



## Brussels Studies

La revue scientifique électronique pour les recherches sur Bruxelles / Het elektronisch wetenschappelijk tijdschrift voor onderzoek over Brussel / The e-journal for academic research on Brussels  
**Collection générale | 2009**

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# The interest of the neighbourhood: Where municipal councillors live within the Brussels Capital Region

*Het belang van de buurt: De woonplaats van de gemeenteraadsleden in het Brussels Hoofdstedelijk Gewest*

*L'intérêt pour le quartier : le lieu de résidence des conseillers communaux dans la région de Bruxelles-Capitale*

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Translator: Mike Bramley



### Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/brussels/676>

DOI: 10.4000/brussels.676

ISSN: 2031-0293

### Publisher

Université Saint-Louis Bruxelles

### Electronic reference

Filip de Maesschalck, « The interest of the neighbourhood: Where municipal councillors live within the Brussels Capital Region », *Brussels Studies* [Online], General collection, no 27, Online since 27 June 2009, connection on 21 April 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/brussels/676> ; DOI : 10.4000/brussels.676



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## The interest of the neighbourhood: Where municipal councillors live within the Brussels Capital Region

Translation : Mike Bramley

This article examines the extent to which certain types of neighbourhood are under-represented or overrepresented in the Brussels municipal councils. It is found that as the prosperity of a neighbourhood increases, so does its representation. Neighbourhoods in difficulty therefore suffer from a double form of deprivation as not only do they accumulate a number of urban problems, but they are also underrepresented within municipal bodies. There are also significant differences between the political ideologies that can be linked to their position within the political spectrum. A comparison with the previous legislature indicates a stable picture. However, the increasing number of municipal councillors of non-European origin is leading to better representation of neighbourhoods that accumulate the most problems, even though they are still underrepresented. The same observations are made for the Brussels Parliament, albeit that the representation of prosperous neighbourhoods is even higher there.

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## Introduction

The question concerning the extent to which the social composition of our political representation is equal to that of society as a whole is a recurring theme within research in political processes. This is also the case in Belgium (see Delwit et al., 2005a; 2005b; Fiers & Reynaert, 2006). This research repeatedly reveals the overrepresentation of men, the highly qualified and forty and fifty year olds within our elected bodies. This is most marked for the highest policy levels, but also the municipal councils show an overrepresentation of these groups.

The focus on the representation of social categories, within which the representation of women has recently been a predominant research topic (Paxton et al., 2007), stands in contrast to the very limited research about the representation of spatial categories. This is definitely the case in proportional representation systems, such as in Belgium (Latner & McGann, 2005). Gallagher & March (1988) did conclude from comparative research of different Western countries, that a geographical balance is an important selection criterion for political parties in forming their list of candidates. This obviously does not mean that the eventual makeup of the political bodies is also geographically neutral. In Belgium, large municipalities are overrepresented to the disadvantage of small municipalities (Wauters et al., 2003; Delwit et al., 2005a). All of these studies have focused on the administrative spatial entities such as provinces, districts and municipalities. Nevertheless, the type of neighbourhood in which politicians live is also important. Not only does this have consequences for defending the interests of these neighbourhoods, but it also has an impact on the politicians who live there, or is, at the very least, a reflection of previously existing preferences. It is within this context that de Borman et al. (2001) argue: "La concentration (ou l'absence) d'élus dans certains types de quartiers (...) ne peut à son tour rester sans influence sur la manière dont sont transmis, relayés, interprétés, déformés et finalement traités les problèmes sociaux". Current research (de Borman et al., 2001; De Maesschalck, 2005; Jacobs, 2006) shows that not only are more prosperous neighbourhoods better represented, even at the level of municipal council, but that there are also significant differences between the political parties which can be linked to their position within the political spectrum.

This article examines the extent to which different types of neighbourhood are represented within the existing municipal councils of the 19 Brussels municipalities. In doing so, the differences between the political parties and ideologies are explored, followed by an analysis of the evolution with regard to the previous legislature. Data from de Borman et al. (2001) was able to be used for this comparison, who investigated the representation of different types of neighbourhood in the municipal councils of the Brussels Capital Region and the suburbs around Brussels from 2000 to 2006. Finally, the differences between where members of parliament for the Brussels Capital Region live are considered in order to establish whether certain types of neighbourhood are better represented at a higher policy level.

The question concerning the representation of different types of neighbourhood is particularly pertinent in the Brussels Capital Region where the social contrasts between neighbourhoods are the most distinct in Belgium. This goes hand in hand with the particularly strong autochthonous depopulation of the central neighbourhoods following the Second World War and the immigration of foreign economic migrants who filled the space created within the housing and employment markets. The economic crisis has affected these groups the most, restricting their social and spatial mobility (see Kesteloot, 2000). Autochthonous depopulation and foreign immigration are still structuralising processes, even though gentrification is increasingly restricting the space available to the poorest groups (Van Crielingen, 2006).

### **The neighbourhoods where the municipal councillors in the present legislature live: no reflection of the Brussels area**

The 663 municipal councillors who are actually in office were analysed in this study. This means that those elected members who did not take up or who gave up their municipal council seat in this legislature, due to another mandate, for example, have not been taken into consideration.<sup>1</sup> The areas where the municipal councillors live were pinpointed at the level of neighbourhood. The party affiliation of each municipal councillor was also registered. Furthermore, the local list by which the person in question was elected did not form the initial starting point, but rather their membership to a national or regional party. Those elected members who do not belong to a national or regional party were categorised as being independent. For the majority of the analyses, the French and Dutch-speaking parties are grouped according to the same political ideologies.<sup>2</sup> The Dutch-speaking representation is mostly not large enough to justify a separate analysis.

To begin with, the neighbourhoods were typified on the basis of two variables, the first being the median income of the neighbourhood. An index of deprivation was also used which was drawn up by Vandermotten et al. (2006). This is a measure of synthesis that is composed on the basis of 22 different variables that measure the

<sup>1</sup> This data was collected in the spring of 2008 by Tom De Bruyn, as part of his thesis within the Department of Social and Economic Geography at K.U.Leuven.

<sup>2</sup> The following ideologies were delimited: Social Democrats (SP, sp.a, MS), Liberals (PRL, VLD, MCC), Christian Democrats (CDH, CD&V, CDF), Greens (Ecolo, Groen!), Extreme Right (Vlaams Belang, FN), Flemish Nationalists (Spirit) and Independents. The FDF was treated as a separate category.

different dimensions of deprivation in terms of housing, employment market, education and health.<sup>3</sup> This index was calculated for all neighbourhoods in all Belgian metropolitan districts and has an average value of 0. The average for the Brussels Capital Region is somewhat lower, with a value of -0.4. A value of 1 (or -1) means that the neighbourhood in question differs by one standard deviation from the average in a positive (or negative) sense. A second part explores the extent to which the considered patterns are influenced by the presence of elected members of non-European origin. Finally, the focus turns to neighbourhoods in difficulty and explores how they are represented within the municipal councils.

