

UNUSUAL BORDERS:

ENCLAVES, EXCLAVES, AND OTHER PHENOMENA

*Borders are scars on the face of the planet...
Las fronteras dividen, solo crean cicatrices*

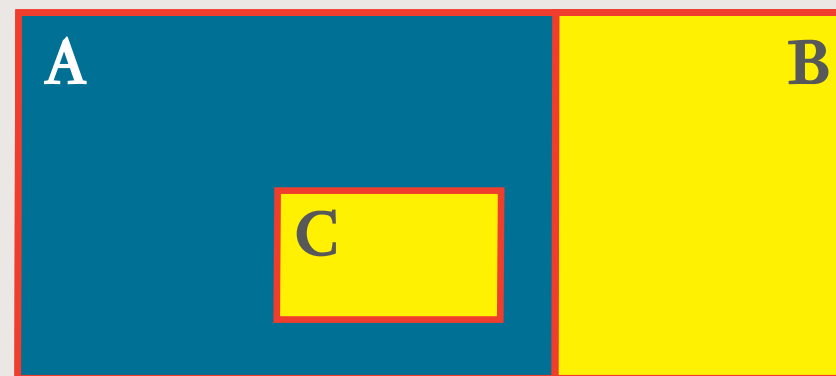
These two lines are taken from the song ‘We Rise Again’ by the American band Gogol Bordello. The second line translates as: Borders divide, and only create scars.

Since the beginning of modern civilization, man has sought to claim his territory and define it with **borders**. These borders divide the land into what is ‘mine’ and what is ‘yours’. They say that you need permission to see his mountain; that they must ask before watching the sunset on your beach; that this side of the lake is mine, and the opposite side is yours.

Borders do not always ‘behave’ in a predictable way. They do not always follow a simple, straight course, with as few twists and turns as possible. Where borders are not clearly defined, this creates potential for conflict. But perhaps the main cause of conflict is man’s instinct to strive for more. Over many years, conflicts – both large and small – have led to the movement of borders, as people have sought to make the dream come true that ‘ours’ is greater than ‘theirs’.

The political map of the world reveals the results of these border movements, the lines giving the impression of scars left by man on the face of our planet, and the course that they follow seeming, in some cases, to be illogical.

Enclaves (territories completely surrounded by the territory of another state) and **exclaves** (part of a territory or state that can be reached from its home territory only through another territory or state) are examples of such oddities. Schematically, we can put it this way:



In this case, C is an exclave of territory B, but at the same time it is an enclave within territory A.

Apart from enclaves, often known as true enclaves, there are also so-called **pene-enclaves** – territories that are physically separated from the home country but which can still be reached without passing through another country. An example of this is Alaska: although it can only be reached over land from the rest of the USA by travelling through Canada, it can be reached by sea without passing through foreign territorial waters. Perhaps surprisingly, there are many such localities around the world, and some are even more complicated.

MEĐURJEČJE

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA | SERBIA



The wedding gift that became an enclave



Only fifteen kilometres from the tri-border area between Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, lies the small village of **Međurječje**. Though similar to all the other villages in this region, Međurječje has one important characteristic that distinguishes it from the rest: it belongs to Bosnia and Herzegovina, though it is surrounded entirely by the territory of Serbia.

The reason for this – according to a popular local story – is that during the time of the Ottoman Empire, a Bosnian *Bey* gifted one of his wives some 400 hectares of land and woods in the vicinity of Priboj in Serbia. When demarcation was established between Austria-Hungary and Turkey, this land was annexed to Bosnia, which was occupied at that time by the Habsburg Empire. Ever since then, this land has been classed as part of the municipality of Rudo, in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the meantime, the village of Međurječje was built there.

While the Yugoslav states were united as one country, it was of little importance which piece of land belonged to which republic or province, so it was the local authority of Priboj, Serbia, that provided the infrastructure – roads, power supply, school, police station, etc. – for the village of Međurječje. This has created the situation whereby the inhabitants pay their taxes to the authorities of Rudo (Bosnia and Herzegovina, or more specifically the sub-division of Republika Srpska), while all the other utility bills are paid to Priboj (Serbia).

The exclave, covering an area of a little under 400 hectares (equivalent to about 550 football fields), lies just over a kilometre from Republika Srpska. Most of the 270 inhabitants have either Serbian or dual citizenship.

Children from Međurječje, along with those from nearby villages in Priboj, attend classes in the primary school which, although located within this Bosnian exclave, follows the curriculum of Serbia.

