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### Metaphors in political communication

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*Metaphors in Political Communication:  
A Case Study of the Use of Deliberate Metaphors in Non-Institutional  
Political Interviews*

*Abstract*

This article analyses the use of (deliberate) metaphors in political discourse produced by French-speaking Belgian regional parliamentarians during non-institutional political interviews. The article first investigates if the use of deliberate metaphor limits itself to a particular type of political discourse (i.e. public and institutional political discourse) or if metaphor use is also found in other types of settings (i.e. non-institutional political discourse). Second, the article analyses the variation of deliberate metaphor use between political actors depending on gender, seniority and political affiliation. To this end, the article applies Steen's (2008) three-dimensional model of metaphor analysis on biographical interviews conducted with French-speaking Belgian regional parliamentarians (RMPs). Our results indicate that RMPs, when using non-deliberate metaphors, mostly rely on source domains such as CONSTRUCTION, BATTLE and RELATIONSHIPS. This is in contrast with the use of deliberate metaphors, where source domains like SPORTS, NATURE and CONTAINER take the upper hand.

*Keywords*

political discourse, metaphor analysis, deliberate metaphor, metaphor variation, three-dimensional model, non-institutional interviews, regional parliamentarians, Belgium, Wallonia

## 1. Introduction

The works of Aristotle, Nietzsche and Lakoff (1996, 2004) have paved the way for a considerable number of studies focussing on political metaphors (see among others Carver and Pikalo, 2008; Charteris-Black, 2005, 2018; De Landtsheer, 2009; L'Hôte, 2011; Musolff, 2004, 2010, 2017; Semino, 2008; Perrez and Reuchamps, 2012, 2014, 2015a, 2015b; Perrez, Reuchamps and Thibodeau, 2019). As shown by Perrez, Randour and Reuchamps (2019), most studies on metaphor in political discourse tend to focus on metaphor production in institutional contexts, e.g. public and formalised political discourse produced in front of large audiences (see for instance Charteris-Black 2005, 2018; Musolff 2004, 2016, 2017; Lakoff 2004). This is no surprise as metaphors are considered to be effective persuasive rhetorical tools. Beer and de Landtsheer (2004), for example, observe that politicians frequently use metaphors “as tools of persuasive communication, to bridge gaps and build identification between strangers; to frame issues, to create, maintain, or dissolve political coalitions; to generate votes and win elections”.

However, one can also wonder whether the use of metaphors in political discourse is limited to these specific institutional contexts or if they also occur in other types of political settings. Indeed, as highlighted by Perrez, Randour and Reuchamps (2019) in their systematic literature review, the range of discourses that fall within the scope of ‘political discourse’, shows a high level of variation. Political metaphor analysis should therefore also include studies on metaphors in other political settings than the institutional ones. This is the first objective of this study, namely investigating to what extent political actors use metaphors in their communication strategy in non-public and less formalised contexts.

In addition, our contribution also aims at analysing the variation in metaphor use between different political actors. Indeed, while previous studies have shown that politicians rely on metaphors as persuasive tools, little is known about the variation in metaphor use between political actors (Reuchamps,

Thibodeau and Perrez, 2019). This situation is mainly explained by the limited number of comparative studies focussing on metaphor production as pointed out by Perrez, Randour and Reuchamps (2019). In fact, most works focus on one actor, one metaphor or a specific policy field without any comparative dimension (see Charteris-Black 2005 for an exception). Therefore, our study adopts a comparative design to analyse the variation in metaphor use across parliamentarians in Belgium according to individual preference, gender, political affiliation and seniority.

To this end, we analysed biographical interviews conducted with French-speaking Belgian politicians, living in Wallonia, focussing on their personal political career within the Belgian and Walloon political context. In particular, this article focusses on the use of deliberate metaphors (DM). Numerous studies have shown the importance of conceptual metaphors in political discourse, making it possible to present abstract political concepts in more familiar terms (see for instance Thompson 1996, Lakoff 2002, Semino 2008, Reuchamps and Perrez 2012, Ly 2013). Focusing on deliberate metaphors (cf. Steen 2008) makes it possible to make a distinction between the metaphors that have become conventionalized in everyday language and the ones that are used intentionally as metaphors in a given communication context (cf. Steen 2017). This distinction allows us to better understand the communicative function of metaphor in political discourse.

The article is structured as follows. In the next section, we present the research questions of the article and discuss the notion of deliberate metaphor within the study of political discourse. Section 3 lays out the methodology used for the analysis of deliberate metaphor. Subsequently, the results of our analysis are presented in section 4. On the one hand, we first focus on the overall quantitative results of the study, on the distinction between deliberate and non-deliberate metaphors and finally, on the saliency of the source domains. On the

other hand, the second part of section 4 focusses on the variation of deliberate metaphors use between political actors. Finally, section 5 consists of a discussion of the results followed by a brief conclusion and avenues for further research (section 6).

## **2. Deliberate metaphors in political discourse**

In *Metaphors We Live By*, metaphors were presented as conceptual tools structuring complex realities by introducing a cognitive linguistics perspective (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Metaphors were seen as instruments that play a considerable role in our understanding and categorisation of abstract entities and in our comprehension of complex processes. Their conception of metaphors has led to a rising interest in the study of conceptual metaphors as analytic tools to delve into various domains of social sciences, such as the political domain. Many researchers support the idea that the political domain and political discourse allow for an extensive use of metaphors. Charteris-Black (2005), for example, explains the popularity of metaphors in political discourse as follows:

Metaphor is a figure of speech that is typically used in persuasive political arguments; this is because it represents a certain way of viewing the world that reflects a shared system of belief as to what the world is and culture-specific beliefs about mankind's place in it. It offers a way of looking at the world that may differ from the way we normally look at it and, as a result, offers some fresh insight.

In particular, Semino (2008: 90) emphasizes that "it is often claimed that the use of metaphor is particularly necessary in politics, since politics is an abstract and complex domain of experience, and metaphors can provide ways of simplifying complexities and making abstractions accessible".

