

The federalization of Belgium can be considered both as the result of an ongoing divergence of mind and practices as well as an important new institutional impetus towards the establishment of divergent regimes of local government. Is there an evolution towards a Flemish and a Walloon local regime? At the heart of those regimes is the conceptualization of the set of roles of political leaders. The paper is based on a triangulation of (1) institutional, (2) quantitative (surveys) and (3) qualitative data (case analysis). Our analysis in the first section confirms that the federalization of local government was an opportunity for the regional political forces to mold “their” local government to the dominant culture. However, “political localism”, very typical for the Belgian political system, has also been strengthened by the federalization process. Exploring role perceptions of the mayors in section 2 confirms that regional cultural variables have a significant impact on role perceptions, particularly towards new management arrangements. In the final section we introduce a set of interpersonal, cultural and structural variables in order to obtain a better understanding of the impact these new management arrangements have in the Flemish region as well as on the contingent interactions between politicians and top administrators.