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True political representation of disadvantaged neighbourhoods?

Where Brussels parliamentary members live, 1989-2009

Op weg naar een representatieve politieke vertegenwoordiging van de achtergestelde buurten? De woonplaats van de Brusselse parlementsleden, 1989-2009

Vers une représentation politique fidèle des quartiers défavorisés ? Le lieu de résidence des parlementaires bruxellois, 1989-2009

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Translator: Mike Bramley



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True political representation of disadvantaged neighbourhoods? Where Brussels parliamentary members live, 1989-2009

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This article examines where Brussels parliamentary members live, looking at the evolution of this phenomenon over the past 20 years. The central question focuses on whether different neighbourhoods within the Brussels Capital Region also experienced a different pattern of representation throughout this period. The analysis shows that the centrally located poor neighbourhoods had little if any representation at the end of the 1980s, but that this underrepresentation gradually decreased and has now just about completely disappeared. The increasing number of parliamentary members of non-European origin has played a role in this evolution, but other parliamentary members are also increasingly living in centrally located neighbourhoods. Furthermore, historical anchoring in certain areas continues to play a role. There are major differences between the political ideologies which broadly follow a left-right continuum, and which are also increasing. The increasing representation of the central urban neighbourhoods simultaneously creates opportunities and challenges for urban policy. Although a lack of policy interest in these neighbourhoods is becoming increasingly unlikely, this does not necessarily go hand in hand with an increase in the amount of attention paid to the current residents within these neighbourhoods.

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Introduction

An earlier contribution to this journal (De Maesschalck, 2009) examined the areas within which Brussels municipal councillors live on the basis that much scientific attention has been paid to the social composition of political representation, but much less to the social composition of their immediate surroundings, the neighbourhoods where they live. This analysis showed that the poorest neighbourhoods are markedly underrepresented and that there is a global increase in representation the more prosperous a neighbourhood is. However, there are also major differences between the political ideologies depending on their position within the political spectrum. The overrepresentation of prosperous neighbourhoods is stronger for right wing parties and the opposite is seen for left wing parties. A comparison of where municipal councillors from the previous legislature live, which was previously analysed by Borman et al. (2001), additionally shows that these trends were also in existence at that time, although the increasing presence of elected members of non-European origin has now increased the representation of the poorest neighbourhoods somewhat. This group is gradually being given more access to the political party lists in an attempt to attract the anti-racist and ethnic segments of Brussels voters. Furthermore, there also seems to be a difference between policy levels, with a higher average level of prosperity for the Brussels parliamentary members than for the municipal councillors. Jacobs (2006) and Van Hamme & Marissal (2008) previously examined where the elected Brussels parliamentary members live and also found that the poorest neighbourhoods were underrepresented. However, these studies mainly focused on the candidates, revealing that this underrepresentation is stronger for those who are ultimately elected than for the candidates themselves, partly due to the position that the candidates have on the list and partly due to fewer candidates from poor neighbourhoods on the main lists.

An empirical analysis of the situation at one moment in time was conducted as part of the aforementioned studies. This article similarly aims to establish whether where new parliamentary members live reflects the aforementioned underrepresentation of the poorest neighbourhoods.

However, this contribution goes one step further by also providing an analysis of the evolution over the past twenty years, which also happens to be the age of the present Brussels Capital Region. The socio-spatial polarisation within the Brussels

Capital Region, which was already greater than in all other Belgian cities, increased significantly throughout these twenty years (Loopmans & Kesteloot, 2009). This socio-spatial polarisation goes hand in hand with historical processes of autochthonous depopulation and the immigration of foreign economic migrants to the central area of the region who filled the gaps within the employment and housing markets in addition to the impoverishment of this group who were affected the most by the economic crisis (Keseloot, 2000). Autochthonous depopulation, foreign immigration and problems on the employment market are still important processes in the central area of Brussels and this so-called 'poor crescent' contrasts increasingly sharply with the wealthy areas in the South-East. Processes of gentrification have taken place within the centre over the past few years (Van Crielingen, 2009), but this has not been the case for the most impoverished neighbourhoods. This increasing socio-spatial polarisation makes the question of the political representation of the various neighbourhoods all the more relevant in Brussels and also helps to explain why the limited attention that is paid to this phenomenon mainly focuses on Brussels. The aforementioned studies all refer to the relationship with the pursuant policy, from the hypothesis that the place of residence has an impact on the perception of the area and also ultimately on political decision-making. Although Van Hamme & Marissal (2008) rightly observe that the impact of the living environment on the perception of the area can actually be demonstrated, but that this is less true for the impact that this perception has on political decision-making - which actually requires different and specific data - a clear link has been made on several occasions between where parliamentary members live and the policy that is ultimately implemented (De Maesschalck, 2010). More generally, this study fits within a research tradition that examines the extent to which proportional election systems lead to geographically representative results (see Latner & McGann, 2005). In majority systems, such as in the UK where each district provides one representative, this geographical representation is integrated within the electoral system, precisely in the interests of spatial representation (Pedersen et al., 2004).

The place of residence of the present Brussels parliamentary members is analysed in the first part of this contribution. The second part examines the evolution of parliamentary representation over the past twenty years. Median income and the level of deprivation are used to first establish the extent to which the neighbourhoods where parliamentary members live are representative for the Brussels area as a whole, for both the present legislature as well as for the historical evolution. The extent to which the neighbourhoods in difficulty are represented is subsequently examined. A distinction is continually made between the various political ideologies and attention is also paid to the impact of the increasing number of elected members of non-European origin.¹ A number of conclusions are made in the final section and possible policy implications are discussed. The data was collected using parliamentary documents, always in the year following elections. This enables the actual composition of the parliaments to be examined as at that moment in time, Min-

¹ The changes over time are mainly a result of the admission of new members of parliament. Indeed, the large majority of re-elected parliamentary members do not move house. The number of new parliamentary members is reasonably stable over time, always fluctuating between 45% and 50%. The fluctuations can be greater for individual political ideologies and mainly depend on the number of new seats that were gained.

isters, State Secretaries and other elected members who for a whole variety of reasons have not taken up their mandates have already been replaced by their successors. As the Dutch-speaking representation is not large enough to justify a separate analysis, the Dutch and French-speaking parliamentary members are grouped according to the same political ideology. The following political ideologies were distinguished: Social Democrats (PS, SP and the later sp.a), Liberals (PRL, PVV and the later VLD and Open VLD), Christian Democrats (PSC and the later cdH, CVP and the later CD&V), Greens (ECOLO, AGALEV and the later Groen!), Extreme Right (FN, FNB, VLAAMS BLOK and the later VLAAMS BELANG), FDF, Flemish Nationalists (VU, spirit, NVA) and Independents. In the case of mixed lists (PRL-FDF in 1995, PRL-FDF, VLD-VU-O and SP-AGA in 1999, sp.a-spirit and MR in 2004, and MR in 2009), the members of parliament were split up according to their membership of one of the mixed parties.

1. Where the present Brussels parliamentary members live

1.1. Is this representative of the Brussels Capital Region?

The neighbourhoods where the parliamentary members live were typified on the basis of two variables: the first being the median income² and the second being an index of deprivation. This index was established by Vandermotten et al. (2006) and was constructed on the basis of 22 variables which measure deprivation in terms of the employment market, health, housing and education. These variables have an average value of 0 with a value of 1 (or -1) representing a deviation in positive (or negative) terms from the average by one standard deviation. The average value of zero applies to all the Belgian metropolitan districts, but the average value is significantly lower for the Brussels Capital Region at -0.4. Figure 1 shows the average median income and the average index of deprivation in the neighbourhoods where parliamentary members live according to political ideology. The size of each circle denotes the extent of parliamentary representation. The average for all parties together is also indicated. The axes are formed on the basis of average income and the average index of deprivation in the Brussels Capital Region as a whole.³

Figure 1 shows that the FDF and the Extreme Right are both situated significantly above the average for the region as far as income and the index of deprivation are concerned. The Liberals are positioned just above average. In contrast, the Christian Democrats show slightly lower than average values. This is even more pronounced for the Social Democrats and particularly for the Greens. This results in a general value for all parties together which falls below the average for the region, both in

² This is based on annual net taxable income which is comprised of all net income minus deductible expenses. Net income is the income before taxes such as payroll tax are deducted but after social security contributions (NSSO) have been deducted.