Still, the need for more research on political metaphors and their impact has been highlighted before: "if metaphor is at the heart of cognitive framing then

it should be crucial to political study” (De Landtsheer 2009: 60). Accordingly, research on political metaphors has increased in the last years (e.g. Boeynaems et al. 2017; Burgers et al. 2019; Brugman and Burgers 2018; Charteris-Black, 2005, 2018; Musolff 2004, 2016, 2017; Reuchamps, Dodeigne and Perrez 2018). George Lakoff, for instance, has taken a particular interest in investigating the way American liberals and conservatives hold different conceptual models of morality and how these different views are reflected in the way they frame their discourse (1996, 2002, 2004). Andreas Musolff analysed the way people conceive and, consequently, speak about Europe – with a particular interest for the ‘heart-of-Europe’ metaphor (1996, 2000, 2004, 2017), while Jonathan Charteris-Black (2005, 2018) analysed political speeches by American and British politicians and delved into their persuasive power.

Most research on political metaphor tend to focus on the production of metaphor in public and institutionalized political discourse. Nonetheless, political discourse does not limit itself to this type of communication and consists of a wide array of different types of discourse (Perrez, Randour and Reuchamps, 2019). Political metaphor analysis should therefore not be restricted to institutional political discourse, but should also include studies on metaphor in other types of political discourse. We therefore propose to analyse a different type of political discourse, that is biographical narrative interviews conducted with parliamentarians. We chose to analyse this type of discourse in order to determine whether metaphor use by political elites can also be found in less institutional types of political discourse. How this corpus differs from other types of political discourse is discussed in section 3 of this article. Accordingly, the first research question is as follows:

*RQ1: Does the use of metaphor limit itself to public and institutional political discourse?*

Second, the article also focusses on the variation of metaphor and source domain use between political actors. Indeed, the homogeneity of our corpus<sup>1</sup> offers a fertile ground to analyse variation in metaphors use across political actors. To further explore this variation, the research focusses on four variables: (i) individual preference, (ii) gender, (iii) seniority and (iv) political affiliation.

Individual preference refers to the idea that some speakers might be more inclined to a higher production of metaphors as opposed to other speakers. To the best of our knowledge, research on this variable is rare. However, some existing research, as for example Jonathan Charteris-Black's *Politicians and Rhetoric* (2005) do suggest that there are differences in metaphor use based on individuals and that it is worth analysing and evaluating individual politicians' discourses in terms of metaphor use.

Analysing gender allows for a differentiation in metaphor use between male and female political actors. Previous studies (see for instance *Politics, Gender and Conceptual Metaphor* edited by Ahrens, 2009) have found mixed results between men and women, finding differences in metaphor production between both in discourses from the United Kingdom, Italy and Germany, while no differences were found in discourses in the United State Senate. Such mixed results suggest that the variation in metaphor production based on gender is still in need of further research.

The third variable we explore for this research, i.e. seniority, involves differences in metaphor production based on politicians' career length and years of experience. As far as we know, literature on this variable remains scarce. Yet,

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<sup>1</sup> Indeed, our corpus focusses on the same actors (French-speaking Belgian parliamentarians), the same genre of discourse (biographical interviews); on the same theme (their career within the Belgian political context) and finally, on the same time period (2012).

we do believe that seniority could be a factor potentially impacting on the production of metaphors as it influences political behaviour (Dodeigne 2014).

Finally, the last variable we want to explore is political affiliation. Lakoff (2002), for example, explored differences in metaphor use between liberals and conservatives in the United States, explaining that the conservatives' success is due to the way they frame their political messaging. Research like this thus indicates that political affiliation and differences in ideology imply differences in metaphorical framing. What is currently lacking in political metaphor research, are studies that account for more complex political systems, as for example proportional systems as is the case in Belgium (Reuchamps 2013, 2015). Moreover, to the best of our knowledge, there are no studies focussing on metaphor use in terms of political affiliation in the French-speaking part of Belgium. Therefore, we consider political affiliation as a fourth potential variable leading to variation in deliberate metaphor use.

Existing literature on the concomitance of metaphor variation and political variables such as the ones explained above thus remains scarce. Yet, exploring these factors brings an added value to literature on political metaphors and opens up avenues for further research. Consequently, the second research question is the following:

*RQ2: To what extent does individual preference, gender, political affiliation and seniority impact on metaphor use across political actors?*

Following Perrez and Reuchamps (2014), we pay particular attention to metaphors which fulfil a communicative purpose within discourse. Indeed, it is crucial to make a distinction between conventional metaphors, which are often the product of common ways of expressing political concepts and process, and non-conventional metaphors. As pointed out by Perrez and Reuchamps (2014:



11), “only such a distinction can help us understand (i) why political actors use metaphors in their discourse and (ii) how they actually perceive and conceptualize complex notions such as state structure and interactions.” The varying communicative nature of political discourse can be illustrated by the following examples taken from our corpus:

(1) *Mais c’est la **construction** pas à pas aussi de la Wallonie.*

‘But that is the step-by-step **construction** of Wallonia.’

(Reformist Movement – liberal)

(2) *L’avenir du fédéralisme c’est comme dans un **couple**. Il n’aura que d’avenir que s’il y a une volonté de **vivre ensemble**. Dans un **couple** si le **mari** veut partir parce qu’il y a une **maitresse**, il quitte sa femme...*

‘The future of federalism, it’s like a **couple**<sup>2</sup>. There will only be a future if there is a will to **live together**. In a **couple** if the **husband** wants to leave because there is a **mistress**, he leaves his **wife** ...’

(Socialist Party)

These examples illustrate how the nature of metaphors can vary from very conventional ways of speaking and thinking about politics (example – 1) to more explicit and novel conceptualisations, as in example (2). It is certainly not our intention to claim that conventional metaphors in political discourse are less important than other metaphors. However, we firmly believe that when analysing political discourse, it is important to make a distinction between

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<sup>2</sup> Throughout the article, the underlined words are the lexical signals pointing to potential metaphor use. The metaphorical units are put in bold.

conventional non-deliberate metaphors, which are often the product of common ways of expressing things, and deliberate metaphors.