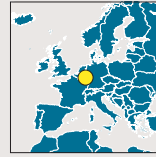
An additional peculiarity is the fact that the local council offices of the Serbian village of **Sastavci** are located within the village of Međurječje, while this whole enclave is administered by the Rudo local council offices in Mioče. The village of Sastavci is located in Serbia, along the very border of this enclave. Due to their proximity and unclear borders, the towns of Međurječje and Sastavci in many ways function as one settlement, even though a state border officially divides them.

It is interesting to note that Međurječje is also surrounded by a religious border: the enclave is part of the Metropolitanate of Dabar-Bosnia of the Serbian Orthodox Church, while the surrounding villages are part of the Eparchy of Mileševa.

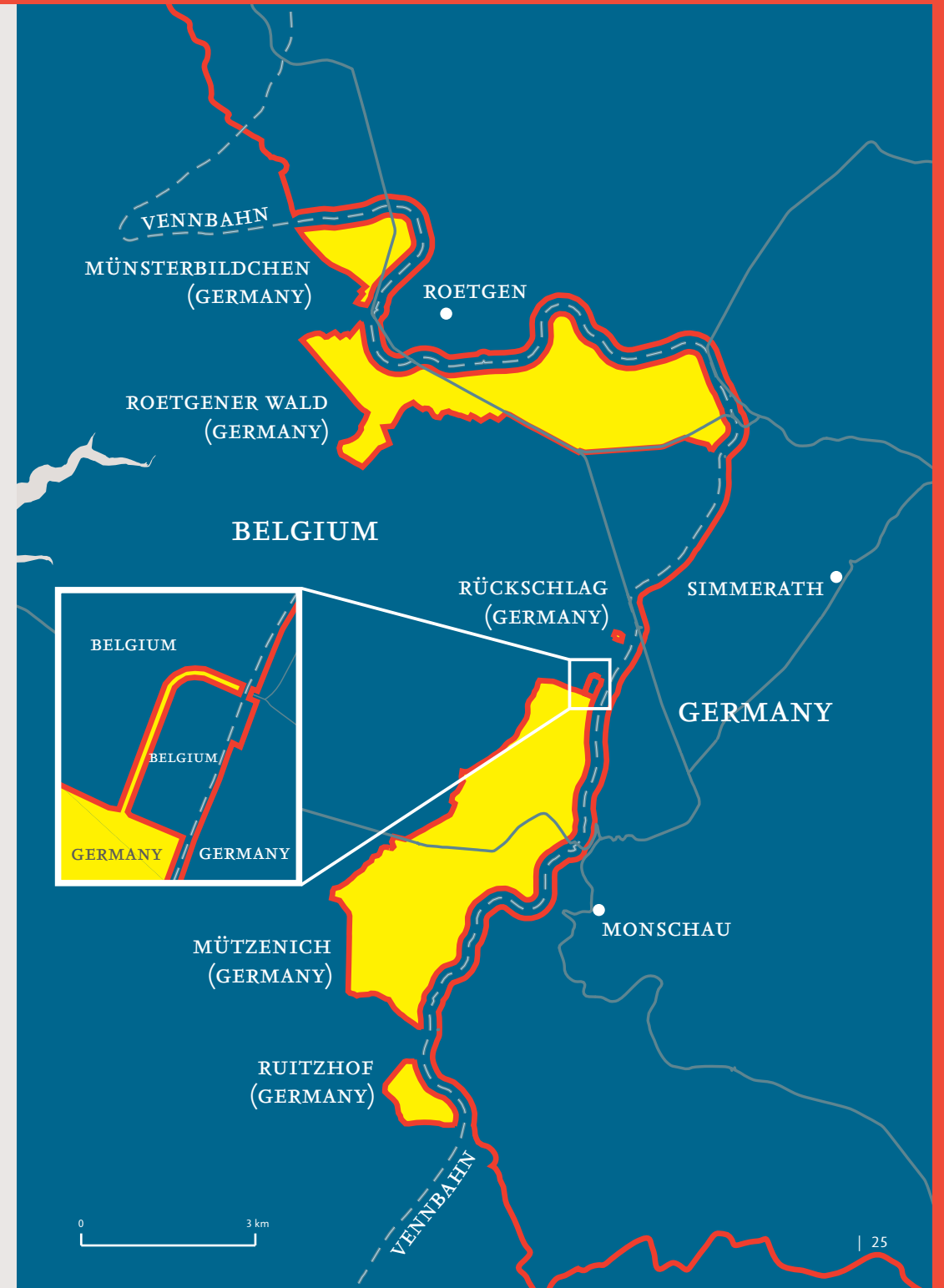
An important regional road passes through the enclave, creating problems for the inhabitants of some of the villages within the Priboj municipality when travelling to their administrative centre at Priboj town. The solution to this problem has yet to be agreed on: Serbia proposes an exchange of territories with Bosnia and Herzegovina, in order to ‘correct’ the border, while Bosnia believes that establishing a corridor between Rudo and Međurječje would be a better solution.