*Substantial party differences*

Figure 1 shows the average income and the average value of the index of deprivation in the neighbourhoods where the municipal councillors live according to each of the political ideologies. The axes are based on the average for the Brussels Capital Region. The size of each circle denotes the total number of municipal councillors who ascribe to that particular political ideology.<sup>4</sup> The average value for all municipal councillors together is also indicated. This reveals that the neighbourhoods within which municipal councillors live are on average more prosperous than the level that has been determined for the whole of the Brussels Capital Region, measured ac-

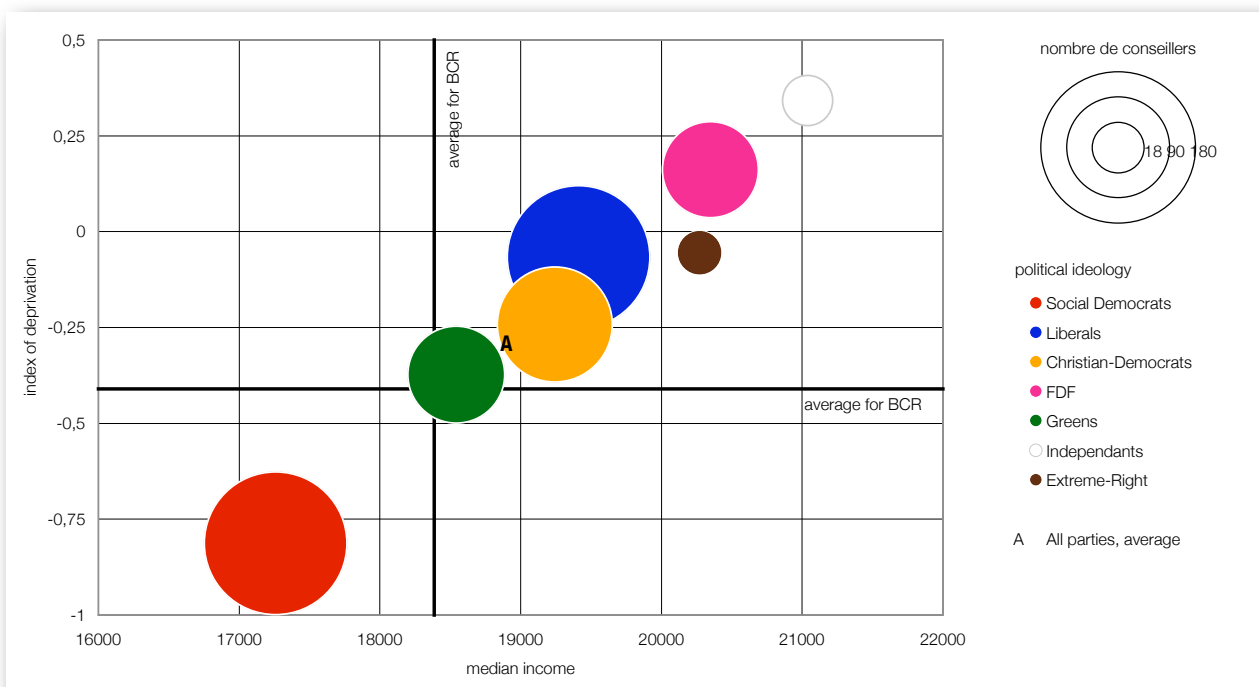


Figure 1. Average prosperity of the neighbourhoods within which municipal councillors live, according to political ideology.

<sup>3</sup> More specifically, it involves the first component of a so-called principal component analysis, which maximally renders the common distribution of the 22 variables.

<sup>4</sup> The Flemish Nationalists are not shown as they only have once municipal councillor in the whole of the Brussels Capital Region.

ording to income as well as according to the extent of deprivation. Nevertheless, there are significant differences between the ideologies. On average, the Social Democrat municipal councillors live in the least prosperous neighbourhoods, which score even lower than the average for the whole region. This is not the case for the other parties, although the Green parties are close to that average. Going from less to more prosperous, we have then the Christian Democrats, the Liberals, the members of the Extreme Right parties, the FDF members and finally the Independents.

The level of prosperity in the neighbourhoods where the municipal councillors live is therefore higher than average, but there are clear differences between the political ideologies. These differences largely go hand in hand with the ideological positions. This means that different ideological positions lead to a different living environment or conversely that a certain living environment leads to certain ideological positions. More specifically, they follow a left-right continuum, although the Extreme Right parties are not found in the outer limits.<sup>5</sup> In contrast to the other ideologies, the Extreme Right has a majority of Dutch-speaking elected members who are more inclined than their French-speaking colleagues to live in the western part of the region, which

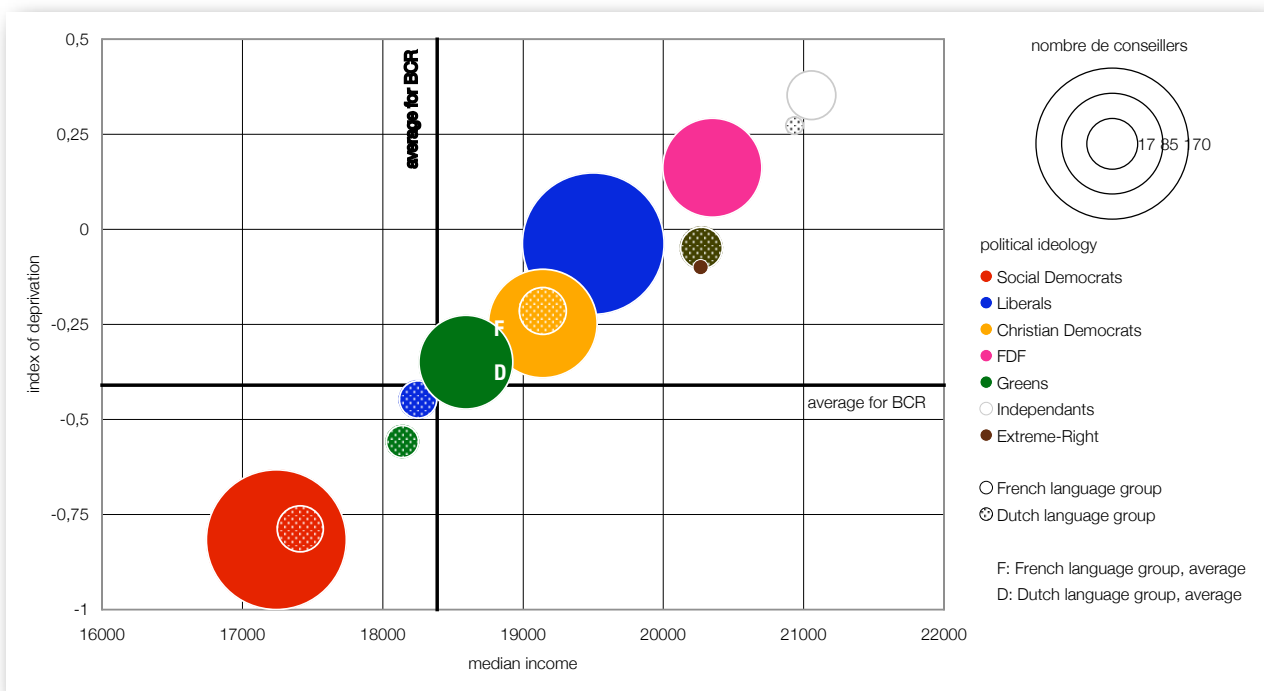


Figure 2. Average prosperity of the neighbourhoods in which municipal councillors live according to political ideology and language group.

<sup>5</sup> The position of the FDF in the left-right continuum is open to discussion due to the central position of language as a recruiting mechanism. Historically, the FDF has taken a large number of representatives and votes from (and lost them back to) the Liberal parties, and along with the Liberal PRL, is now part of the MR.

is less prosperous – particularly when this is measured according to the index of deprivation. The differences between the Dutch-speakers and the French-speakers are otherwise not that great. This can be deduced from figure 2, where both language groups are shown for each ideology. The only exception is formed by the Dutch-speaking Liberals who live in much less prosperous neighbourhoods than their French-speaking colleagues. This can be explained by the relatively large proportion of liberal professions among this party's elected members. Where they live is largely linked to where their jobs are, which are often in the old and less prosperous central districts of the municipalities (de Borman et al., 2001).