In order to make this distinction possible, we used Steen's (2008) three-dimensional model of metaphor analysis in discourse and communication. In this model, Steen distinguishes between three levels of metaphor analysis: the linguistic level, the conceptual and the communicative level. It is the latter that is instrumental for the current research<sup>3</sup>. At the communicative level, a distinction is made between deliberate metaphor and non-deliberate metaphor. Deliberate metaphor is defined as metaphor that is produced to alter the addressee's perspective on the topic that is the target of the metaphor, by making the addressee look at it from a different conceptual domain or space, which functions as a conceptual source. Overall, by making a distinction between deliberate and non-deliberate metaphors, we get to better understand how Belgian parliamentarians conceptualise their career within the Belgian political system. In this article, this is done by looking at the saliency of the different source domains used by the parliamentarians.

The next section presents a more detailed description of the data used for this research. Further methodological issues and remarks regarding the identification of deliberate metaphors are also addressed.

### **3. Data & Method**

#### **3.1 Corpus: Face-to-face narrative interviews with political representatives**

This article seeks to analyse a type of political discourse that differs from the types of corpora usually studied in political metaphor studies and to control if the use of metaphors varies across political actors. Overall, this offers an

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<sup>3</sup> Steen (2008) offers a thorough description of this three-dimensional model.

interesting ground of investigation to see how the political elite generate their own deliberate metaphors, which in turn might provide insights as to how politicians position themselves regarding their career's development within the political dynamics of their country.

Accordingly, the research relies on biographical interviews conducted with regional Members of Parliament (RMPs), each describing at length their personal political career within the political dynamics of their country. The data used for this research was collected within the framework of a study exploring the development of political representatives' political careers in minority regions in newly regionalised and multinational countries (Dodeigne 2015). Initially, the data was thus not collected with the aim to analyse metaphor use in political discourse.

Still, these face-to-face narrative interviews constitute an interesting ground of investigation for metaphor analysis. Indeed, most research on metaphor in political discourse tends to focus on institutional and public elite discourse produced in front of large audiences (often consisting of fellow politicians, citizens and/or media). Narrative interviews, on the other hand, differ in the sense that they took place in a more private setting consisting only of the interviewer and the interviewee. This type of setting allows the interviewees to express *their* stories, their understanding of their political environment and experience and it allows them to focus on what *matters* to *them* (see Dodeigne 2015: 177). Interviewees are able to express their representations in *their own words*. Therefore, the direct character of these face-to-face interviews – as opposed to institutional and public political communications – brings an added value. For that reason, we support the idea that it is worth studying in a more profound way which words political representatives employ to communicate their representations, and more precisely, which metaphors they use to do so.

In this article, we concentrate on narrative interviews conducted with French-speaking Belgian parliamentarians, members of the Walloon Parliament (N = 24). To trigger the narrative, each interview started with the same question: “How did you get into politics?” Subsequently, depending on the interviewees’ reactions and answers, the interviewer went on with a set of questions, always aiming at explicitly soliciting the political part of the interviewees’ lives. Questions were thus not all the same for all interviewees, yet, all were designed to focus on their political experience and, if possible, their personal political visions. All interviews were conducted in the interviewees’ native language (in this case French) and took place between June and September 2012. The shortest interview lasted 35 minutes, the longest interview, 100 minutes. The entire corpus consisted of approximately 206 000 words.

### **3.2 Metaphor identification**

In order to assess to what extent the politicians use metaphors to talk about their career within Belgian political dynamics in their discourse, we used the MIPVU procedure developed by Steen et al. (2010). First, we read the entire corpus to come to a global understanding of its content (step 1). Following this first lecture, we then determined the lexical units in the corpus (step 2).

The next step in our identification procedure was to further identify potentially relevant contexts by performing a concordance search for the target domain of the Belgian federal state, on the one hand, and for relevant source domains, on the other. For the target domain, we created a list of lexical units that directly refer to the Belgian federal state (see table 1 for an overview). The first lecture of the entire corpus also allowed us to detect the most commonly used source domains. Based on this, we created onomasiological profiles containing words that directly referred to specific source domains (see table 2 for an

overview). By creating such profiles, we slightly distance ourselves from what the traditional MIPVU procedure prescribes, since we are not considering all lexical units. Instead, this concordance search allowed us to automatically preselect potentially relevant contexts i.e. lexical units that were potentially metaphorical. This step ultimately resulted in 744 relevant contexts.

Table 1: Terms referring to the target domain of Belgian politics used for the automatic corpus extraction

Target domain	Terms referring to domain
Belgian politics	<i>Belgique</i> 'Belgium', <i>belge</i> 'Belgian', <i>Wallonie</i> 'Wallonia', <i>wallon</i> 'Walloon', <i>region</i> 'region', <i>communauté</i> 'community', <i>fédéral</i> 'federal', <i>fédéralisme</i> 'federalism', <i>Flandre</i> 'Flanders', <i>flamand</i> 'Flemish', <i>Europe</i> 'Europe', <i>européen</i> 'European', <i>francophone</i> 'French-speaking', <i>néerlandophone</i> 'Dutch-speaking', <i>germanophone</i> 'German-speaking', <i>Bruxelles</i> 'Brussels', <i>bruxellois</i> 'inhabitant of Brussels'

Table 2: Terms referring to the source domains used for the automatic corpus extraction

Source domain	Terms referring to domain
Battle	<i>Bataille</i> 'battle', <i>guerre</i> 'war', <i>paix</i> 'peace', <i>battre</i> 'to fight', <i>défendre</i> 'to defend', <i>victoire</i> 'victory', <i>défaite</i> 'defeat', <i>trêve</i> 'truce', <i>champ de bataille</i> 'battlefield', <i>arène</i> 'arena', <i>bombarder</i> 'to bombard', <i>attaquer</i> 'to attack', <i>combat</i> 'combat', <i>combattant</i> 'combatant', <i>combattre</i> 'to combat', <i>défense</i> 'defense', <i>défenseur</i> 'defender', <i>pouvoir</i> 'power', <i>puissance</i> 'power', <i>bagarre</i> 'fight', <i>alliance</i> 'alliance', <i>arme</i> 'weapon', <i>soldat</i> 'soldier', <i>camps</i> 'sides', <i>allié</i> 'ally', <i>ennemi</i> 'enemy', <i>rival</i> 'rival', <i>diviser</i> 'divide'
Construction	<i>Construction</i> 'construction', <i>bâtiment</i> 'building', <i>construire</i> 'to build', <i>bâtir</i> 'to build', <i>créer</i> 'to create', <i>immeuble</i> 'building', <i>fondation</i> 'foundation', <i>structure</i> 'structure', <i>fonder</i> 'to found', <i>échafauder</i> 'to put together', <i>ciment</i> 'cement', <i>brique</i> 'brick', <i>architecte</i> 'architect', <i>plan</i> 'plan', <i>machine</i> 'machine', <i>ingénieur</i> 'engineer', <i>pont</i> 'bridge', <i>base</i> 'base',