³ The Flemish Nationalists only had one elected member and are therefore not shown here.

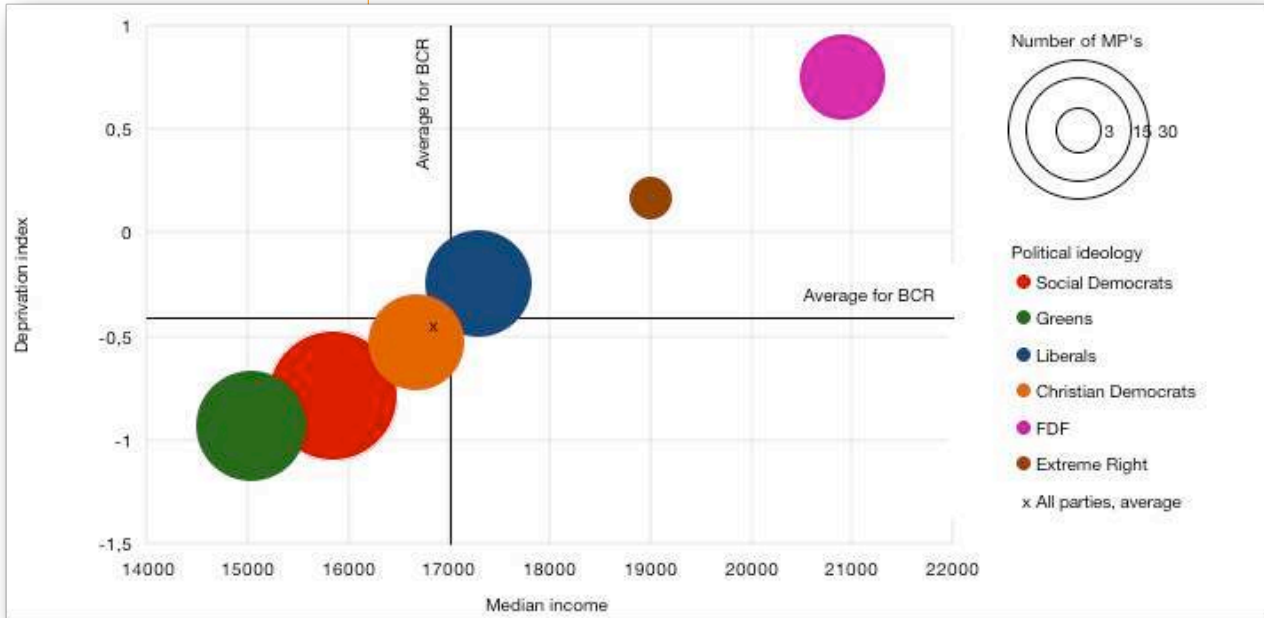


Figure 1. Incomes and index of deprivation in the neighbourhoods where parliamentary members live, according to political ideology, 2009.

terms of income and the index of deprivation.⁴ As was the case for the municipal elections, we are also able to observe differences between the political ideologies which run globally along a left-right continuum, although the Greens have lower values here than the Social Democrats. As was also the case for the municipal elections, the Extreme Right are not found in the outer limits. In contrast to the other ideologies, Extreme Right mainly has Dutch-speaking elected members who more often live in the less prosperous western part of the region.

The analysis of where municipal councillors live also revealed that elected members of non-European origin tended to live in significantly poorer neighbourhoods. 27% of the members belong to this group⁵ within the Brussels parliament. Figure 1 has been redrawn in order to establish whether the same observations apply here; however, the group of parliamentary members of non-European origin are shown separately (Figure 2).

Figure 2 shows that for each political ideology, the level of prosperity within the neighbourhoods where the parliamentary members of non-European origin live is

⁴ This order applies to both the Dutch-speaking and the French-speaking representation (not counting the Dutch-speaking Christian Democrats and Liberals, who change place), but the Dutch-speaking representation is positioned at a significantly lower level. This is partly explained by the fact that they mainly live in the less prosperous western part of the region.

⁵ This group was delimited using data from Pierre-Yves Lambert (<http://suffrage-universel.be>) and concerns origin in its broadest sense. It can also cover second or third generation migrants.

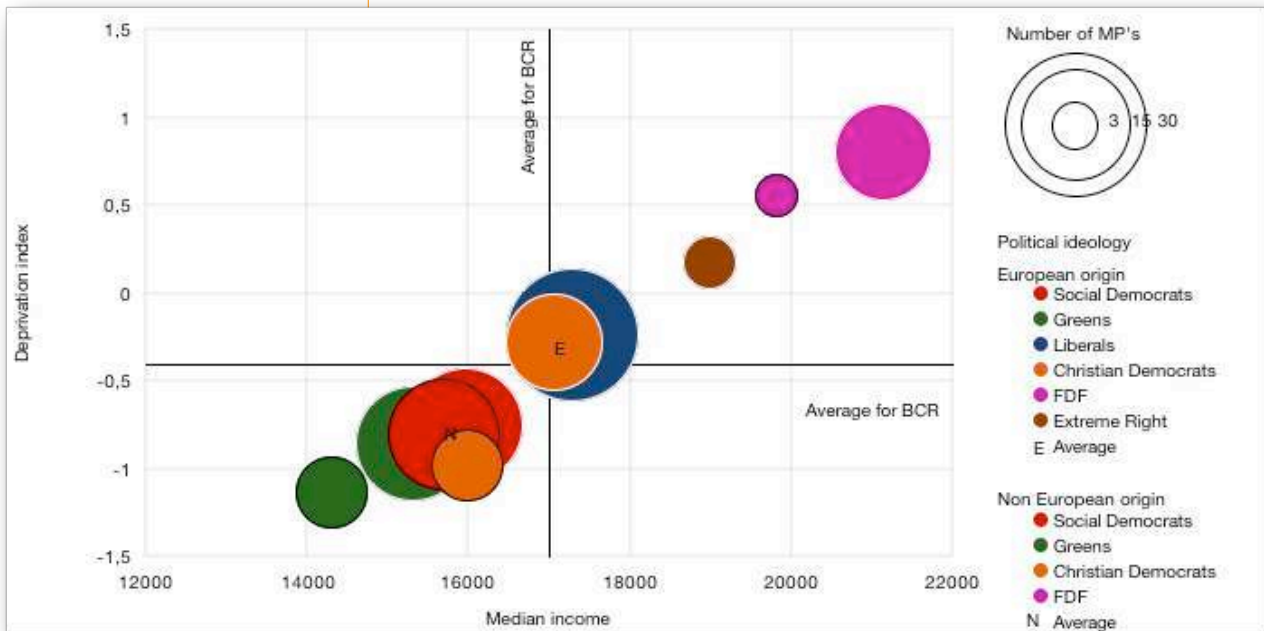


Figure 1. Incomes and index of deprivation in the neighbourhoods where parliamentary members live, according to political ideology, 2009.

lower than that for the other parliamentary members, both in terms of income and also in terms of the index of deprivation. Compared to the Brussels average, this results in a lower than average value for the first group and an above average value for the second group. It is also striking that the differences between the political ideologies are largely the same when both groups are considered separately. This means that a certain selection is also taking place according to ideology amongst the people of non-European origin, even though intrinsic as well as political objectives play a role for all political parties concerned in including this group on the lists (Bousetta, 2006). Furthermore, the differences between both groups are relatively small, especially in comparison to the municipal elections. The greatest differences can be seen within those ideologies that have a higher average level of prosperity. This is particularly noticeable for the Christian Democrats.