*The impact of elected members of non-European origin*

The average level of prosperity in the neighbourhoods in which municipal councillors live would be considerably higher without the municipal councillors of non-European origin. Twenty two percent of the municipal councillors belong to this group<sup>6</sup>. They tend to live in much poorer neighbourhoods with a much larger degree of deprivation. This is shown in Figure 3, where a distinction is made for each political ideology between the municipal councillors of non-European origin and the other municipal councillors. The elected members of non-European origin come out below average for all political ideologies, whilst the opposite is true for the other municipal councillors. Within this latter group, only the Social Democrats remain under the average – at least in terms of the index of deprivation. The impact of municipal councillors of non-European origin is obviously greatest for those parties who have many elected members from this group. They account for almost half of the Social Democrats, while the Christian Democrats are just above average. This is followed by the Greens, the FDF and the Liberals. Extreme Right is the only political ideology which has no municipal councillors of non-European origin.<sup>7</sup>

The average level of prosperity in the neighbourhoods where the municipal councillors of non-European origin live is therefore much lower than for all municipal councillors as a whole. However, the same differences are also evident between the political ideologies. This means that the differences also go hand in hand with the ideological positions for this group, more specifically on a left-right continuum. Although Busetta (2006) points out the instrumental purposes for which the immigrant candidates are used by all parties (except by Extreme Right) in an attempt to attract the anti-racist and ethnic segment of the Brussels electorate, it seems that there is a certain selection within this group according to ideology. The only exception is the lower position of the Christian Democrats, which consequently means that the position of the Christian Democratic municipal councillors of European origin is noticeably higher than for all their municipal councillors as a whole. They come out in a higher position than the Liberals, and even Extreme Right when it comes to the level of deprivation. As there are only two municipal councillors of non-European origin that belong to the Dutch language group, the difference between the French and the Dutch language groups becomes much greater within the municipal councillors of non-European origin.

<sup>6</sup> This group was identified using data from Pierre-Yves Lambert (<http://suffrage-universel.be>), supplemented by information available about the individual candidates.

<sup>7</sup> Both the Independents and the Flemish Nationalists only have one elected member of non-European origin. They are not shown here.

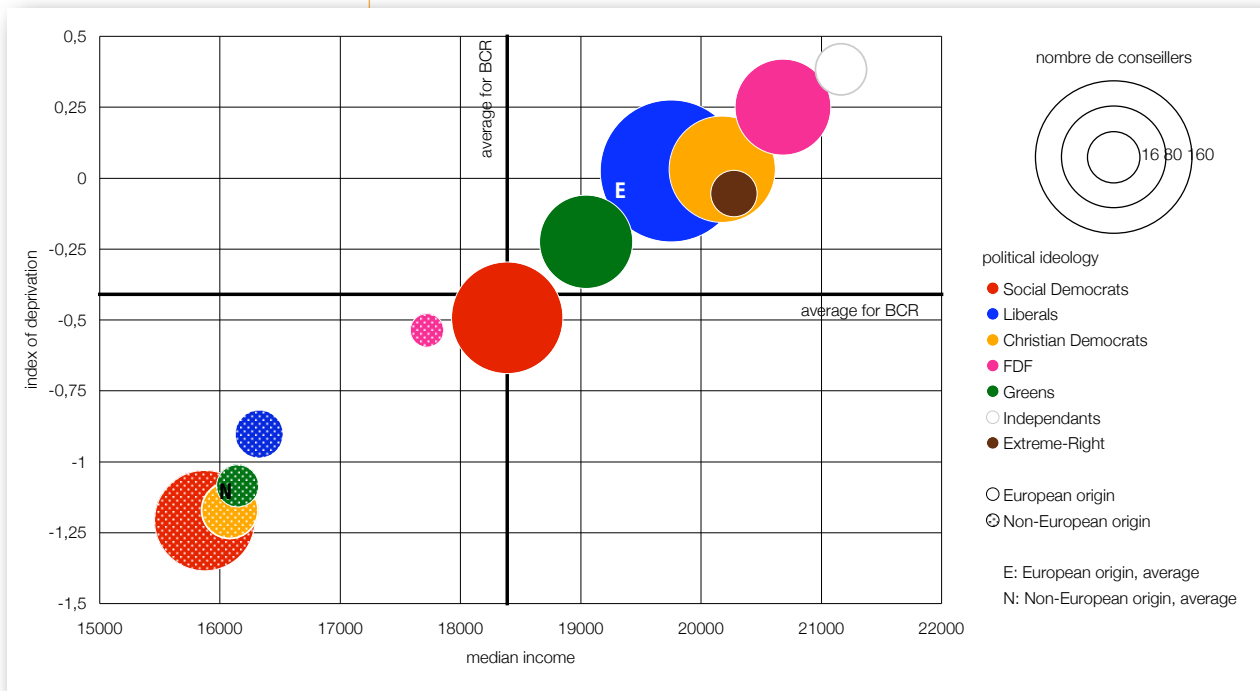


Figure 3. Average prosperity of the neighbourhoods in which municipal councillors live according to political ideology and origin.

### The underrepresentation of the most deprived neighbourhoods

Average values were used in the previous section. However, the same average value can actually conceal different distribution patterns. An average value that indicates an average level of prosperity can mean that a large number of municipal councillors live in neighbourhoods with an average level of prosperity. However, it can also mean that there is an overrepresentation of both very prosperous and very deprived neighbourhoods. This section explores the extent to which certain neighbourhoods are overrepresented or underrepresented. The neighbourhoods were categorised into eight groups according to their level of deprivation. More specifically, the same number of groups was created on either side of the average for the Brussels Capital Region. The interval within each group amounts to 0.5, which corresponds to half a standard deviation. Figure 4 shows the overrepresentation or underrepresentation of these eight types of neighbourhood. More specifically, the proportion of municipal councillors in a certain type of neighbourhood was divided by the proportion of the population within that type of neighbourhood. A value of one indicates perfect proportional representation.

This shows that, for all parties combined, the representation increases globally as the level of prosperity increases. The differences between the political ideologies are also noticeable here. The Christian Democrats, and even more the Liberals and the