	<i>chantier 'construction site', chape 'screed', pilier 'pillar', niveau 'level', étage 'floor'</i>
<b>Container</b>	<i>Contenir 'to contain', contenu 'content', tenir 'hold', renfermer 'to contain', englober 'to embrace', coquille 'shell', boîte 'box', contenant 'container, caisse 'box', recipient 'recipient', réservoir 'reservoir', inclure 'include', entourer 'surround', emprisonner 'to imprison', remplir 'to fill', sac 'bag', cage 'cage', coffre 'trunk', cocon 'cocoon'</i>
<b>Human body</b>	<i>Corps 'body', poumon 'lung', Coeur 'heart', organe 'organ', artère 'artery', vie 'life', mort 'death', vivre 'to live', mourir 'to die', cerveau 'brain', tête 'head', colonne vertébrale 'backbone', os 'bone', main 'hand', bras 'arm', peau 'skin', organisme 'organism', oxygène 'oxygen'</i>
<b>Disease</b>	<i>Malade 'sick', maladie 'disease', affection 'disease', syndrome 'syndrom', trouble 'disarray', cancer 'cancer', tumeur 'tumor', rétablissement 'recovery', guérir 'to heal', guérison 'healing', mal 'ache', attaque 'attack', tare 'defect', souffrance 'suffering', souffrir 'to suffer', irritation 'irritation', contagieux 'contagious', virus 'virus', paralyser 'paralyse'</i>
<b>Nature</b>	<i>Faune 'fauna', flore 'flora', animal 'animal', plante 'plant', pousser 'to grow', végétation 'vegetation', végétal 'vegetable', étoile filante 'shooting star'</i>
<b>Relationship</b>	<i>Relation 'relationship', amitié 'friendship', ami(e)(s) 'friend(s)', famille 'family', père 'father', mère 'mother', enfant(s) 'child(ren)', couple 'couple', amour 'love', mari 'husband', femme 'wife', sexe 'sex', divorce 'divorce', aimer 'to love', mariage 'wedding', frère 'brother', soeur 'sister', complicité 'complicity', complice 'accomplice', connivance 'complicity', soutien 'support', compromise 'compromise', loyauté 'loyalty', pilier 'pillar', vivre ensemble 'live together', vivre séparément 'live apart', unité 'unity', partenaire 'partner'</i>

<b>Sports</b>	<i>Jeu</i> 'game', <i>concours</i> 'contest', <i>compétition</i> 'competition', <i>gagner</i> 'to win', <i>perdre</i> 'to lose', <i>victoire</i> 'victory', <i>échec</i> 'failure', <i>défaite</i> 'defeat', <i>jouer</i> 'to play', <i>joueur</i> 'player', <i>gagnant</i> 'winner', <i>perdant</i> 'loser', <i>stratégie</i> 'strategy', <i>tactique</i> 'tactic', <i>match</i> 'match', <i>course</i> 'race', <i>puzzle</i> 'puzzle', <i>terrain</i> 'field', <i>arbitrage</i> 'refereeing', <i>recompense</i> 'reward', <i>équipe</i> 'team', <i>vainqueur</i> 'winner', <i>participant</i> 'participant', <i>participer</i> 'to participate', <i>adversaire</i> 'adversary', <i>chaise musicale</i> 'musical chair', <i>foot</i> 'football', <i>cyclisme</i> 'cycling', <i>cycliste</i> 'cyclist', <i>formule 1</i> 'Formula 1', <i>yo-yo</i> 'yo-yo', <i>guidon</i> 'handlebars', <i>échiquier</i> 'chessboard', <i>balle</i> 'ball', <i>boomerang</i> 'boomerang', <i>valet noir</i> 'black jack', <i>carte(s)</i> 'card(s)'
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To complete the identification of metaphors, the basic meaning of each of the 744 lexical units was compared with its meaning in context by using an electronic version of *Le Petit Robert 2016* (steps 3 and 4). If the basic meaning of the lexical unit did not match the meaning in context, the lexical unit was considered as potentially metaphorical. This final step of our analysis ultimately resulted in 673 potentially metaphorical contexts.

### 3.3 Identifying deliberate metaphors

Following Steen's three-dimensional model, we determined to what extent each identified metaphor-related word was indirect/direct, conventional/novel and, most importantly, deliberate or not. In order to be coherent in the analysis, we complied with the following procedure.

At the *linguistic* level, metaphors were categorised as direct or indirect by looking if the cross-domain mapping between the source and the target domain was explicitly indicated (as in example – 3) or not (as in example – 4):

(3) ... sur le plan stratégique, c'est un peu comme **l'arme nucléaire**: c'est l'avoir sans ne jamais s'en servir.

'... on a strategic plan, it is a bit like a **nuclear weapon**: it's having it without ever using it.'

(Socialist Party)

(4) On peut imaginer de discuter de textes donnant une **ossature** plus structurelle à la Wallonie, mais ce n'est pas ça la priorité aujourd'hui.

'We can imagine discussing texts that give a more structural **skeleton** to Wallonia, but that is not today's priority.'

(Green Party)

At the *conceptual* level, a metaphor was classified as being conventional if we were able to find the meaning of the metaphorically used expression among the definitions of the expression in the reference dictionary (example – 5). If this was not the case, the metaphor was considered as novel (example – 6).

