughly identical distribution of labour: fathers went out to earn wages or to cultivate the land, while mothers stayed at home taking care of the household and raising the children. In Hazen's (2002) treatment of the parents' role in language acquisition, no distinction is made between the father's contribution and that of the mother; yet, traditionally, the latter had by far the most frequent contact with young children during the first stages of language acquisition, so that the father's provenance was less relevant for their linguistic development. Janssen (1941, p. 58) emphasizes the importance of the mother's role in first language acquisition, particularly in the past when there was no widespread formal schooling (1941, pp. 55–58). Trudgill (1986, p. 35) shows that some phonetic distinctions in Norwich English can only be mastered by speakers whose mother was native to Norwich, whereas others, even when they came to the city at a very young age, never acquired them.

References to the role of in-marrying women in a community are infrequent in the literature. Weijnen (1966, pp. 106–107) refers to van Ginneken (1916) and Janssen (1941), as well as to Adolphe-Louis Terracher's (1881–1955) classic study of intermarital relations in the village of Blancheteaux in the Angoulême, with only forty-six inhabitants. Terracher (1914, p. 226) states that while marriage may not be the only factor affecting dialect contact, it is certainly true that "le mariage est de beaucoup le fait le plus fréquent, et surtout le fait dont l'action est quotidienne et

prolongée". Some people may enter the community for other reasons than marriage (1914, p. 145, n. 2), but their presence is much more ephemeral, and hence less relevant in this context.[16] Terracher leaves open the possibility that the frequency of intermarriages and linguistic change are both caused by a third factor, but his data demonstrate that the in-marrying partners (*transplantés* in Terracher's terminology), in particular women who became mothers, were crucial for the linguistic socialization of the children (1914, p. 133, n. 3), especially when they introduced variants that were closer to the standard language.[17] They shaped the direction of language change, acting as "language missionaries" (J. Milroy, 1992, p. 198), not only with respect to the language of their children, but also that of other adults. Even grandparents were affected by the way these newcomers spoke.

Terracher's conclusions are confirmed by a more recent study of communities in the German/Dutch border area of Kleverland near Nijmegen by Giesbers (2008, pp. 62–68), who analyzes the role of cross-border marriages and of mixed marriages in general on the basis of data from the municipal registers. With the formalization of the state border between Germany and the Netherlands, especially after the two World Wars, cross-border marriages became less and less frequent when interaction between speakers from both sides of the border ceased. Children from the two countries no longer went to the same schools, but learnt different standard languages in their respective country. Schifferle's (2012) study of communities on both sides of the Upper Rhine in Baden (Germany) and Aargau (Switzerland) also found that when the state border, which coincided with the river, became increasingly strict, the influence of the school grew, and as a result, the rather similar dialects on both sides started to diverge (2012, p. 195). On a lower organizational level, Britain (2014) illustrates the importance of school choice with the example of the county border between Norfolk and Lincolnshire in the Fenlands.

The circumstances of daily life are important for understanding the pattern of dialect contacts. Britain (2010, p. 208) refers to this crucial aspect of human relations as follows: "As they go about their routine, mundane, day-to-day business people *move* and they often do so for the purposes of interaction, interaction which brings them into contact with people who necessarily will speak (often subtly, often not) different language varieties." In fact, he explains (2010, pp. 216–217), it is the absence of contact, for whatever reasons, that creates dialect boundaries, while the default is constant contact of the type he describes elsewhere (2013) as "mundane

[16] He makes an exception for state employees and notables speaking the standard language, who come to stay in small communities. Weijnen (1966, p. 345), too, refers to this factor.

[17] In this particular case, the competing variants were *je/ne* for the 1st pers. pl. pronoun, and *-ã/-*õ for the corresponding verbal ending.

mobility", the everyday interaction that leads to fixed routines in the relations between communities. Such routines may well be instrumental in establishing the weak ties L. Milroy (1991, pp. 197–204) and J. Milroy (1992, pp. 175–183) hold responsible for the introduction of innovations within the network. The "routinization of spatial practices" Britain refers to in his study of the Fenland region in East Anglia (2014), is particularly relevant for the situation in the Land van Maas en Waal: the constant flooding of the marshlands in the Fens impeded communication in the same way as the wetlands in the Land van Maas en Waal did.