1.2 The representation of neighbourhoods in difficulty

These average values can, however, conceal different spatial patterns. For example, an average value that indicates an average level of prosperity can mean overrepresentation in neighbourhoods with an average level of prosperity, but it can equally mean overrepresentation of both very deprived and very prosperous neighbourhoods. This is why the proportion of parliamentary members who live in neighbourhoods in difficulty is also examined. These neighbourhoods were delimited by Vandermotten et al. (2006) using the index of deprivation and were classified into different types: migrant neighbourhoods in significant difficulty, neighbourhoods experiencing slight difficulty, neighbourhoods undergoing gentrification, where a dynamic

is prevalent of renovation and middle class immigration, and other neighbourhoods in difficulty (especially social neighbourhoods). Table 1 shows the overrepresentation or underrepresentation of these different neighbourhood types and also of the neighbourhoods that are not in difficulty for each political ideology. In concrete terms, the proportion of parliamentary members in these neighbourhoods was divided by the proportion of the population in these neighbourhoods. A value of 1 therefore indicates perfect representation; a higher value signifies overrepresentation and a lower value signals underrepresentation.

| | neighbourhoods not in difficulty | migrant neighbourhoods in significant difficulty | neighbourhoods experiencing slight difficulty | neighbourhoods undergoing gentrification | other neighbourhoods in difficulty |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|--|---|--|------------------------------------|
| All parties | 1,18 | 1,06 | 0,60 | 0,91 | 0,26 |
| Social Democrats | 0,89 | 1,67 | 0,80 | 0,65 | 0,94 |
| Greens | 0,79 | 1,74 | - | 2,26 | - |
| Liberals | 1,43 | 0,61 | 0,79 | 0,48 | - |
| Christian Democrats | 1,16 | 0,75 | 1,43 | 0,58 | - |
| FDF | 2,03 | - | - | - | - |
| Extreme Right | 2,03 | - | - | - | - |
| % of the population | 49,30 | 19,10 | 15,00 | 12,30 | 4,30 |

Table 1. Overrepresentation and underrepresentation of neighbourhoods in difficulty, 2009

The Chi²-test gives a P value of 0.03999. Without Extreme Right, which only has three parliamentary members, this becomes 0.02412.

This means that we are able to state with 95% certainty that the members of parliament are distributed differently across the various neighbourhood types than the population as a whole.

This table shows that neighbourhoods that are not in difficulty are slightly overrepresented. 58% of the parliamentary members live in these neighbourhoods, whilst the percentage of the population comes to less than half. This overrepresentation specifically applies to the FDF and Extreme Right (who have no representation in neighbourhoods in difficulty), to the Liberals and also to the Christian Democrats, although it seemed earlier that they had an average lower income and a lower level of deprivation than for the region as a whole.

The Christian Democrats are actually overrepresented in neighbourhoods experiencing slight difficulty. In contrast to these ideologies, the Greens and the Social Democrats are underrepresented in neighbourhoods that are not in difficulty. The Greens are overrepresented in neighbourhoods undergoing gentrification, which was also the case for the municipal elections whilst both ideologies are overrepresented in migrant neighbourhoods in significant difficulty, which consequently also applies to all parties together. The presence of elected members of non-European origin plays a role here as this overrepresentation actually disappears when this group is not taken into consideration. However, the overrepresentation of migrant neighbourhoods in significant difficulty still remains, also for parliamentary members of European origin belonging to the Green and Social Democrat parties even though this is less pronounced. For the Christian Democrats, only elected members of non-European origin live in these neighbourhoods.

Although the neighbourhoods in difficulty are slightly underrepresented, this trend is less pronounced than for the municipal councillors. Furthermore, the average income is also lower and the average index of deprivation is higher for parliamentary members, also when the parliamentary members of non-European origin are not taken into consideration. Apart from the FDF and the Extreme Right, these differences also apply to all political ideologies, even though the differences between the political ideologies remain. These relatively low values can be linked to the central areas where these parliamentary members often live as the poorest and most deprived neighbourhoods are located within the central part of the region. This is a new piece of information as in the past it was always concluded that the level of prosperity in the neighbourhoods where the parliamentary members live was higher than that of the municipal councillors. The following section provides a more in-depth examination of these changes and the historical evolution of parliamentary representation since the first direct election of the Brussels parliament is also considered.

2. A historical perspective

Over the past 20 years the balance of political power in the Brussels Capital Region has naturally not remained the same. The changing proportions also have an influence on the representation of the different neighbourhoods as this is strongly dependent on political ideology. Figure 3 shows the evolution of the balance of political power over the past 20 years. This is not based on absolute figures as the number of parliamentary members increased in 2004 from 75 to 89 and therefore cannot be compared over time. Figure 3 shows that the representation of the Social Democratic and Green parties experienced an overall increase, although there are a number of sizeable dips in the course of both parties that partly cancel out each other. Extreme Right grew steadily, but experienced a sharp decline in 2009. The other parties have a more stable curve with an overall loss for the Liberals and the FDF (although the latter experienced a slight resurgence in the final year), and a V-shaped curve for the Christian Democrats.

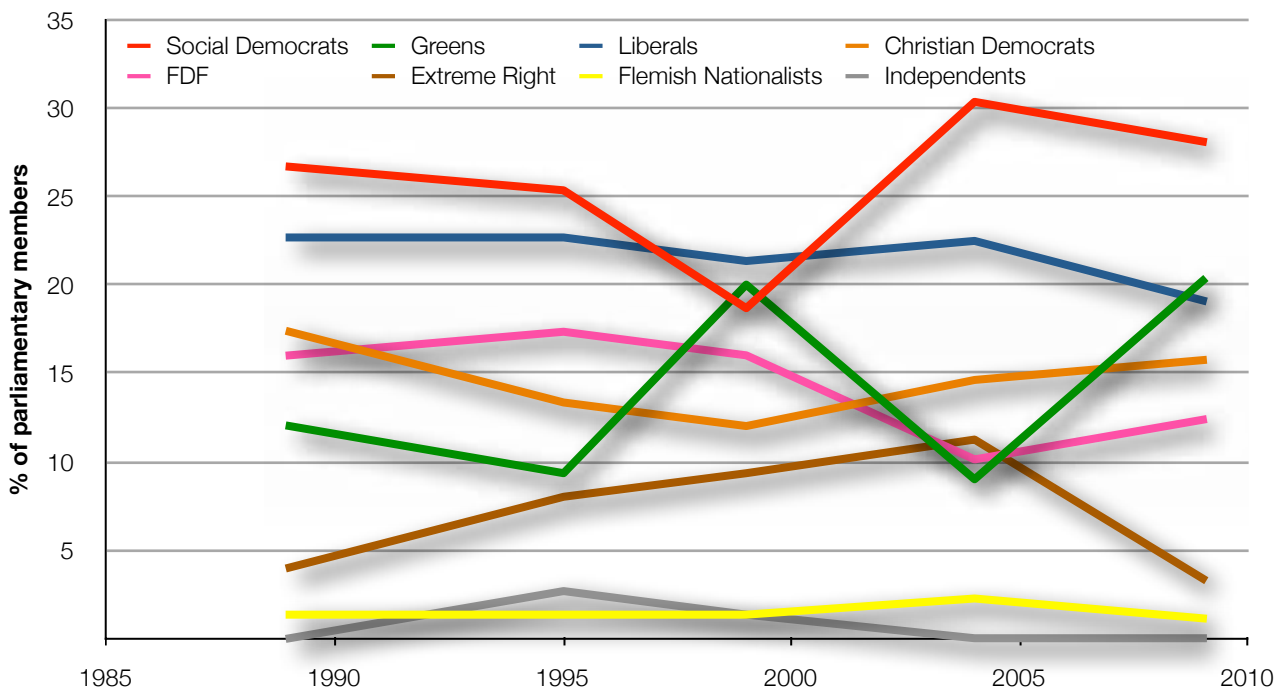


Figure 4. Index of deprivation in the neighbourhoods where parliamentary members live, according to political ideology, 1989-2009