(5) J'ai envie de **défendre** beaucoup plus ma région même si c'est au fédéral.

'I want to **defend** my region much more, even if it's on a federal level.'

(Reformist Movement)

(6) Les francophones sont **le sac à dos rempli de pierres sur le dos des flamands**.

'The Francophones are **the backpack filled with rocks** of the Flemish.'

(Green Party)

Categorising metaphor at the linguistic and conceptual levels relies on objective



criteria. Determining whether a metaphor is deliberate or not at the *communicative* level is a more difficult enterprise. However, existing literature on the identification of deliberate metaphor (see for instance Krennmayr 2011, Pasma 2011) has provided a list of features which can help researchers to determine if a metaphor-related word can count as deliberate. This list was used as a base in the current research and is as follows:

- (i) Is the metaphorical unit **signalled** (e.g. by a simile or other signalling device)?
- (ii) Is the metaphorical unit in the **form of A = B**?
- (iii) Is the metaphorical unit **expressed directly**?
- (iv) Is the metaphorical unit **novel**?
- (v) Is the metaphorical unit **surrounded by metaphorical expressions from compatible semantic fields**, which are somehow connected?
- (vi) Is the **metaphorical sense** of the unit particularly **salient** through, for example, alluding to the topic of the text?
- (vii) Does the metaphorical unit participate in **word play**?
- (viii) Does the metaphorical unit **elicit rhetorical effects** such as, for example, persuasion or humour?

Following this list, metaphors that were identified as direct (linguistic level) and/or novel (conceptual level) were coded as deliberate. Moreover, the remaining features (v – to – viii) were also taken into consideration to determine whether a metaphor was deliberate or not. Subsequently, the following sentence was counted as an instance of deliberate metaphor:

(7) *On est une équipe, il faut que tous les joueurs soient sur le terrain et shooter dans le même sens. S'il y en a un qui shoote dans son camp, ça ne va pas.*

'We are a **team**, all **players** must be on the **field** and **shoot** in the same direction. If there is one person who **shoots** in their own **camp**, it won't work.'

(Reformist Movement)

The link between indirect/conventional metaphor and deliberate metaphor is not always evident. However, features (v) to (viii) were also used to determine the deliberateness of such cases, as in:

(8) *Et la Flandre, il n'y a rien à faire ... Je m'en suis rendu compte, tu ne sais pas faire un **mariage** si les deux ne sont **consentants**. Je ne sais pas, qu'est-ce que t'en penses?*

'And Flanders, nothing can be done ... I came to the realisation, you cannot make a **wedding** if both aren't **consenting**. I don't know, what do you think?'

(Socialist Party)

Even though this sentence was classified as an instance of indirect and conventional metaphor, we still considered it as being deliberate. The two underlined elements are the reason why. Before presenting their metaphor of Belgium as a couple, this politician specifically points to the fact that he came to a realisation, suggesting that the following sentence will be a clarification of his personal conceptualisation of Belgium. To even further strengthen his representation of Belgium in terms of a couple is indeed his perception, he asks the interviewer afterwards, '*what do you think?*' Due to these elements, it is thus possible to identify the metaphorical expression's function in communication (feature – viii). In this light, we decided that this example matched Steen's definition of deliberate metaphor.

If we were not able to determine whether indirect metaphors and conventional metaphors were deliberate or not, we looked at the immediate context of the metaphorically used expression in order to find other lexical units

belonging to the same source domain (feature – v). If we found at least one different unit referring to the same domain as the metaphorically used expression, we considered the conventional and/or indirect metaphor as a deliberate metaphor (as is, moreover, also the case for the example above).

The overall analysis of our corpus has been performed by one member of our research team. Problematic cases, however, were discussed by all team members in order to come to an agreement. The following section of this article presents the results of the quantitative analysis.

#### 4. Results

##### 4.1 The use of deliberate metaphor by Belgian regional MPs

Table 3 summarises the overall results of the quantitative analysis. These results suggest that the majority of the identified metaphorically used expressions consists of indirect (92,27%), conventional (93,46%) and non-deliberate metaphors (91,68%). Even though the results of these three categories are fairly high, the results of the direct (7,93%), novel (6,54%) and deliberate (8,32%) metaphors still suggest that, even in non-institutional political discourse, RMPs also tend to resort to this type of metaphor as a discourse strategy to talk about politics.

*Table 3: Overall results of the quantitative analysis*

	N (out of 673)	%
<b>Direct vs. indirect</b>		
Direct	52	7,93%
Indirect	621	92,27%
<b>Novel vs. conventional</b>		
Novel	44	6,54%
Conventional	629	93,46%

<b>Deliberate vs. non-deliberate</b>		
Deliberate	56	8,32%
Non-deliberate	617	91,68%

#### 4.2 Deliberate versus non-deliberate metaphor: source domain saliency

Table 4 shows the most commonly used source domains emerging from our data, for both deliberate and non-deliberate metaphor. Overall, when speaking about Belgian federalism, political elites tend to frequently rely on metaphors referring to the CONSTRUCTION and the BATTLE domain and – though to a lesser extent – the RELATIONSHIP domain<sup>4</sup>.

*Table 4: Distribution of deliberate and non-deliberate metaphors across the conceptual source domains*

<b>Source domain</b>	<b>Deliberate</b>	<b>Non-deliberate</b>	<b>Total</b>
Construction	0	310	310
Battle	1	155	156
Relationships	10	44	54
Path/movement	0	25	25
Sports	22	1	23
Games	1	20	21
Personification	2	18	20
Others	1	16	17
Human body	2	11	13
Nature	5	2	7
Disease	3	4	7
Container	5	1	6
Life & death	2	4	6
Machine	1	2	3
Everyday life	1	1	2
Drama	0	2	2
Religion	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>617</b>	<b>673</b>

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<sup>4</sup> The source domain 'relationship' refers to relationships in general, that is love relationships, family relationships and friendships.