Auer and Hinskens (2005) are right when they argue that frequency of contact in itself is not the determining factor in language change: this depends on how speakers feel about the varieties they are exposed to, whether these have equal or unequal status, and whether the direction of influence is symmetrical or asymmetrical. According to Auer and Hinskens (2005, p. 356), the main factor is "a strong attitudinal orientation towards the group with whom one wishes to associate or a strong attitudinal dissociation from those with whom one wishes to dissociate." Speakers seek models they can identify with, rather than accommodating to the speech of anyone they meet. This is why Auer and Hinskens argue in favour of an identity-projection model, rather than an accommodation model.

Elsewhere, Auer (2005) points out that boundaries between dialect areas are often constructed by speakers themselves to reflect changes in political realities and do not represent real dialectal differences. Yet, this does not mean that frequency of communication is entirely irrelevant: when physical circumstances impede communication in one direction and facilitate it in another, it is not unreasonable to assume that speakers feel more at ease, dialectologically speaking, with those people with whom they are in touch on a regular basis, irrespective of any actual differences, all the more so when these people are their kin.

The difference in socio-geographical mobility patterns between Catholics and Protestants went hand in hand with a differentiation in linguistic attitude between the two groups. Catholic speakers were familiar with the dialect spoken across the river in Brabant, not only through patterns of daily mobility, but also because of the family ties between families on both sides of the river. This association may have acted as an incentive for Protestants to use standard Dutch in order to avoid sounding "Catholic". Some Protestants came from elsewhere and did not feel at ease with the local dialect anyway, preferring to speak standard Dutch at home. A good example was the family of one of the people I spoke with, whose father was born north of the Rhine and never spoke the local Batenburg dialect. He grew up in a family where dialect was rarely used, even his mother, who was born in Batenburg, only spoke dialect occasionally, when conversing with a friend.

It is not just the attitude towards other dialects that is at play here. Throughout their school years children are exposed to the standard language, but the intensity may vary. In his study of the Alemannic dialects spoken on the German and the Swiss side of the border, Schifferle (2012) found that after the Second World War, the attitude towards the standard language in the Swiss and German schools came to be markedly different, the influence of the standard language being much stronger in the German schools. As a result, people may have experienced differences in speech they were not aware of when there was more cross-river communication.

The situation of the communities in the Land van Maas en Waal is somewhat similar. Gelderland and Brabant have the same official language, yet, attitudes towards the standard and to the relationship between dialect and standard may have been different. Catholic children who went to the local school in Batenburg or across the Meuse grew up to be more liberal towards the use of dialect. In the all-Catholic communities in Brabant, dialect was accepted generally as a means of communication for all speakers, and there was no religious factor involved. Protestant children in Batenburg, on the other hand, were more likely to be stimulated by their parents and teachers to use standard Dutch. This emphasis on standard Dutch spread beyond the direct family. Because of the general status of Protestants within the community, speaking standard Dutch was associated with higher prestige and better schooling. As one Catholic woman told me, the use of dialect could have been seen as an obstacle to the education of the children. This is why she and her husband avoided the use of dialect at home. In other families, parents spoke dialect among themselves, but addressed the children in standard Dutch (*Hollands*).

MODERN TIMES IN BATENBURG

The sketch of relations between both sides of the Meuse given above may have been valid in the first half of the twentieth century, but is no longer relevant. Nowadays, the river in Batenburg has lost its function both as a transport medium and as a dividing line between the two religious denominations in Batenburg. New influences have replaced the old ones. It has become easier to travel from Batenburg to the Waal than crossing the Meuse, since a network of provincial roads now connects the south of the region with the north (Deurloo, 2017, pp. 113–116). By car, it takes one twenty-five minutes to reach Nijmegen, fifteen to reach Wijchen, and twenty to reach Druten, approximately the same time as to Ravenstein. The ferry across the Meuse ceased its regular service in 1983; in 2007, it started to run again, but only as

a tourist attraction during the day in the summer months (Deurloo, 2017, pp. 73–77).[18] Nowadays, when people travel to Brabant, they have to make a detour, crossing the Meuse by the bridge in the A50 highway, which was built in 1975.[19]

Within Batenburg, relations between the religious groups have changed. People still know to which religion their neighbours belong, but it no longer affects their interaction the way it used to do. There has even been a change in the Sunday venue. After the Catholic church from 1875 was sold to a developer in 2019, the few remaining Catholic and Protestant churchgoers now take turns to worship in what used to be the Protestant church. Mobility patterns have changed over the years, too: people do not do their shopping in Ravenstein anymore, but in Wijchen or Druten, and no one sends their children to school across the river. Catholic and Protestant children visit the same Catholic school in Batenburg and they have been doing so for a good many years now.