2.1. Towards a reflection of the Brussels area?

Figure 4 shows the evolution of the average index of deprivation over the years in the neighbourhoods where the parliamentary members live according to the different political ideologies.⁶ A steady decrease in the average level of prosperity can be seen for all parties combined from 1999 onwards which now even falls below the average for the region. The decrease in the level of prosperity is particularly striking for the Greens and the Social Democrats who already had relatively low values at the start of the period under consideration. Moreover, the Greens have fallen below the level of the Social Democrats. The Christian Democrats' falling curve is also very striking. They had the highest average level of prosperity in 1989, but now have a value that is lower than the regional average. The Liberals have also had a falling curve since 1999, but the drop is less marked. It is also striking that they still had relatively low values at the beginning of the period under consideration. The FDF experienced an overall increase in the average level of prosperity which is particu-

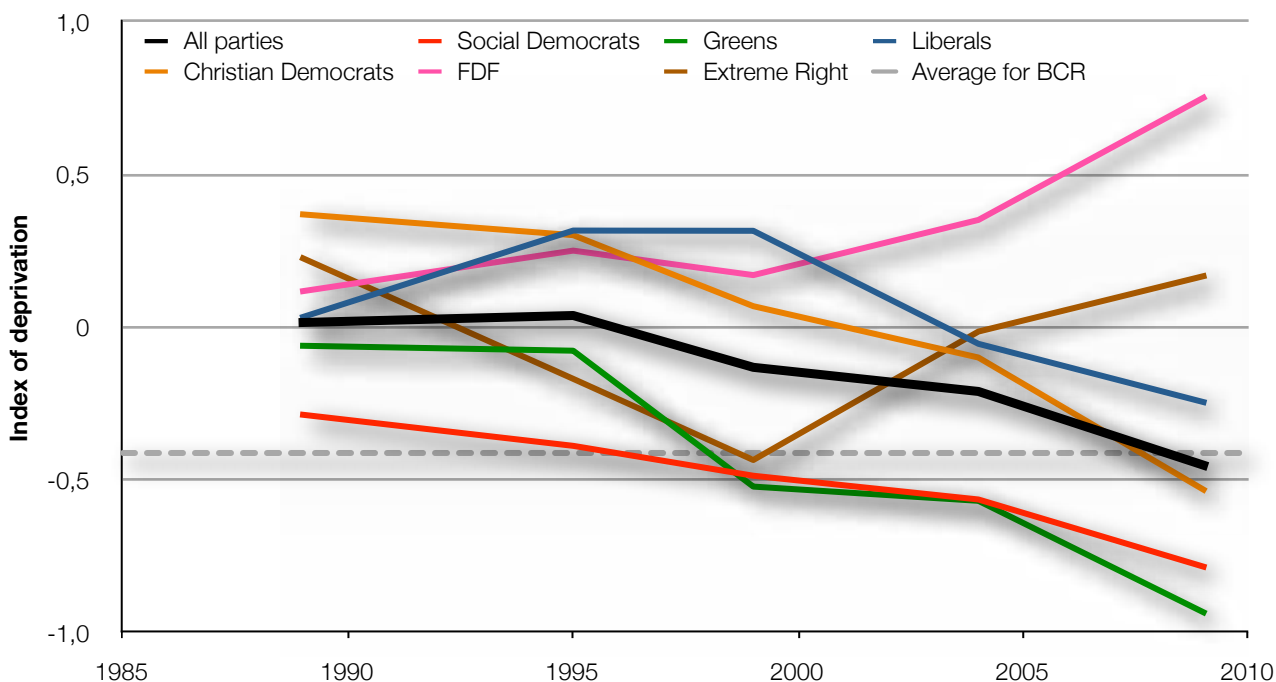


Figure 4. Index of deprivation in the neighbourhoods where parliamentary members live, according to political ideology, 1989-2009

⁶ The index of deprivation was measured at one moment in time. This raises the question of whether the same evolutions would be seen if the level of prosperity were measured at the moment of representation itself. When the median income at the moment of representation is used rather than the index of deprivation, we see the same overall evolutions as in figure 4. This is linked to the strong level of inertia within the socio-spatial structure in Brussels (Roeseems et al., 2006): the social differences between the neighbourhoods do not just change from one year to the next.

larly marked from 2004 onwards. Finally, Extreme Right has a V-shaped curve. As a result of these developments, the existing differences between the political ideologies (Green and Social Democrats on the one side, FDF and Extreme Right on the other side with the Liberals in between) has clearly become greater over the course of time. The only exception to this are the Christian Democrats.

Considering the clear relationship that was stated earlier between the level of prosperity of the neighbourhoods and the origin of the parliamentary members, the question arises as to whether this declining trend is associated with the increasing presence of parliamentary members of non-European origin. The number of naturalized foreigners increased sharply during the period under consideration due to the gradual relaxation of naturalization procedures. This makes this group electorally strong and paved the way for the admission of candidates of foreign origin to the lists. The right for foreigners to vote does not actually apply for the regional elections. The presence of this group in the parliament gradually increased from 1% in 1989 to 27% in 2009 and is particularly strong within the Social Democrats, Greens and Christian Democrats, the political ideologies for which the level of prosperity of the neighbourhoods shows a sharp decline (see table 2).⁷

| | 1989 | 1995 | 1999 | 2004 | 2009 |
|----------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Social Democrats | 0 | 3 | 4 | 13 | 12 |
| Greens | 1 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 5 |
| Christian Democrats | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 5 |
| FDF | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Liberals | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Flemish Nationalists | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Total | 1 | 5 | 8 | 17 | 24 |
| % of parliamentary members | 1,3 | 6,7 | 10,7 | 19,1 | 27,0 |

Table 2. Number of Brussels parliamentary members of non-European origin, 1989-2009

In order to be able to demonstrate this group's impact, the evolution of the index of deprivation in the neighbourhoods where the parliamentary members live is shown once again in figure 5, but only for parliamentary members of European origin. Extreme Right has the same curve as this ideology does not have any parliamentary members of non-European origin. By contrast, the FDF's rising line is even more marked. Both the Liberals and the Christian Democrat retain a falling curve, but this is considerably less steep for the latter and they are now above the average for the region. There is a striking difference as far as the Greens and the Social Democrats are concerned; whilst the Greens now also have a sharply falling curve (which is even lower, apart from the last year), the Social Democrats largely remain at the

⁷ This group was also delimited on the basis of data from Pierre-Yves Lambert (<http://suffrage-universel.be>).

same level until 2004 and it is not until 2009 that the fall also affects the parliamentary members of European origin. It therefore looks like the parliamentary members of European origin have followed the parliamentary members of non-European origin in their choice of residence, albeit with some delay.⁸ The increasing rift between the Greens and the Social Democrats on the one hand and the FDF and Extreme Right on the other, with the Liberals in between, can also be seen here. However, the Christian Democrats now lean more towards the Liberals.