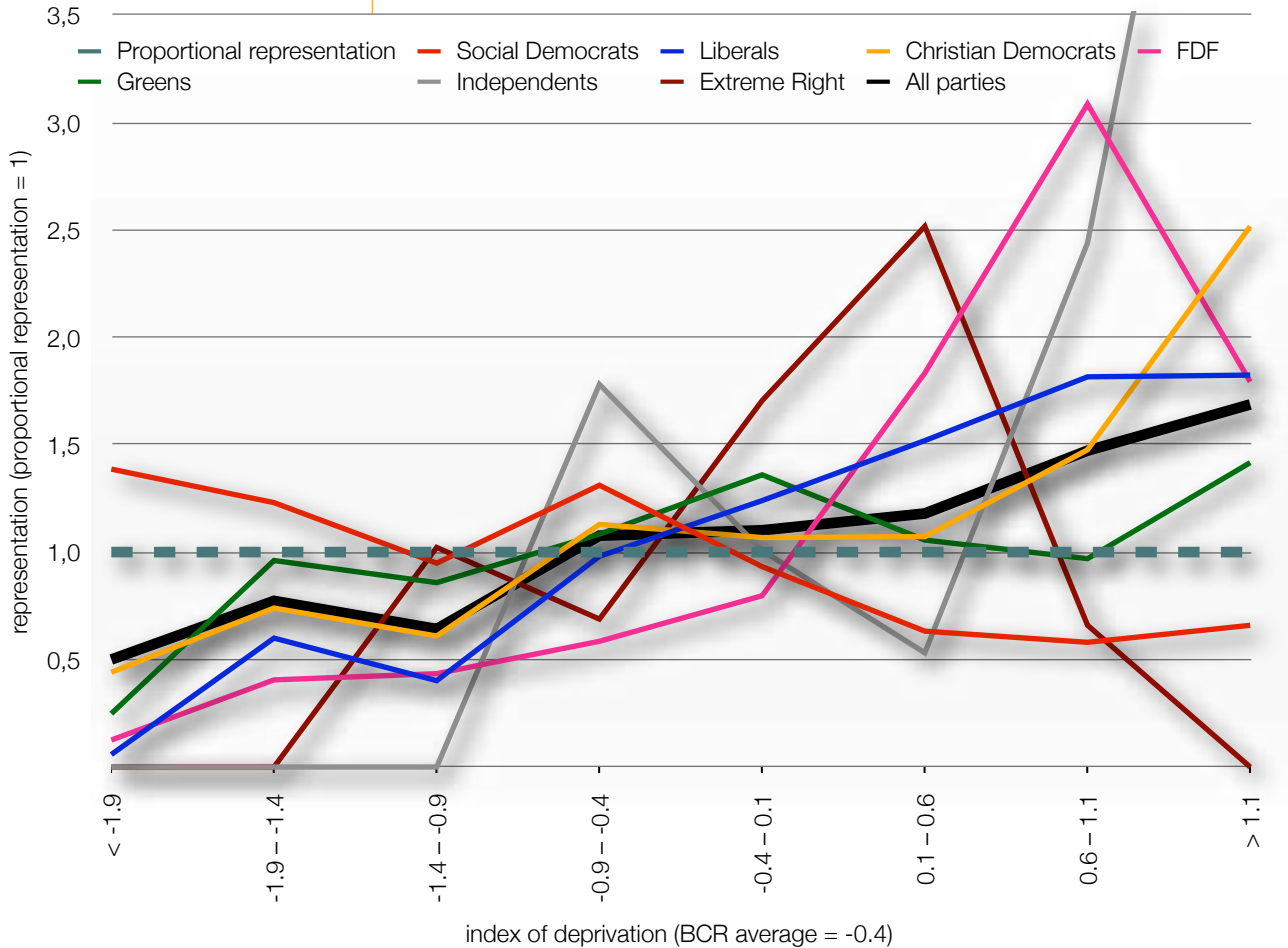


Figure 4. Overrepresentation or underrepresentation of neighbourhoods according to level of deprivation and political ideology

FDF, follow the general pattern of increasing representation along with an increasing level of prosperity. The Greens have a somewhat flatter curve, with a local maximum in neighbourhoods that just fall above the average. The Social Democrats are the only political ideology to follow an inverse pattern. They have an overrepresentation of the most deprived neighbourhoods, even though they also show a local maximum just below average. The inverse pattern of the Social Democrats on the one hand and the Liberals and the FDF on the other translates spatially to a more central location for the former and a more peripheral location for the latter (see Figure 5). After all, deprivation is concentrated within the central part of the Brussels Capital Region. The Extreme Right municipal councillors have a specific profile as they are highly overrepresented in the moderately prosperous neighbourhoods and have no representation in the most and least prosperous neighbourhoods. These parties

make extensive use of the problems of the deprived neighbourhoods in their propaganda, but they actually have no political representation there.

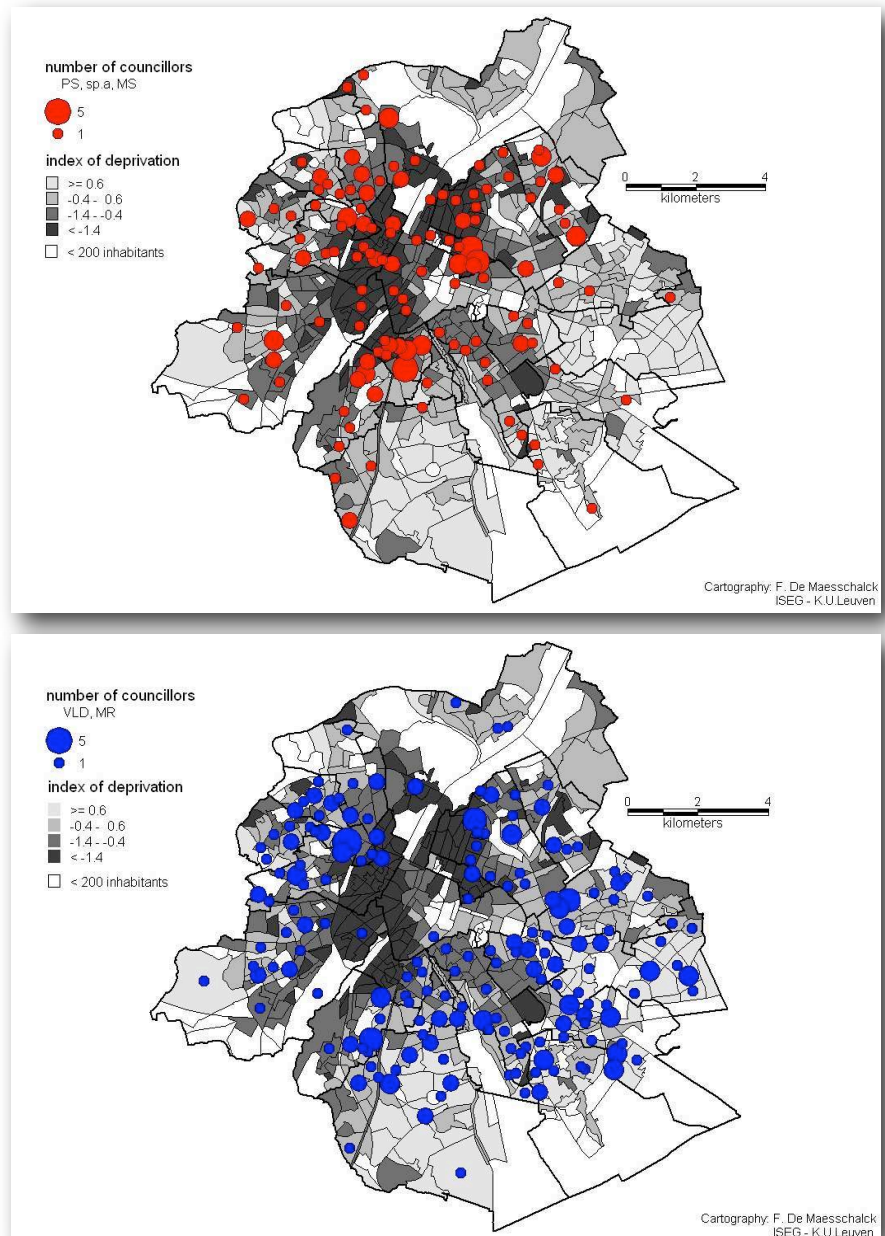


Figure 5. The neighbourhoods where Social Democrat municipal councillors live (top) and those where Liberal and FDF councillors live (bottom).

There are also significant differences here between the municipal councillors of non-European origin and the other municipal councillors. When only the latter group is taken into consideration, for all parties combined, the increase in representation as prosperity increases is even stronger (see Figure 6). The changes are obviously greatest for those political ideologies which have many municipal councillors of non-European origin. The overrepresentation of Social Democrats in the most deprived neighbourhoods disappears – but of all the parties they are still the most markedly present - and the curve takes on a roof-like shape. The Christian Democrats' curve becomes steeper and the Greens' curve becomes significantly less flat.

Finally, the extent to which neighbourhoods in difficulty are represented can be examined. These neighbourhoods were delimited by Vandermotten et al. (2006), who classified them into different types. In Brussels, the most important types are the migrant neighbourhoods in significant difficulty, the neighbourhoods experiencing slight difficulty and the neighbourhoods undergoing gentrification, where a strong