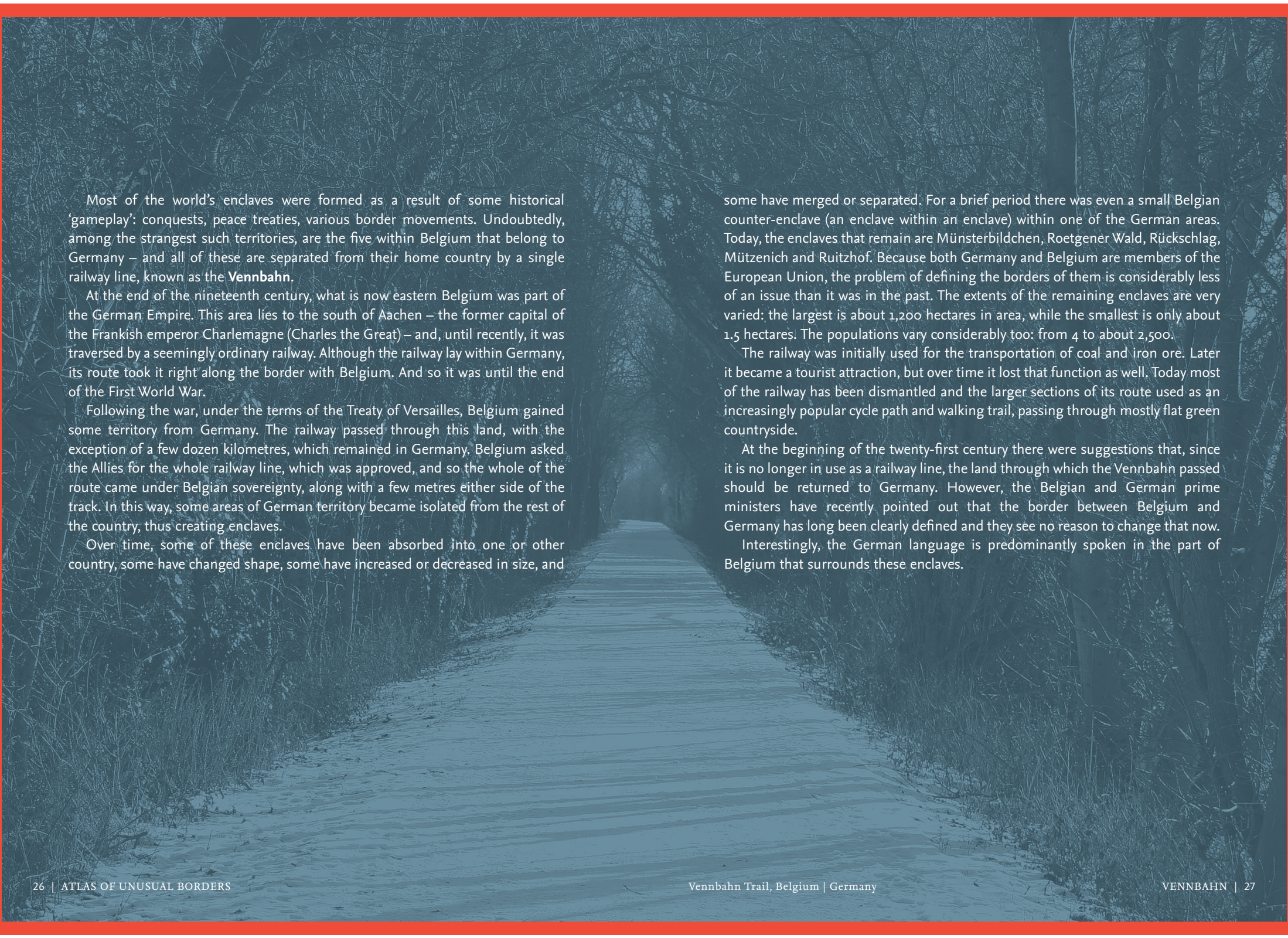
VENNBAHN

BELGIUM | GERMANY



Enclaves that were created when the border railway's ownership passed from Germany to Belgium





Most of the world's enclaves were formed as a result of some historical 'gameplay': conquests, peace treaties, various border movements. Undoubtedly, among the strangest such territories, are the five within Belgium that belong to Germany – and all of these are separated from their home country by a single railway line, known as the **Vennbahn**.