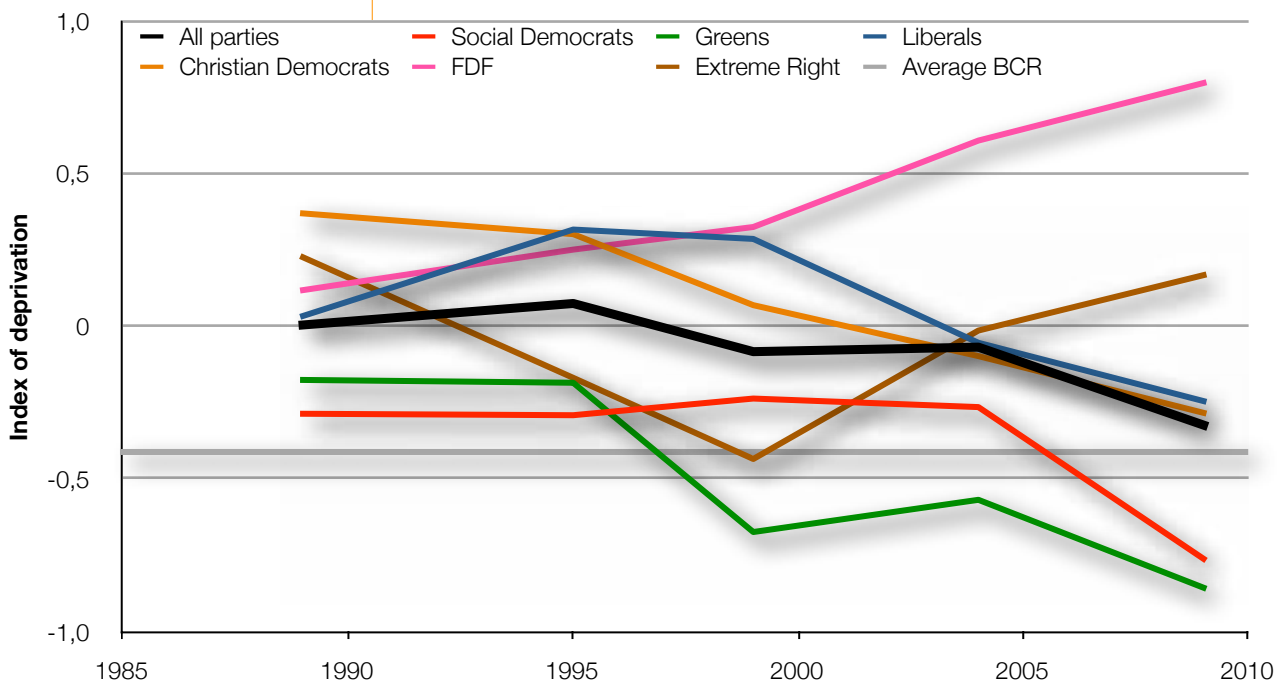


Figure 5. Index of deprivation in the neighbourhoods where parliamentary members live, without parliamentary members of non-European origin and according to political ideology, 1989-2009

2.2. The increasing representation of neighbourhoods in difficulty

As stated above, the average values can conceal different spatial patterns. For example, an average level of prosperity can point to high levels of representation in neighbourhoods with an average level of prosperity. However, it may also be due to an overrepresentation of both very prosperous as well as very poor neighbourhoods. Figure 6 therefore shows the proportion of parliamentary members that do not live in neighbourhoods in difficulty according to political ideology throughout the entire period under consideration. Figure 6 shows that this value fell from 1999 onwards for all parties together, although they still remain well above the regional value.

⁸ The same observation applies for the Dutch-speaking representation, who with one exception, have no members of non-European origin; they show relatively stable values until 2004 and it is only in 2009 that a sharp decline becomes discernable.

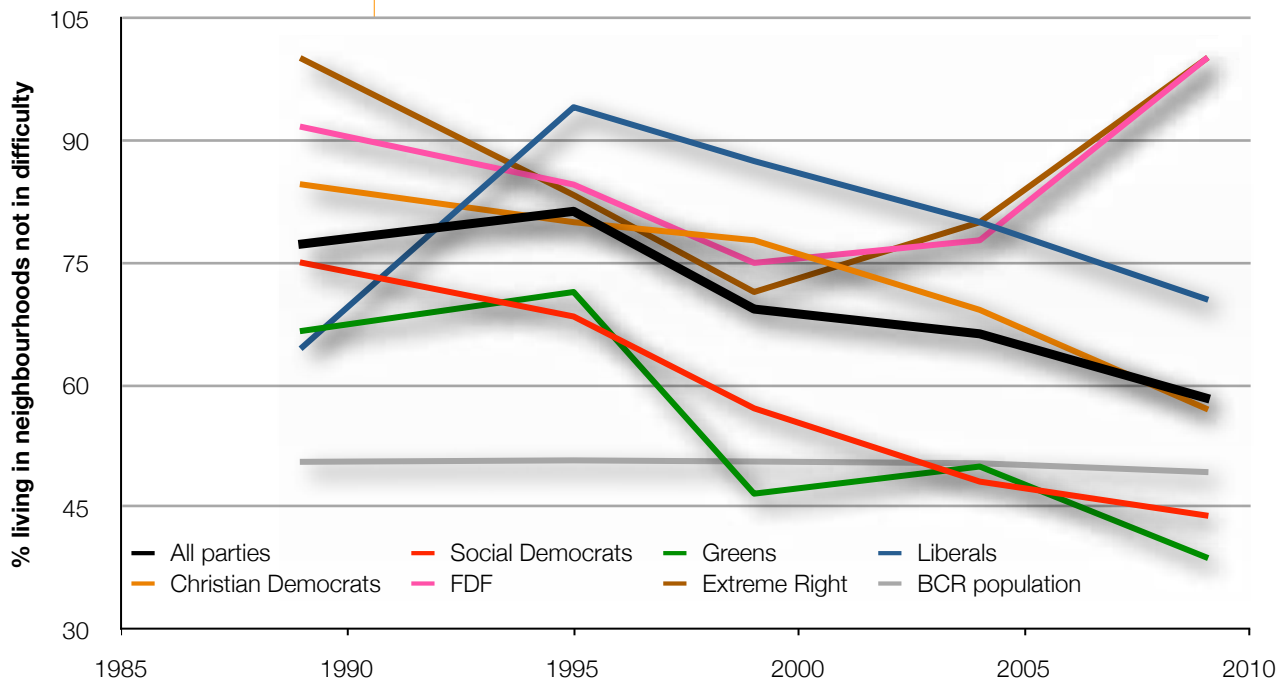


Figure 6. Proportion of parliamentary members who live in neighbourhoods that are not in difficulty, according to political ideology, 1989-2009

This value for the entire population only fell slightly from a maximum of 50.8% in 1999 to a minimum of 49.3% now. As far as the different ideologies are concerned, similar developments can be seen within the average values, but the increasing contrast between the Greens and the Social Democrats on the one hand and the Extreme Right and the FDF on the other is even more noticeable here. The Liberals and the Christian Democrats also now find themselves in the middle, although the Liberal's lower value in 1989 is much more noticeable here. The value for the Christian Democrats may also be closer to that of the Liberals without the parliamentary members of non-European origin. Without this group, the decrease experienced by the Social Democrats only comes into effect in 2009 and the FDF curve is higher.

A movement towards or departure from the centre can be surmised within these developments as the poorest and most deprived neighbourhoods are located in the centre of the region. A detailed analysis per political ideology is carried out in this final section through the use of figure 7, which shows which type of neighbourhoods in difficulty are represented per political ideology. Figure 8 charts where parliamentary members live throughout the years, also according to political ideology. Even when different ideologies represent the same types of neighbourhoods in difficulty, a different spatial logic can still be in force which often has to do with a historically anchored presence within certain areas of the region.