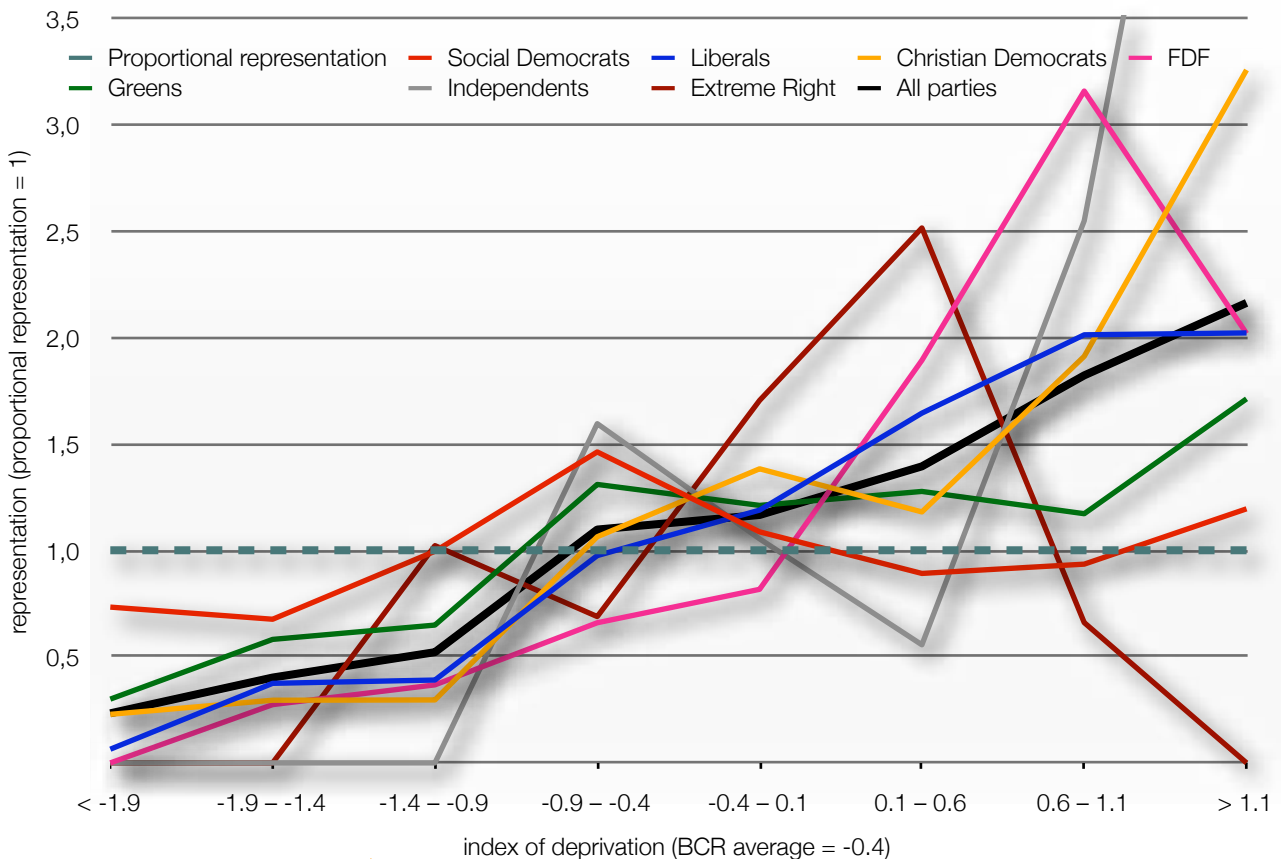


Figure 6. Overrepresentation or underrepresentation of neighbourhoods according to the level of deprivation and political ideology without the municipal councillors of non-European origin

dynamic is prevalent of renovation and middle class immigration. The other neighbourhoods in difficulty are mainly social neighbourhoods. Table 1 shows the overrepresentation or underrepresentation of these neighbourhoods for the different political ideologies. A value of one indicates perfect proportional representation whilst a lower value signifies underrepresentation. This table shows, firstly, a global overrepresentation of neighbourhoods that are not in difficulty. Apart from the Social Democrats, all political ideologies are overrepresented within these neighbourhoods, and the same order prevails as previously shown for the averages; but the Extreme Right account for the extreme value here. The extent of overrepresentation of neighbourhoods that are not in difficulty clearly follows a left-right continuum. Conversely, the neighbourhoods in difficulty are globally underrepresented, and this is true for all types. The migrant neighbourhoods in significant difficulty are only overrepresented by the Social Democrats. This can be linked to the large proportion of municipal councillors of non-European origin within this political ideology. The neighbourhoods experiencing slight difficulty are overrepresented by the Christian Democrats and also by the Independents who, when they live in deprived neighbourhoods, are only present within this type. Neighbourhoods undergoing gentrification are overrepresented by the Social Democrats, and mainly by the Greens. The other deprived neighbourhoods – particularly social neighbourhoods – are only overrepresented by the Social Democrats.

	not in difficulty	migrant neighbourhoods in significant difficulty	neighbourhoods experiencing slight difficulty	neighbourhoods undergoing gentrification	other neighbourhoods in difficulty
Social Democrats	0.82	1.43	0.94	1.14	1.18
Greens	1.18	0.67	0.68	1.32	0.63
Christian Democrats	1.29	0.71	1.08	0.43	0.23
Liberals	1.50	0.44	0.63	0.48	0.30
FDF	1.69	0.40	0.51	0	0
Independents	1.64	0	1.19	0	0
Extreme Right	1.75	0	0.40	0.48	0
all parties	1.28	0.74	0.79	0.67	0.50
% of the population	50.4	18.5	14.6	12.1	3.9

Table 1. Overrepresentation or underrepresentation of neighbourhoods in difficulty

The overrepresentation of Greens in gentrifying neighbourhoods was already observed by de Borman et al. (2001) in the previous legislature, where they established the link with the Greens' strong focus on urban revitalisation. They compared the localisation of the Green municipal councillors with a typology of gentrification proposed by Van Criekingen (see Van Criekingen, 2003). Van Criekingen made a distinction between neighbourhoods undergoing gentrification in the narrow sense that started off in a deprived position but where a strong dynamic of renovation and so-

cial change have taken place, and on the other hand, neighbourhoods undergoing upgrading that have also experienced this dynamic, but which started off in a less deprived position. A distinction was made for the other neighbourhoods between neighbourhoods that were developed earlier which have a relatively large proportion of houses dating from before the First World War, and the more recently developed neighbourhoods.

Table 2 shows the overrepresentation or underrepresentation of these neighbourhoods in the present legislature for the different political ideologies. It indeed seems that the Greens, and to a lesser extent, the Social Democrats, have the strongest presence in the neighbourhoods undergoing gentrification in the narrow sense. This Green overrepresentation is even more apparent in the neighbourhoods undergoing upgrading, which are also slightly overrepresented by all parties combined. However, this global overrepresentation is strongest for recently developed neighbourhoods. The extent of this overrepresentation or underrepresentation for the different political ideologies provides an inverse image of the neighbourhoods undergoing gentrification in the narrow sense: with the highest values for Extreme Right, then the FDF, the Liberals, the Christian Democrats, the Social Democrats and finally, the Greens. Figure 7 shows the neighbourhoods where the Green municipal councillors live, together with the typology used. This clearly demonstrates that the Green municipal councillors have a preference for neighbourhoods undergoing gentrification and upgrading.

	gentrification	upgrading	early developed neighbourhoods	recently developed neighbourhoods
Social Democrats	1.14	0.84	1.18	0.75
Greens	1.47	1.89	0.86	0.68
Christian Democrats	0.58	0.92	1.04	1.08
Liberals	0.38	1.01	0.80	1.48
FDF	0.17	0.87	0.69	1.79
Independents	0	1.21	0.62	1.78
Extreme Right	0	0.82	0.48	2.21
all parties	0.70	1.04	0.92	1.19
% of the population	7.5	14.4	48.8	29.3

Table 2. Overrepresentation or underrepresentation of neighbourhoods according to the typology of gentrification.

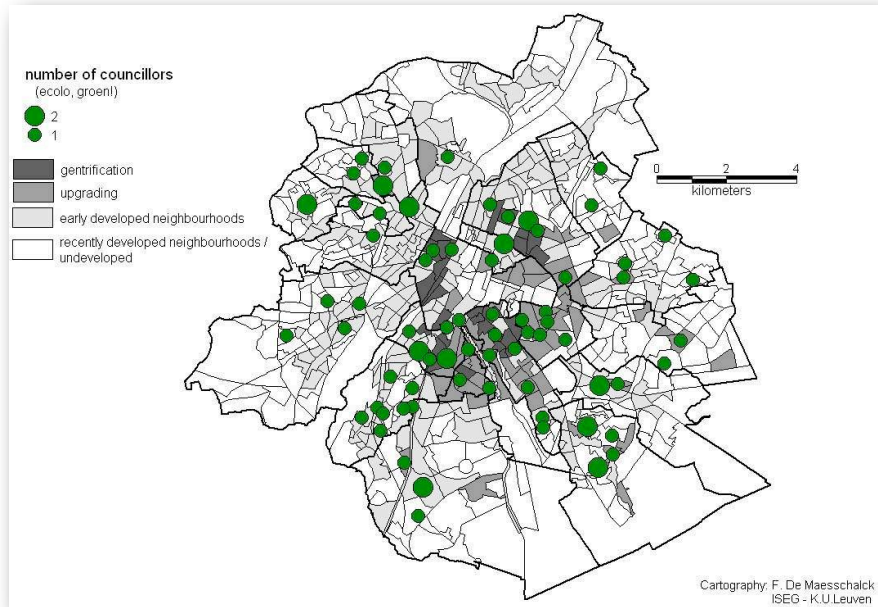


Figure 7. The neighbourhoods where the Green municipal councillors live.