However, once taking into account the difference between deliberate and non-deliberate metaphors, a shift in saliency of the source domains occurs. Even though CONSTRUCTION, BATTLE and RELATIONSHIP metaphors are the most frequently used metaphors, two of these categories – BATTLE and CONSTRUCTION – almost completely rely on the use of non-deliberate metaphors. Regarding the RELATIONSHIP domain, it consists of 18,5% of deliberate metaphors as opposed to 81,5% of non-deliberate metaphors. When going further into the use of deliberate metaphors, some of the less frequent source domains (that is SPORTS, CONTAINER and NATURE) seem to prevail. This difference in saliency is presented in figure 1 and figure 2.

Figure 1: Distribution of deliberate and non-deliberate metaphors across all source domains

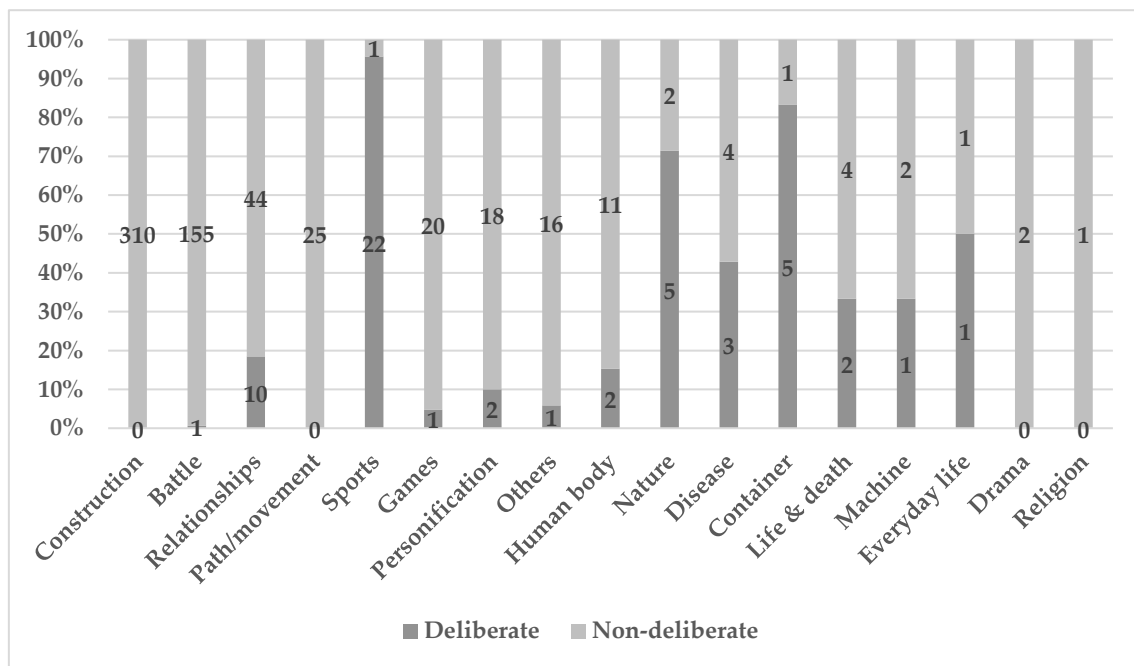
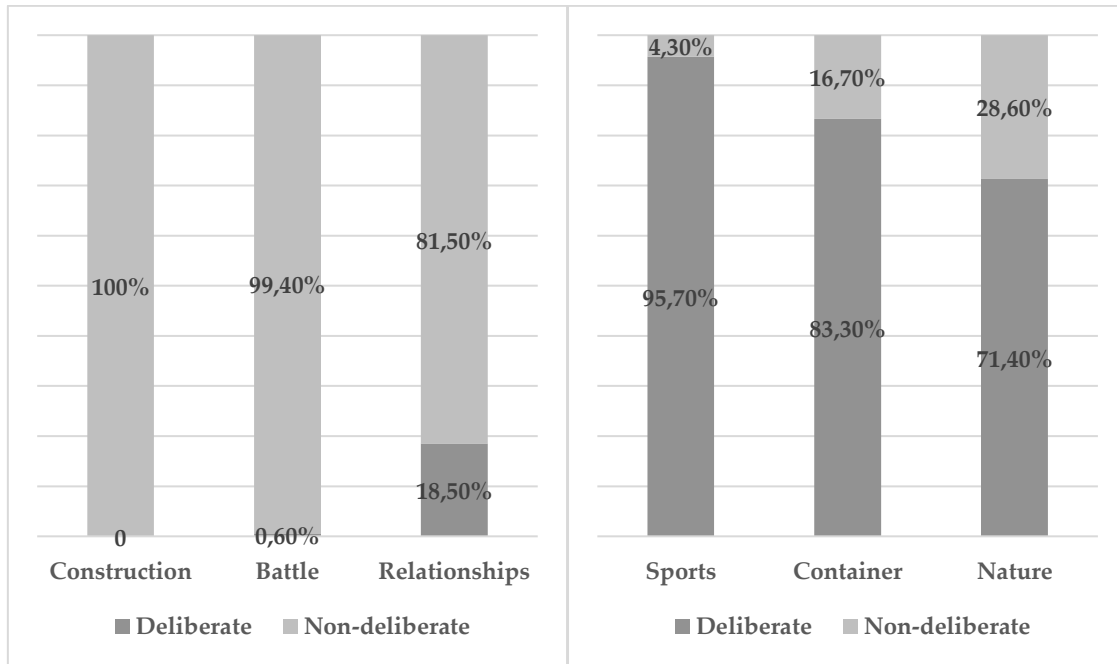


Figure 2: Distribution of deliberate and non-deliberate metaphors across specific source domains (construction, battle, relationships, sports, container and nature)



These results suggest that making a distinction between deliberate and non-deliberate metaphors is pertinent. This distinction makes it indeed possible to identify interesting variations in the way politicians deliberately describe their perceptions of the Belgian federal state.