It earlier appeared that the Social Democrats and Greens have experienced an overall evolution towards stronger representation in neighbourhoods in difficulty,

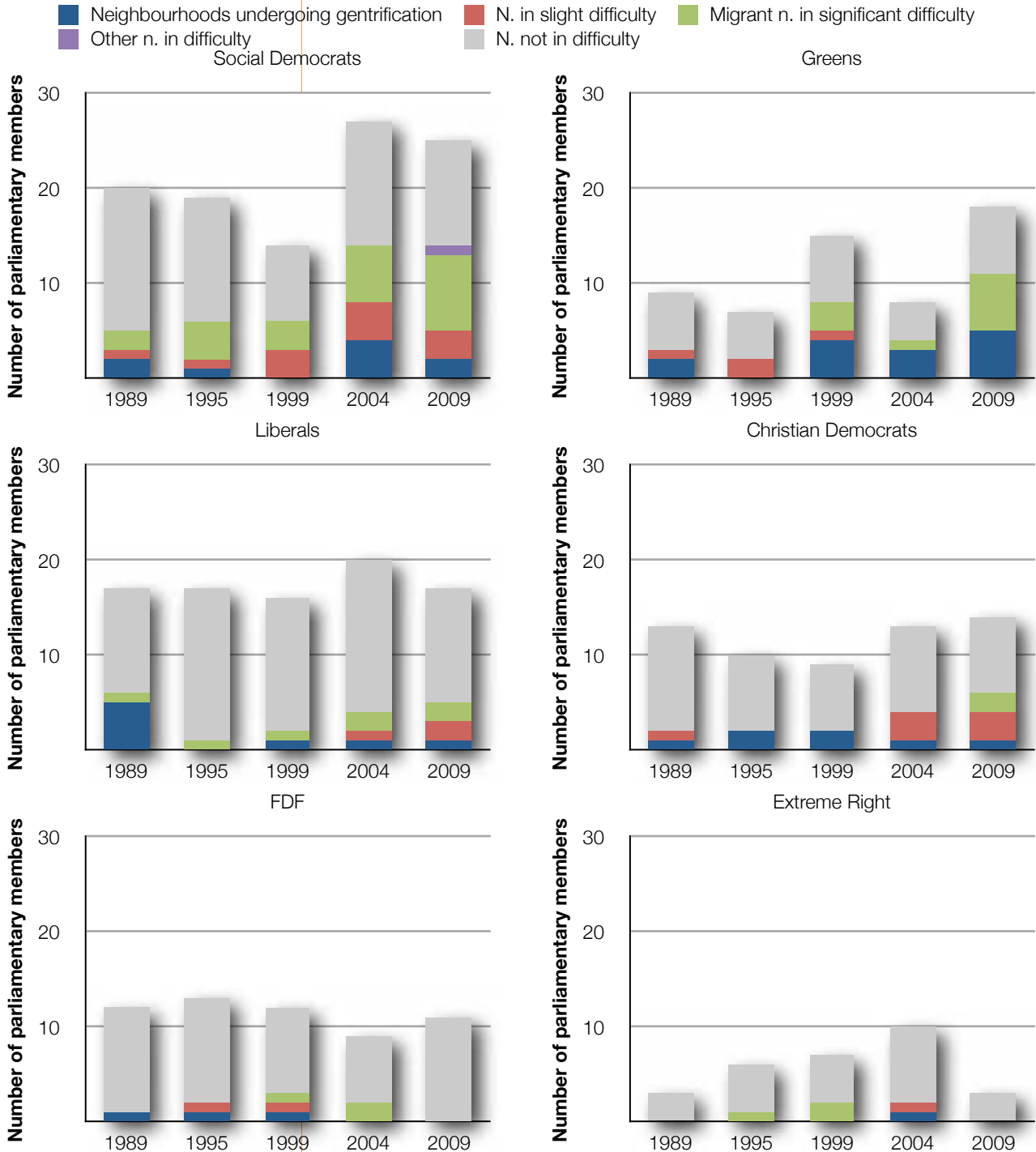
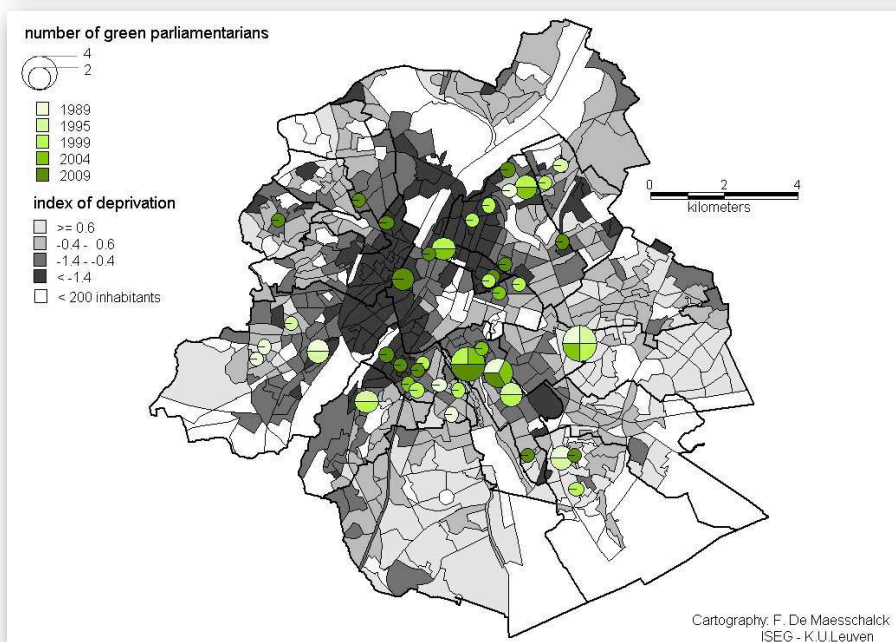
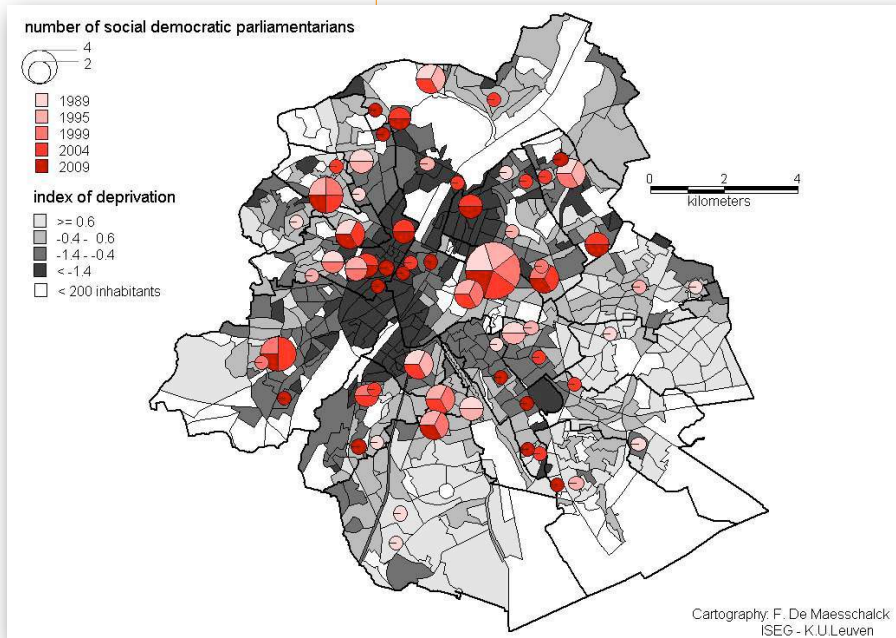