### A comparison over time: limited differences with the previous legislature

In this section a more extensive comparison is made with data from de Borman et al. (2001) about the 653 municipal councillors from the 2000-2006 legislature. It should be noted here that this data set concerns the originally elected members, whilst the data from the present legislature comprises the municipal councillors who are actually in office. The first part of this section examines the evolution of the average income and the average value of the index of deprivation in the neighbourhoods where the municipal councillors live. The changing impact of the elected members of non-European origin is also considered. The second section focuses on the evolution of the representation of neighbourhoods in difficulty.

#### *A stable image*

Figure 8 shows the average income and the average index of deprivation of both legislatures in the neighbourhoods where the municipal councillors live, for the different political ideologies as well as for all parties together. The same conclusions largely count for the 2000-2006 legislature as for the present municipal councils. The averages for all parties combined are close to each other in both periods, and the order of the parties according to the level of prosperity is also largely the same. However, the location of Extreme Right is noticeably different. In the previous legislature, the Extreme Right municipal councillors lived on average in significantly less prosperous neighbourhoods, even remaining under the general average in terms of the index of deprivation. A clear shift is therefore visible within the Extreme Right ideology to more elite neighbourhoods.

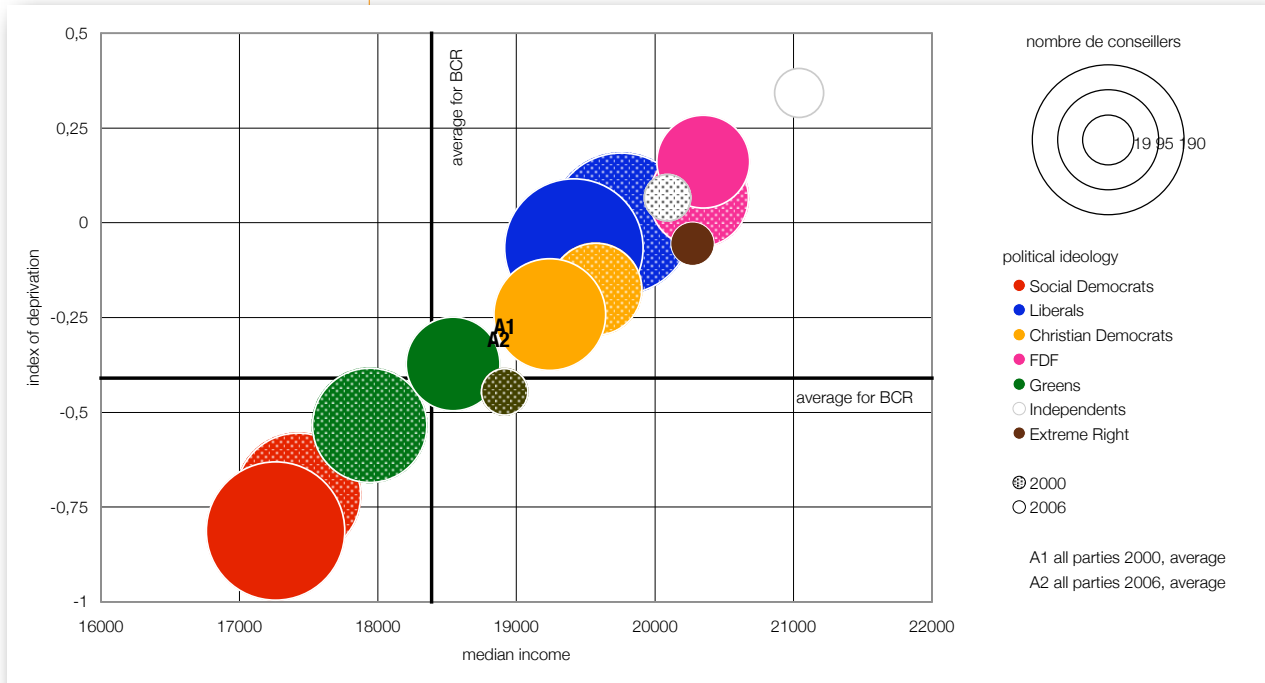


Figure 8. Average prosperity of the neighbourhoods where the municipal councillors live according to political ideology and legislature.

The shifts are smaller for the other political ideologies and to a large extent can be accounted for by the increase or decrease in the proportion of municipal councillors of non-European origin who usually live in poorer neighbourhoods with a larger de-

	percentage 2000	percentage 2006	evolution 2000-2006
Social Democrats	27.7	44.8	+ 17.2
Greens	9.0	22.8	+ 13.8
Christian Democrats	28.3	17.3	- 11.0
Liberals	6.7	11.3	+ 4.5
FDF	3.3	9.8	+ 6.5
Independents	4.8	4.3	-0,4
Extreme Right	0.0	0.0	/
all parties	14.2	22.0	+ 7.8

Table 3. Percentage of municipal councillors of non-European origin, according to political ideology and legislature

gree of deprivation. The increase in the average level of prosperity is relatively high for the Greens, who experienced the largest decrease in the proportion of municipal councillors of non-European origin (see Table 3). The FDF also saw an increase in the average level of prosperity and only experienced a limited increase in municipal councillors of non-European origin when compared with the other political ideologies. The higher increase in the other political ideologies goes together with a decrease in the average level of prosperity.

Figure 9 shows the separate average values for the municipal councillors of non-European origin and European origin during both legislatures for the different political ideologies as well as for all parties together. When only the municipal councillors of European origin are taken into consideration, it is seen that also in the previous legislature, only the Social Democrats remain under the general level of prosperity. This was also true for the municipal councillors of non-European origin, as is also now the case for all political ideologies. However, in contrast with the present legislature, the differences between the political ideologies within this group were rather arbitrary and the general level of prosperity in the neighbourhoods where this group live increased markedly. The struggle between the political parties (excluding Extreme Right) for the migrant votes was already very vigorous in the municipal elections of 2000. As a result, parties were in a number of cases not very selective in the recruitment of candidates of migrant origin to the dissatisfaction of several migrant organisations (Jacobs et al., 2003). During the 2006 elections, recruiting seemed to