At the end of the nineteenth century, what is now eastern Belgium was part of the German Empire. This area lies to the south of Aachen – the former capital of the Frankish emperor Charlemagne (Charles the Great) – and, until recently, it was traversed by a seemingly ordinary railway. Although the railway lay within Germany, its route took it right along the border with Belgium. And so it was until the end of the First World War.

Following the war, under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, Belgium gained some territory from Germany. The railway passed through this land, with the exception of a few dozen kilometres, which remained in Germany. Belgium asked the Allies for the whole railway line, which was approved, and so the whole of the route came under Belgian sovereignty, along with a few metres either side of the track. In this way, some areas of German territory became isolated from the rest of the country, thus creating enclaves.

Over time, some of these enclaves have been absorbed into one or other country, some have changed shape, some have increased or decreased in size, and

some have merged or separated. For a brief period there was even a small Belgian counter-enclave (an enclave within an enclave) within one of the German areas. Today, the enclaves that remain are Münsterbildchen, Roetgener Wald, Rückschlag, Mützenich and Ruitzhof. Because both Germany and Belgium are members of the European Union, the problem of defining the borders of them is considerably less of an issue than it was in the past. The extents of the remaining enclaves are very varied: the largest is about 1,200 hectares in area, while the smallest is only about 1.5 hectares. The populations vary considerably too: from 4 to about 2,500.

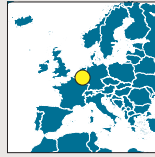
The railway was initially used for the transportation of coal and iron ore. Later it became a tourist attraction, but over time it lost that function as well. Today most of the railway has been dismantled and the larger sections of its route used as an increasingly popular cycle path and walking trail, passing through mostly flat green countryside.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century there were suggestions that, since it is no longer in use as a railway line, the land through which the Vennbahn passed should be returned to Germany. However, the Belgian and German prime ministers have recently pointed out that the border between Belgium and Germany has long been clearly defined and they see no reason to change that now.

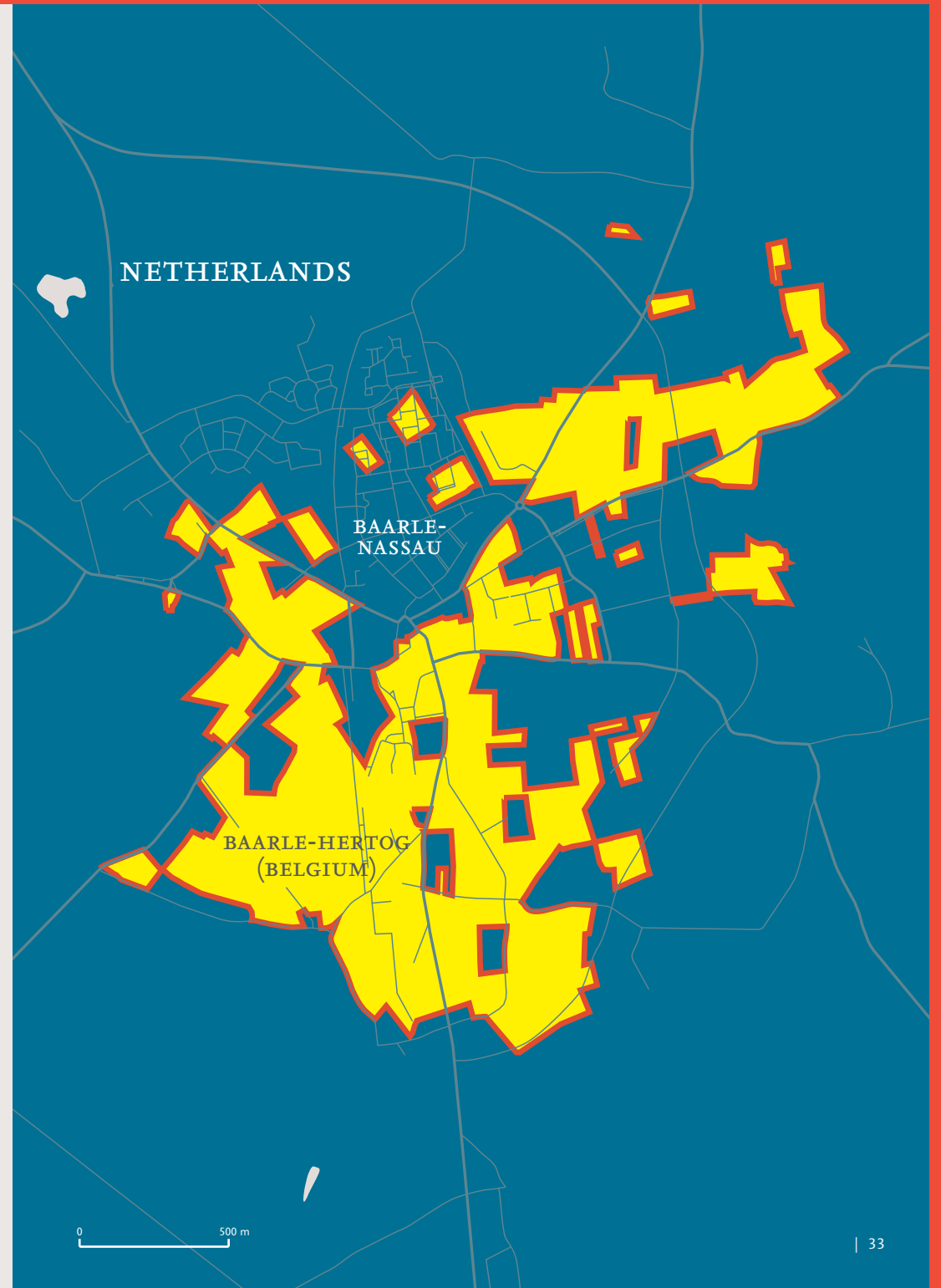
Interestingly, the German language is predominantly spoken in the part of Belgium that surrounds these enclaves.