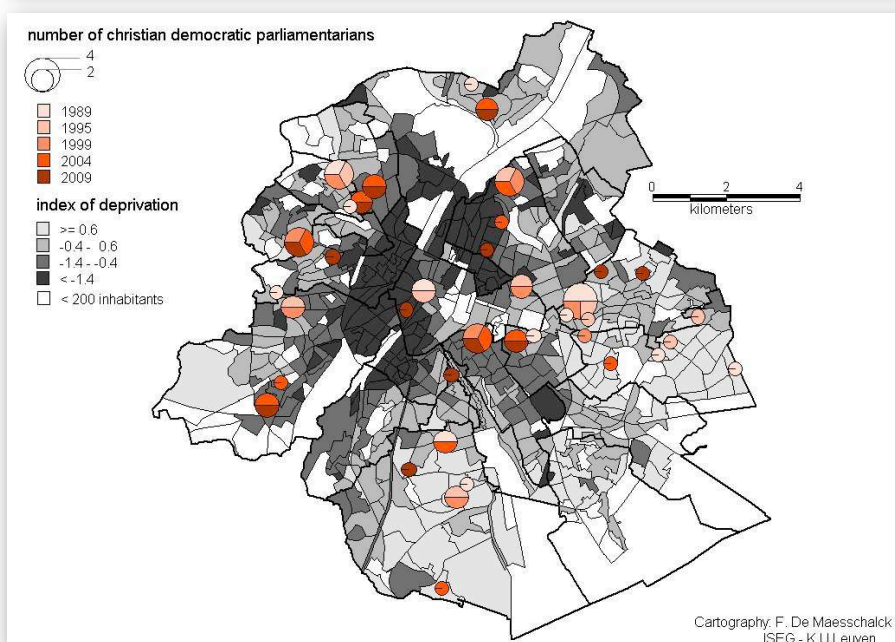
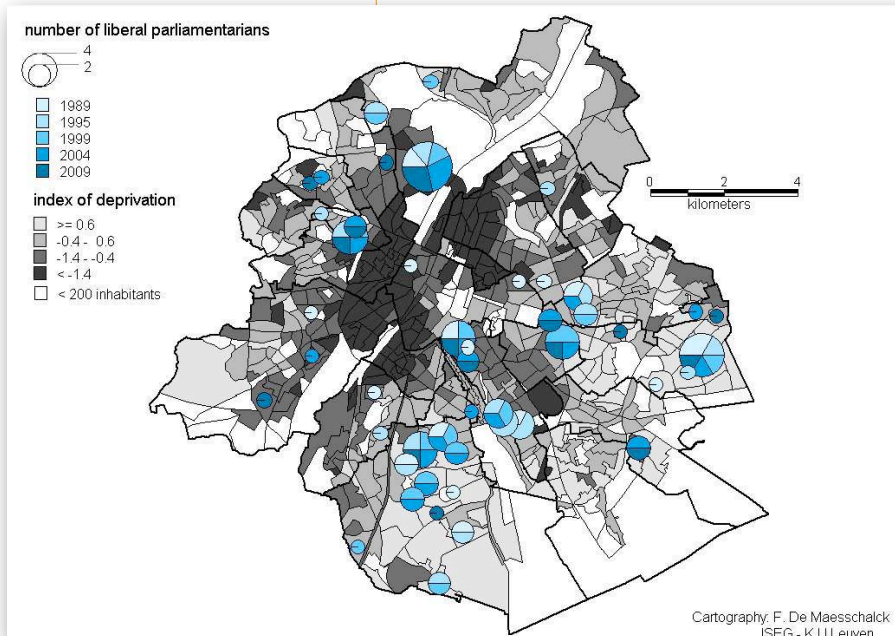
Figure 7. Number of parliamentary members according to type of neighbourhood in difficulty for the different political ideologies, 1989-2009



which are now even overrepresented. In the case of the Social Democrats, this can be explained to a large extent up to 2004 by the admission of parliamentary members of non-European origin, but since 2009 this is also the case for the other parliamentary members. The impact that this group has had is much smaller for the Greens. However, we are able to deduce from figure 7 that the neighbourhoods undergoing gentrification are more strongly represented for this ideology than for the Social Democrats and that migrant neighbourhoods in significant difficulty have been represented by the Social Democrats right from the beginning of the period under consideration. This goes hand in hand with several striking spatial differences (see figure 8). For example, the Social Democrats have a classically strong presence in several municipalities along the canal, such as Sint-Jans-Molenbeek, where they are also electorally strong, whilst the Greens have a noticeable concentration in the Southern and South-Eastern neighbourhoods of the first belt where gentrification and upgrading of former middle-class neighbourhoods is relatively prevalent.⁹ In both cases, the representation of the most central areas along the canal is largely a recent phenomenon.

Compared to the other parties, the Liberals had a large proportion of parliamentary members in neighbourhoods in difficulty in

⁹ Just like neighbourhoods undergoing gentrification, neighbourhoods undergoing upgrading have a strong dynamic of renovation and middle-class immigration, but with a less deprived starting position (Van Crieckingen & Decroly, 2003).



1989. Figure 7 shows that this mainly involved neighbourhoods that are now undergoing gentrification, often old middle-class neighbourhoods. However, by 1995 the Liberal representation had largely left these neighbourhoods. Since then, the representation of neighbourhoods in difficulty has increased slightly once again, just as for the Christian Democrats. However, this often involves neighbourhoods that do not accumulate the majority of the problems. For the Christian Democrats, where the difference between the parliamentary members of non-European origin and the others is the greatest in relative terms, the migrant neighbourhoods in difficulty are also only represented by the former group. Although there is therefore a cautious movement for both ideologies towards the more central areas, with a noticeable presence in the East and the South-East areas of the first crown, both still have a relatively important peripheral representation (see figure 8). However, there is a noticeable difference in the peripheral location of both ideologies over the years. Whereas the Christian Democrats have the strongest levels of representation in relative terms within the Eastern, traditional Christian Democratic side of the region, the presence of the Liberals is also noticeable within the Southern middle-class axis, which is traditionally non-denominational (Dobruszkes & Vandermotten, 2006).

In 1989, Extreme Right and the FDF had almost no representation within neighbourhoods in difficulty and subsequently experienced a somewhat increased level of representation only to return to