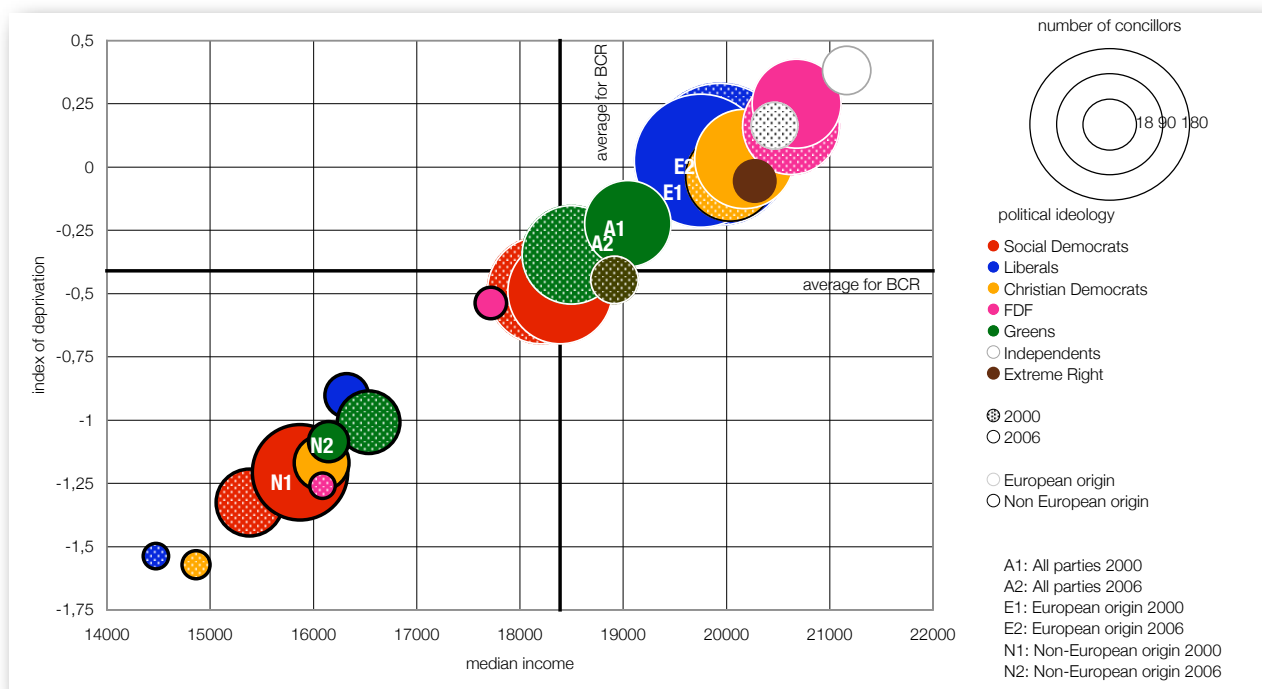


Figure 9 Average prosperity of the neighbourhoods where municipal councillors live according to political ideology, origin and legislature



take on a more selective nature, with only the Christian Democrats forming an exception here. The aforementioned increase in prosperity was also true for municipal councillors of European origin, but due to the increase in the total number of municipal councillors of non-European origin, the average level of prosperity decreased for all municipal councillors combined.

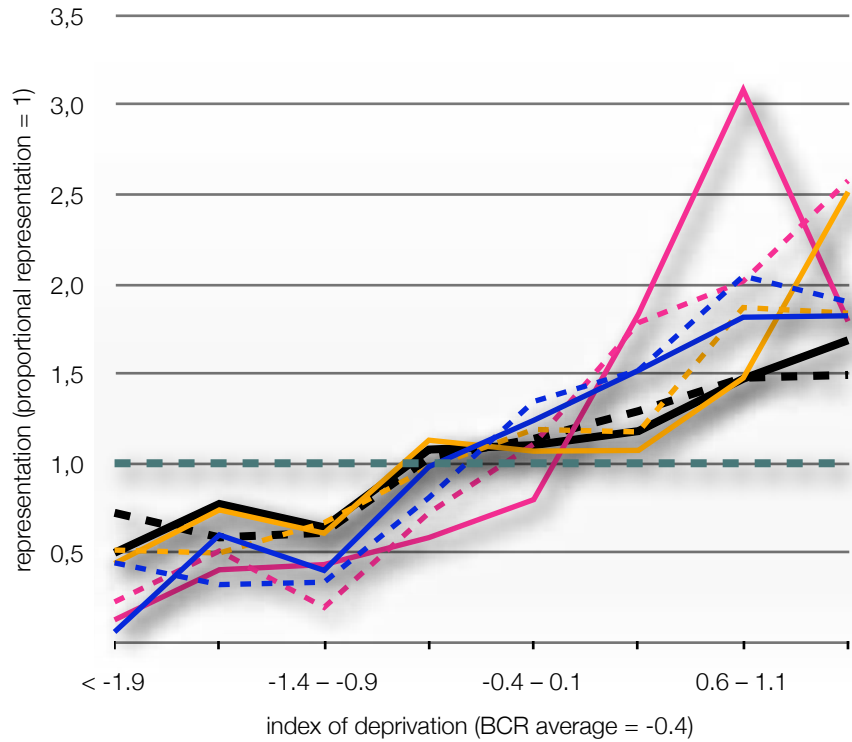
*A persistent underrepresentation of deprived neighbourhoods.*

The representation of the different neighbourhood types categorised according to the extent of deprivation is also found to run parallel in both legislatures for all political ideologies. This is shown in Figure 10, which reveals the extent of underrepresentation or overrepresentation of the different neighbourhood types in both periods. The political ideologies that follow the general pattern of an increase of representation along with an increase in prosperity are shown above (Christian Democrats, Liberals, FDF). The political ideologies that deviate from this are shown below (Social Democrats, Greens, Extreme Right). However, there are some striking evolutions, particularly in the latter group. Extreme Right had an overrepresentation of the moderately prosperous neighbourhoods in both legislatures, but was well represented during the previous legislature in the most deprived neighbourhoods. This representation has now completely disappeared, both for the French-speaking as well as the Dutch-speaking Extreme Right. This means that the typical discord of such populist parties (de Borman et al., 2001) has disappeared, making room for an elitist party, at least at the level of representation. The representation of the most deprived neighbourhoods in the current period is actually larger for the Social Democrats, but significantly smaller for the Greens who were still overrepresented in the previous legislature. This can once again be explained by the increase and respective decrease in the proportion of municipal councillors of non-European origin. This is shown in Figure 11, which is a repeat of Figure 10 without the inclusion of municipal councillors of non-European origin. This indeed shows that the overrepresentation of the most deprived neighbourhoods has disappeared. The parties' curves that follow the general pattern – the Christian Democrats, the Liberals and the FDF – have also become steeper, along with the curve for all parties combined.

The overrepresentation of the neighbourhoods that are not in difficulty – as delimited by Vandermotten et al. (2006) – remains unchanged. The relation between the proportion of municipal councillors and the proportion of residents in these neighbourhoods is still 1.28. However, there are various developments for the different political ideologies which can again – with the exception of Extreme Right – be linked to the evolution in the proportion of municipal councillors of non-European origin. This can be seen in Figure 12 which shows the extent of underrepresentation or overrepresentation in the neighbourhoods that are not in difficulty for both legislatures.

Figure 10. Overrepresentation or underrepresentation of the neighbourhoods according to extent of deprivation, political ideology and legislature.

- Proportional representation
- - - Liberals 2000
- Liberals 2006
- - - Christian Democrats 2000
- Christian Democrats 2006
- - - FDF 2000
- FDF 2006
- - - All parties 2000
- All parties 2006



- Proportional representation
- - - Social Democrats 2000
- Social Democrats 2006
- - - Greens 2000
- Greens 2006
- - - Extreme Right 2000
- Extreme Right 2006