On the one hand, regarding the use of non-deliberate metaphors, the three most dominant source domains are the CONSTRUCTION, BATTLE and RELATIONSHIP domain. The fact that these domains are almost exclusively based on the use of non-deliberate metaphors (see figure 2), suggests that talking about Belgian politics in terms of these three domains has become very conventional. Indeed, in our study these domains often rely on the occurrence of conventional metaphorical expressions such as ‘structure’; ‘level’; ‘to build’; ‘to defend’; ‘to attack’; and so on, as illustrated by the following examples taken from our data:

(9) *Si vous avez un pouvoir fédéral, qui est tellement effiloché parce*

*que ce n'est plus qu'une coquille vide ... À ce moment-là, il n'y a plus de raisons d'avoir une **structure** fédérale'*

'If you have a federal power that is so frayed because it's just a hollow shell ... At that moment, there is no reason left to have a federal **structure**.'

(Humanist Democratic Centre)

(10) *Les Flamands ont eu l'occasion eux de **construire** une identité historique.*

'The Flemish had the opportunity to **build** a historical identity.'

(Humanist Democratic Centre)

(11) *... les extrémistes flamands qui **attaquent** très régulièrement le PS ...*

'... the Flemish extremists who regularly **attack** the Socialist Party...'

(Reformist Movement)

The considerable presence of these three source domains through the use of non-deliberate, conventional metaphors also reveals information as to how the political actors conceptually perceive Belgian politics. It suggests that they think of Belgian federalism as a kind of building in need of a step-by-step construction in order to develop in the right direction, or that they think of Belgian politics as a kind of battlefield in which each has to defend their territory and their convictions.

On the other hand, looking exclusively at the use of deliberate metaphors, the most prevailing conceptual source domain is the SPORTS domain (POLITICS IS A SPORT), referring to politics in terms of football, cycling or even Formula 1 (as in example – 12).

(12) *Le Parlement wallon, je l'assimile à une **Formule 1** où vous avez neuf personnes pour **conduire un bolide** vers la **victoire**. Vous en avez sept qui poussent sur **l'accélérateur** et deux qui actionnent le **frein à main**, donc ce n'est pas évident.*

'The Walloon government, I assimilate it to a **Formula One** where you have nine people to **drive a racing car** towards **victory**, you have seven people who step on the **accelerator** and two who activate the **handbrake**, so it is not easy.'

(Socialist Party)

These examples reveal that the parliamentarians think of the workings of Belgian politics in terms of working as a team in sports. According to them, Belgian politics can only function correctly if politicians work together as a team, just as players on the same sports team have to work together to be victorious. In addition, the two other most frequently used source domains through deliberate metaphor usage are the CONTAINER (see example – 13) and the NATURE domain (example – 14).

(13) *Il y a eu deux problèmes, c'est du côté d'Ecolo et du côté du PS. Mais c'est comme une marmite, quand on tient le **couvercle**, à un moment donné le **couvercle** explose.*

« There are two problems, and that's from Ecolo's side and the PS side. But it's like a **cooking pot**, when you hold the **lid**, at some point, the **lid** explodes. »

(Reformist Movement)

(14) *Parce qu'aujourd'hui c'est un grand **magma**, le parlement européen,*



*avec des gros groupes qui se retrouvent dans le parlement européen.*

« Because today, the European Parliament is one big **magma**, with big groups coming together at the European Parliament. »

(Socialist Party)

The first part of our questioning consisted of determining whether metaphor use limits itself to public and institutional political discourse or whether metaphor use can also be found in other types of political communication. The results above suggest that this is indeed the case.

### **4.3 Variation in deliberate metaphor use**

Concentrating exclusively on deliberate metaphor use reveals interesting variations between political actors. For the purpose of this article, we focus on four variables, that is (i) individual preference (ii) gender (iii) seniority and (iv) political affiliation. For each variable, we discuss the average use of deliberate metaphors as well as some of the relevant source domains – more specifically POLITICS IS A SPORT and POLITICS IS A RELATIONSHIP. For this analysis, we only focussed on the use of deliberate metaphors (N = 56) which were used by fifteen RMPs.

The first variable we explore is the differences in use of deliberate metaphors based on individual preferences. Our results indicate that individual preference could potentially be a factor as one of the fifteen RMPs displayed a stronger inclination to the use of deliberate metaphor as opposed to his fellow RMPs. Out of the 56 DMs, 17 were produced by one RMP in particular, which account for almost one third of our sample (30,36%). Through the use of these metaphors, this RMP also displays a particular focus on two source domains. Out of the 22 SPORTS metaphors produced in total, 10 of these metaphors are found in this RMP's interview. The remaining 7 DMs are RELATIONSHIP metaphors,

describing Belgium and the link between the Dutch- and the French-speaking part of the country in terms of marriage.

Although to a lesser extent in comparison with the first RMP, two other RMPs also showed an above average usage of DMs, respectively producing 7 (12,5%) and 6 (10,71%) DMs. Interestingly, the source domain that stands out in both of these RMPs' discourses in the SPORTS domain.

The deliberate metaphor production among the remaining RMPs is equally assured, all of them producing between one and four DMs in total.

The next variable we tested was gender. The quantitative analysis shows that men (N = 11) tend to use more deliberate metaphors (average of 4.45 DM per person), as opposed to women (N = 4) (average of 1.75 DM/person).

The SPORTS metaphor is the most productively used domain within deliberate metaphor use. All of the sports metaphors were produced by masculine politicians. This may not be surprising, given that sports are generally seen as a masculine domain. The sport domain is not only being used exclusively by males, it, moreover, displays the use of metaphoric expressions which are related to sports which are culturally related to their country, Belgium. Apart from one case, all sports metaphor referred to football, cycling or formula 1. These sports are all three considered very popular in Belgium, which might potentially explain their use in our data. What may seem more striking in the difference between males and females is the use of RELATIONSHIP metaphors. All of the deliberately metaphorical expressions referring to relationships describe Belgian politics in terms of marriage. Out of the ten deliberate metaphors recorded for this domain, nine were produced by men as opposed to only one deliberate metaphor produced by the women.