BAARLE

BELGIUM | NETHERLANDS



The 'citizenship' of a house is determined by the position of its front door



Baarle is a small town in the south of the Netherlands, close to the border with Belgium. Although the international boundary runs to the south of the town, it also passes through the town itself.

The town consists of two parts: the Dutch **Baarle-Nassau** and the Belgian **Baarle-Hertog**. The Belgian part includes more than twenty enclaves within the Dutch section of the town, while inside these Belgian enclaves there are approximately ten Dutch counter-enclaves. This means that the border intersects some of the streets several times, while some houses are partly in Belgium and partly in the Netherlands.

The complexity of the border is the result of a series of divisions, contracts and exchanges of territory, many of which have their roots in the Middle Ages. Although the divisions were largely confirmed by the mid-nineteenth century, the border was not completely defined until 1995, when the extent of the smallest Belgian enclave – an uninhabited piece of agricultural land with an area of about 2,600 square metres – was finally established.

In order to make the situation a little clearer (primarily because of the large number of tourists who visit), boundaries are often physically marked on the streets themselves. Also, as Dutch and Belgian house numbering differs, there is sometimes a Dutch or Belgian flag alongside the house number. In cases where the boundary cuts through a house, its 'citizenship' is determined on the basis of

whose territory the front door is facing. Throughout history – and accompanying numerous changes of tax rates in the Netherlands and Belgium – relocating the front door was not unusual, in order that the owner could pay less tax.

The Belgian enclaves range in size from 0.2 hectares to about 153 hectares, while the Dutch enclaves from about 0.28 hectares up to a little more than five hectares. In addition to the enclaves within the city itself, the Belgian Baarle-Hertog also has several small enclaves around it.

The borders of these enclaves are fully open, but anybody crossing them should be aware of the things that are permitted in one country, but forbidden in another. For example, in the Belgian Baarle there are a number of fireworks shops, but the free sale of fireworks in the Netherlands is prohibited. This fact is often taken advantage of by the Dutch on the eve of their national holidays, when many of them cross the border to buy fireworks for the celebrations. Another interesting practice was relatively common in previous years: because the closing time for restaurants was earlier in the Netherlands than in Belgium, at those establishments through which the border passes, diners would simply transfer to the Belgian half when the Dutch closing time came, and continue their socializing there.

Also, it is interesting to note that during the First World War, during which the Netherlands was neutral and Belgium was occupied by Germany, Baarle-Hertog was the only free part of Belgium.