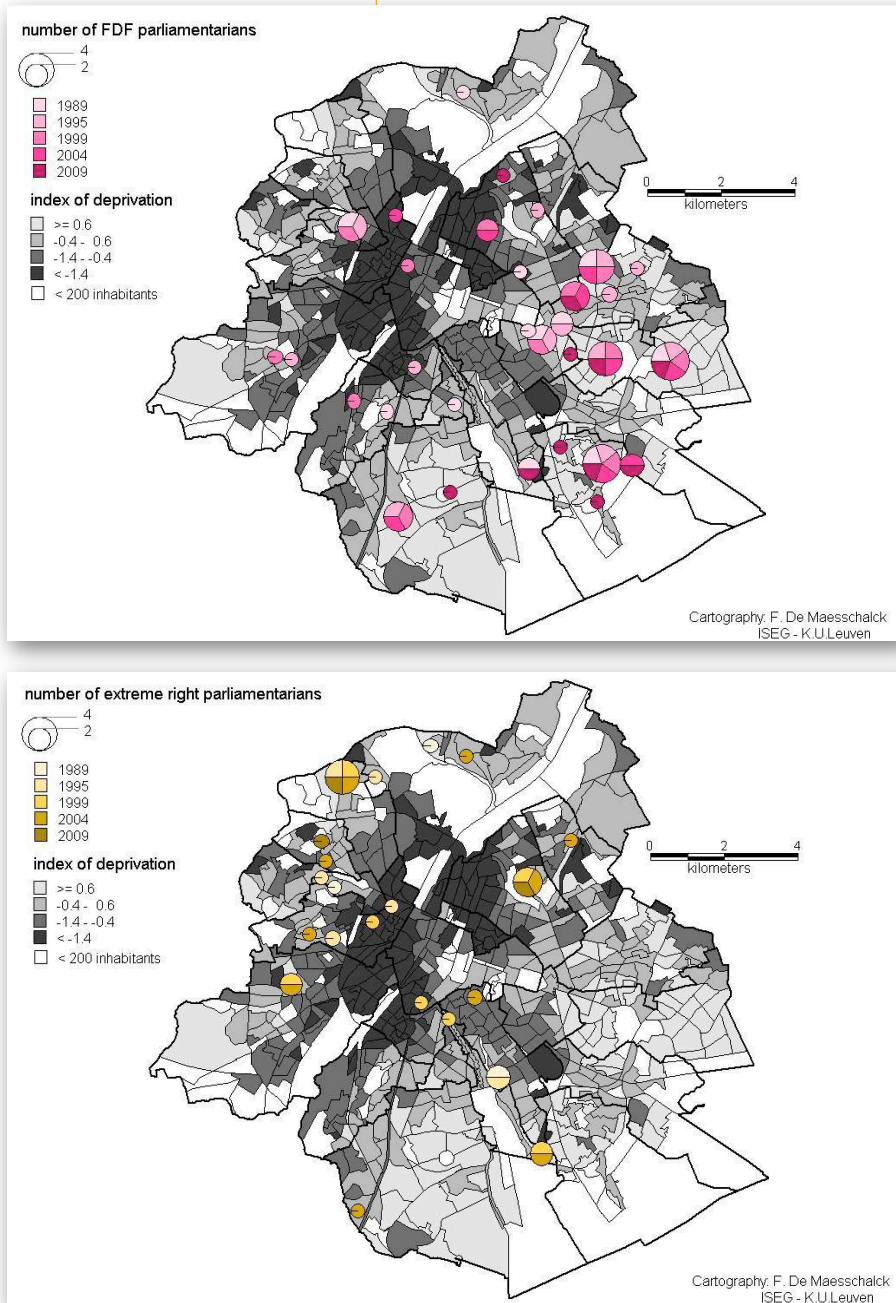


Figure 8. Spatial distribution of the parliamentary members for the different political ideologies, 1989-2009

having no representation now. In the case of the FDF, this is partly to do with the (limited) admission of elected members of non-European origin during those years. By contrast, this involved elected members of Belgian origin for Extreme Right. The fast growth of Extreme Right therefore went hand in hand with the admission of a number of parliamentary members who lived in neighbourhoods in difficulty. By 2004, which was the pinnacle of their success, this trend was dwindling once again even though their propaganda clearly focused on the problems experienced by these neighbourhoods. However, these parties differ greatly in spatial terms (see figure 8). The FDF has a very strong presence in the prosperous Eastern and South-Eastern areas of the region whilst they are virtually absent from the central districts, particularly recently. In relative terms, Extreme Right has a much stronger presence in the Western area of the region, which has to do with the relatively important Dutch-speaking representation within this ideology. More generally, it is noticeable that Extreme Right is mainly present in the direct periphery around the central zone, where anxiety about the spread of the nearby urban diversity is very real. The success of Extreme Right in these neighbourhoods was observed by Vandermotten & Vanlaer (1993) and explains the overrepresentation of Extreme Right within these neighbourhoods (Van Hamme & Marissal, 2008).

Conclusion and discussion: towards urban representation, towards urban policy?

Despite the relatively small number of parliamentary members in each legislature (an individual elected member belonging to a small political ideology can therefore have a major impact on the result), there are still very clear and consistent developments that can be seen over time. The representation of less prosperous, more centrally located neighbourhoods has increased markedly over the past 20 years. In 1989, the number of parliamentary members living in such neighbourhoods was very limited. However, this was no longer the case in 2009. The average income and the average index of deprivation is now even lower than the regional average in the neighbourhoods where the parliamentary members live, although the proportion of parliamentary members living in neighbourhoods in difficulty is still smaller than for the Brussels population as a whole. There are obviously major differences between the political ideologies, which further increased during the period under consideration. The Greens and the Social Democrats were still living in the least prosperous neighbourhoods, but this process clearly intensified from 1999 onwards. In the case of the Greens, this is linked to a preference for neighbourhoods undergoing gentrification and their surroundings. For Social Democrats, this process is largely due to the increasing admission of parliamentary members of non-European origin, with the other parliamentary members only following this trend in 2009. In 1989, the Liberals still had a fairly strong level of representation in a number of neighbourhoods that are presently undergoing gentrification. However, this representation had completely disappeared by 1995. A cautious trend is once again visible from 1999 onwards towards less prosperous, more centrally located neighbourhoods, although this predominantly does not include neighbourhoods that accumulate the most problems. This declining trend is even more noticeable for the Christian Democrats, which for the most part can be explained by the admission of parliamentary members of non-European origin. Historically, both parties have been located in different areas: the Christian Democrats are represented more strongly throughout the period under consideration within the traditional Catholic East side of the region, whilst the Liberals have a relatively stronger level of representation in the historically non-denominational South. These political ideologies still have an important peripheral representation, but it is mainly Extreme Right and the FDF who now have a peripheral geography, just as they did at the beginning of the period. Extreme Right had a higher degree of representation in the more immediate periphery, close to the central areas where the angst for the spatial spread of urban diversity is much stronger. The FDF almost exclusively represented the prosperous East and South-East. It is therefore not surprising that the FDF is strongly involved with the French-speakers in the periphery outside the Brussels Capital Region and the community questions that are linked to this area. This is not only a historical and strategic choice, the Brussels FDF parliamentary members also share the same socio-spatial ideology.

In general, the growing presence of parliamentary members of non-European origin therefore means increasing central urban representation, often in neighbourhoods in difficulty. The effect of this group now means that migrant neighbourhoods in significant difficulty are even slightly overrepresented. Other parliamentary members have followed much more gradually and particularly since the most recent elections. This is the case for the Greens (who had a strong representation in central districts rela-

tively early on), Social Democrats and to a much lesser extent, the Liberals and the Christian Democrats. Consequently, the difference between parliamentary members of non-European origin and the other parliamentary members is now relatively small for both the Greens and the Social Democrats, but larger for the ideologies who have a higher average level of prosperity. This is particularly noticeable for the Christian Democrats. The increasing central urban representation of neighbourhoods in difficulty simultaneously offers opportunities and challenges for urban policy. They go hand in hand with a focus on urban regeneration within these neighbourhoods, which were often not able to count on much policy interest in the past. The increasing number of parliamentary members of non-European origin, who have often grown up in these neighbourhoods, can also be a cause of significant concern for the current residents, even though this often comprises a local elite with an individual socio-economic status that is much higher than that of the neighbourhood as a whole (Van Hamme & Marissal, 2008). This higher socio-economic status also applies to the other elected members in these neighbourhoods, where it frequently involves immigrants. Some of them may also consider urban regeneration as a tool for making these neighbourhoods attractive for further middle class immigration. There are often underlying motives at work here, such as extending the municipal fiscal base and the presumed benefits of a social mix. For the time being, a large number of recent regional initiatives aimed at steering the future of these neighbourhoods are paving the way for gentrification, and it is not the poorest groups who are reaping most of the benefits (Decroly & Van Crielingen, 2009; Romainville, 2010). Concrete policy studies which fall outside the focus of this contribution must identify future developments. This contribution does show that the everyday surroundings of a large number of parliamentary members now fall within the focus of these developments more than ever before. This on its own makes a lack of policy interest highly unlikely.

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