Next, we explored the political representatives' seniority, i.e. their career length as a potential factor. For the purpose of the present research, we divided the political actors into three groups according to their career length, with (i) the younger generation (N = 4) (ii) the middle generation (N = 6) and (iii) the older generation (N = 5). Interestingly, average results show that there is a stronger tendency for the older generation to produce deliberate metaphors (average of 5.8 DM/person vs. 2.5 DM/person for the younger generation and 2.8 DM/person for the middle generation). Looking at the use of conceptual source domains, there are again some differences in the use of the SPORTS and the RELATIONSHIP domain depending on the generation. Both domains are more present in the interviews conducted with the older generation, who produced 15 out of the 22 SPORTS metaphors and 9 out of the 10 RELATIONSHIP metaphors.

Finally, we examined whether political affiliation could play a role in the variation of deliberate metaphor use between RMPs. Interviews from four political parties displayed the use of deliberate metaphors: the Socialist Party (N<sup>5</sup> = 5), the Green Party (N = 3), the Humanist Democratic Centre Party (N = 2) and, finally, the Reformist Movement (N = 5).

Standardised results for the use of deliberate metaphors according to political affiliation were as follows:

Left-wing	Green	Centre	Right-wing
Socialist Party	Ecolo	Humanist Democratic Centre	Reformist Movement
47.55%	14.86%	19.76%	17.83%

<sup>5</sup> Number of interviews per political party.

Results show that there is a higher tendency for the left-wing Socialist Party to produce deliberate metaphors as opposed to the other political parties. Moreover, the SPORTS and the RELATIONSHIP source domain were both prominently present in the Socialist Party's interviews (respectively 15 out of 22 deliberate sports metaphors and 9 out of 10 deliberate relationship metaphors).

## 5. Discussion

The interest of this research lies in the analysis of deliberate metaphors within political discourse. To identify these metaphors, we relied on the MIPVU procedure as well as Steen's three-dimensional model. This enabled us to classify metaphors according to three levels: (i) linguistic level (direct versus indirect metaphor) (ii) conceptual level (novel versus conventional) and (iii) communicative level (deliberate versus non-deliberate metaphor). Identifying deliberate metaphors allows us to make a distinction between metaphors that are used *as* metaphors and metaphors that have become conventionalised in everyday language.

Deliberate metaphor use represented 8.32% of our corpus. First, this suggests that even in non-institutional political discourse, the political elite also rely on the use of explicit comparisons between conceptual domains to talk about politics. Second, the comparison between deliberate and non-deliberate metaphors allowed us to observe different degrees of saliency in the use of conceptual source domains. The various conceptual domains emerging from our analysis give us an insight as to how politicians think and talk about politics. Overall, the most prominent source domains are the BATTLE, CONSTRUCTION and RELATIONSHIP domain. However, two of these domains – BATTLE and CONSTRUCTION – rely exclusively on the use of non-deliberate metaphors. This shows that the metaphors produced within these two domains are the result of common ways of expressing those things. The RELATIONSHIP domain displayed

more particularities in the distinction between deliberate and non-deliberate use of metaphor. This domain consists of a majority of non-deliberate metaphors (81.5%). Yet, almost one fifth of this domain is represented by means of deliberate metaphors. Using the idea of relationships is very common when talking about politics, especially when referring to countries with a particularly complex political system such as Belgium (see for instance Perrez & Reuchamps, 2014, 2015c). When focussing exclusively on the use of deliberate metaphors, other source domains take the upper hand, i.e. the SPORTS, NATURE and CONTAINER domains.

Within the present research, we also aimed at examining variation in deliberate metaphor and source domain use between political actors. We focussed on four variables: individual preference, gender, seniority and political affiliation. All four variables displayed differences in deliberate metaphor use as well as the source domains political actors tend to resort to when talking about politics. Overall, results showed that there was a higher use of deliberate metaphors by male politicians, left-wing politicians and politicians with a longer career. Moreover, one RMP's deliberate metaphor use stood out, producing almost one third of the deliberate metaphor sample.

These results suggest that when considering variation in deliberate metaphor use and in the usage of different types of conceptual source domains, we should consider the fact that this variation can be due to a range of factors, such as individual preference, gender, career length and political affiliation. However, even though this research focusses on these variables, other factors may also play an instrumental role such as the current political situation (e.g. discourses produced right before elections or in times of crisis), political actors' professional background or their personal character, and so on. It is instrumental to take these elements into consideration, as they can contribute to explaining metaphorical variation. Even though the present research is still an exploratory

study, the results still suggest that there is a need for more research in order to further validate the concomitance between such factors and variation in metaphor use.

## **6. Conclusion and further work**

The present article constitutes a contribution to the study of metaphor in political discourse on several levels. First, by focussing on deliberate and non-deliberate metaphor, this research aims at showing the purposefulness of this distinction within the analysis of metaphor in political discourse. Given the communicative value of deliberate metaphors, they are a suitable candidate for the analysis of political discourse. It is not our intention to undermine the importance of conventional and non-deliberate metaphors in political discourse. However, concentrating on deliberate metaphors provides useful insights as to how politicians think about politics and how they deliberately resort to metaphor use to convey their political representations.

With this article, we also aimed at bringing something new to political metaphor studies by analysing a different type of political discourse. Most research tends to focus on institutional political discourse. Yet, our results showed that metaphor use does not limit itself to this type of discourse and that politicians also employ deliberate metaphors in non-institutional discourses. Indeed, other types of discourses should also be analysed in order to come to a more global understanding of how and why metaphors are used in political communication (see also Perrez, Randour and Reuchamps, 2019).

In view of this, we would suggest as an avenue for further work to continue to apply Steen's model to other types of political discourse – that is elite, media and citizen discourse. Differentiating metaphors by using this model provides interesting insights regarding political communication and political issues by means of a distinction between, on the one hand, metaphors that are

used with rhetorical aims in terms of framing one's understanding of the issues at hand (i.e. deliberate metaphor) and more conventional political metaphors which are often the product of common ways of expressing things (i.e. non-deliberate metaphor). Following this, another potentially relevant avenue is the analysis of political metaphors in terms of their *circulation*, that is how metaphor circulate between the different spheres of political communication (for instance, how do political metaphors 'move' from the elite sphere to the citizens' sphere?).

Further research on the analysis of metaphor in political discourse is definitely indispensable, because it contributes to an overall comprehension of metaphors' role and function in political discourse and of how political actors understand political issues and how they frame political interactions.

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