Breaks in routinized social practices within a community are important markers of change (Britain, 2010, p. 151). Some historical associations may strive to underscore the unity of the Land van Maas en Waal, by creating an "imagined community" (Anderson, 2006) of *Tweestromenland* 'Land of two rivers'. Yet, speakers' perceptions change much slower than the actual circumstances of their daily life. People along the Meuse in the Land van Maas en Waal have come to grudgingly accept Wijchen as their administrative center ("at least it has gotten us decent garbage containers", as one old Batenburger used to grumble), but many of them do not feel connected with the rest of the region, let alone with the big city, Nijmegen. There was some talk of a fusion between the municipalities of Druten upon the Waal and Wijchen upon the Meuse, but this did not work out.

The deep Batenburg dialect (*plèt Baotenburgs*) is bound to die out with the older generation, making way for a dichotomy between Dutch with a strong local accent and more or less standard Dutch. The use of the local accent no longer distinguishes Catholics from Protestants but, in the kind of "social redistribution" that Trudgill (1985, pp. 118–119) describes for Norwich and Belfast, it has come to mark the difference between people of the older generation who have always lived here, and those with networks outside Batenburg, including younger speakers and outsiders like myself.

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[18] Did the ferry stop because people were no longer interested in traveling south or did the end of the ferry connection affect people's spatial routines? To echo Britain's (2014) conclusion about bus connections in the Fenlands: "Probably both".

[19] The railway bridge across the Meuse near Ravenstein dates from 1872; older people from Batenburg remember that in their youth they used to cross the river by walking along the footpath beside the rails, which was not without danger, but provided a welcome alternative late at night when the ferry no longer ran.

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"A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT": CROSSING THE MEUSE IN BATENBURG (THE NETHERLANDS)

Summary

The dialects spoken in the Dutch region Land van Maas en Waal, between the two rivers Meuse and Waal, are usually classified as a mixed dialect group exhibiting characteristics of the dialects of both Brabant and Gelderland. The perceptual map of the dialects paints a different picture as it shows a division between the speakers in the southern part of the region, who regard their dialect as more related to Brabant dialects, while speakers in the northern part feel more connected with the dialects spoken to the north of the Waal. The present paper attempts to explain this difference in perception by looking at the contacts the inhabitants of the small town of Batenburg had across the river. Materials used for this study include interviews with elderly people in Batenburg and data from the municipal archives.

Keywords: dialect contact; Dutch dialects; perceptual dialectology; cross-river contacts; marriage selection; religious affiliation; Meuse; social networks.

„PRZEPŁYWA PRZEZ NIĄ RZEKA". PRZEPRAWA PRZEZ MOZĘ W BATENBURGU (NIDERLANDY)

Streszczenie

Dialekty używane w niderlandzkim regionie Land van Maas en Waal, położonym między dwiema rzekami, Mozą i Waal, są zwykle klasyfikowane jako mieszana grupa dialektów wykazująca cechy dialektów zarówno Brabancji, jak i Geldrii. Mapa percepcyjna dialektów maluje jednak inny obraz sytuacyjny, ponieważ pokazuje rozdźwięk między mówcami w południowej części regionu, którzy uważają swój dialekt za bardziej związany z dialektami Brabancji, a mówcami w północnej części, którzy czują się bardziej związani z dialektami używanymi na północ od rzeki Waal. Niniejszy artykuł jest próbą wyjaśnienia tej różnicy percepcyjnej poprzez analizę kontaktów, jakie mieszkańcy małego miasteczka Batenburg mieli z mieszkańcami po drugiej stronie rzeki Mozy. Materiały wykorzystane w niniejszych badaniach obejmują wywiady z osobami starszymi w Batenburgu oraz dane z archiwów miejskich.

Słowa kluczowe: kontakt dialektalny; dialekty niderlandzkie; dialektologia percepcyjna; kontakty na obu brzegach rzeki; dobór małżeński; przynależność religijna; Moza; sieci społeczne.

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