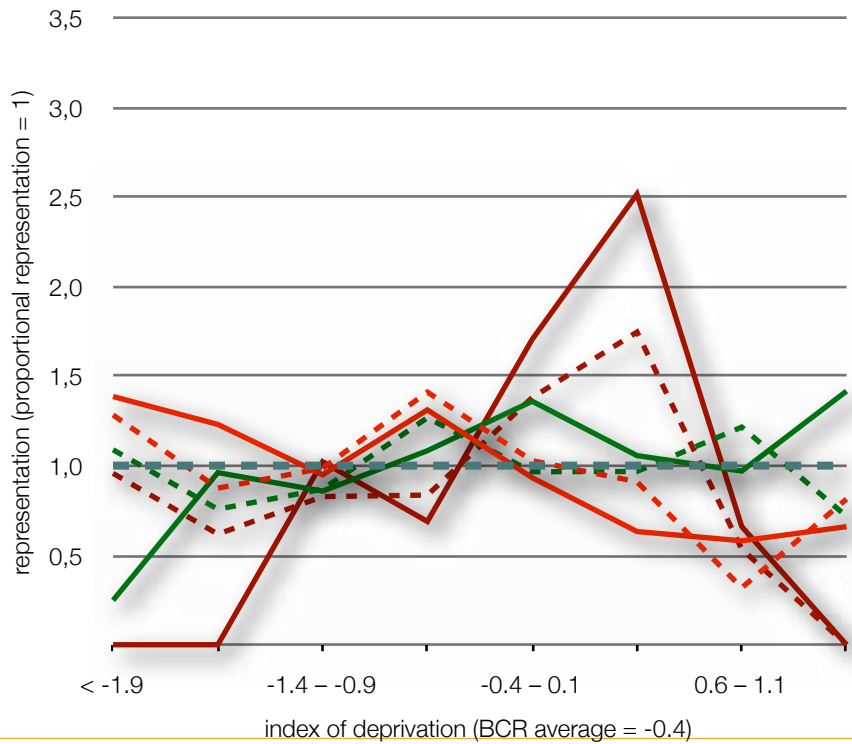
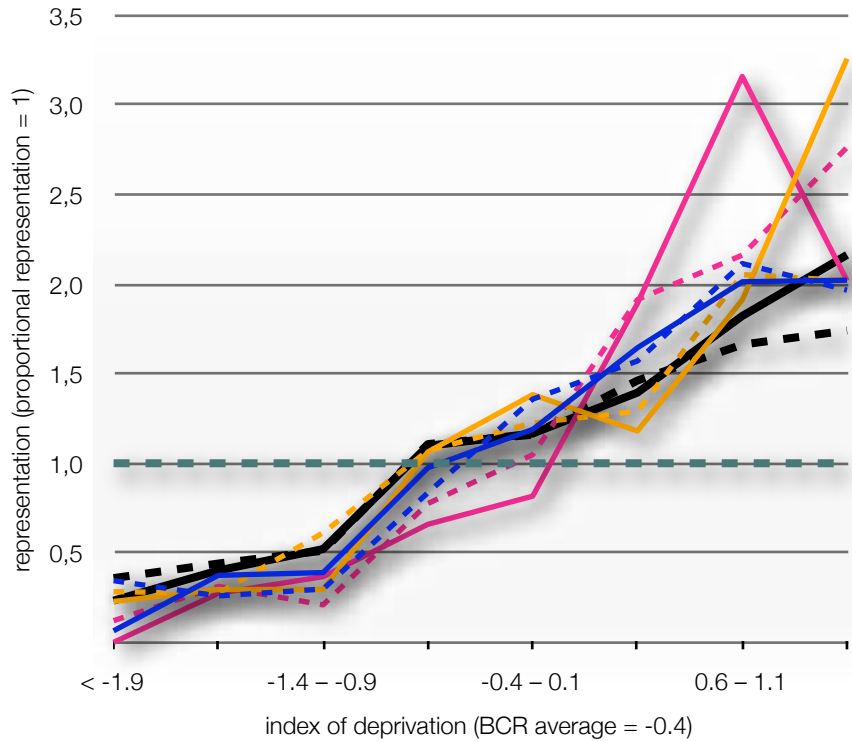
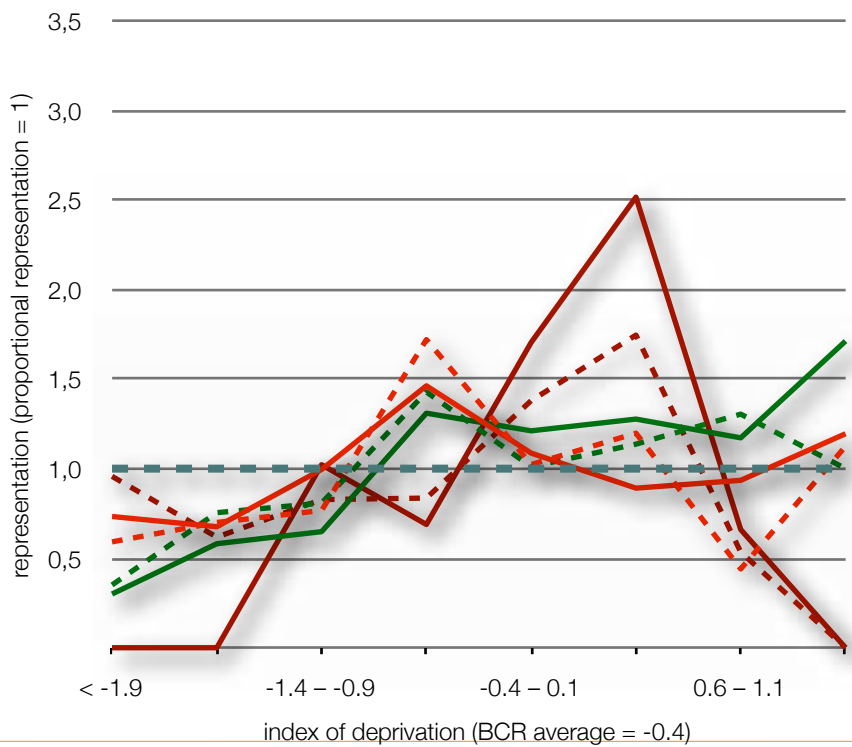


Figure 11. Overrepresentation or underrepresentation of the neighbourhoods according to extent of deprivation, political ideology and legislature without the municipal councillors of non-European origin.

- Proportional representation
- - - Liberals 2000
- Liberals 2006
- - - Christian Democrats 2000
- Christian Democrats 2006
- - - FDF 2000
- FDF 2006
- - - All parties 2000
- All parties 2006



- Proportional representation
- - - Social Democrats 2000
- Social Democrats 2006
- - - Greens 2000
- Greens 2006
- - - Extreme Right 2000
- Extreme Right 2006



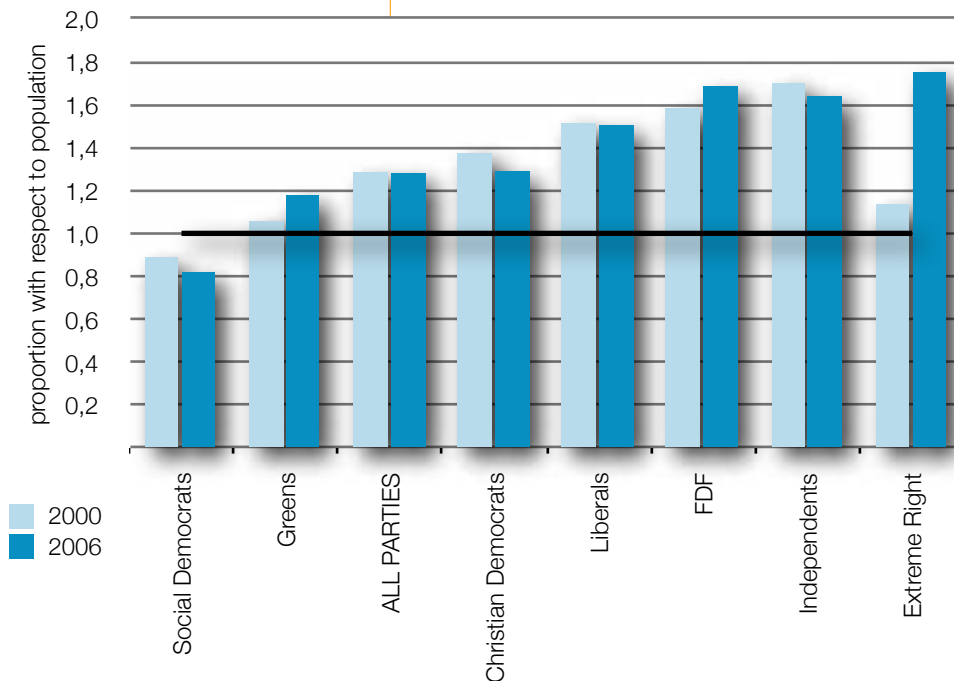


Figure 12. Overrepresentation or underrepresentation of neighbourhoods that are not in difficulty.

Despite the increase in the total number of municipal councillors of non-European origin, there is no improvement in the representation of neighbourhoods in difficulty. However, there is a different evolution within the different types of neighbourhood in difficulty with significantly better representation of migrant neighbourhoods in significant difficulty. This occurs to the disadvantage of the other types. The neighbourhoods experiencing slight difficulty are still the least underrepresented, but the neighbourhoods undergoing gentrification are – in contrast to the previous legislature – now represented less than the migrant neighbourhoods in significant difficulty. The other deprived neighbour-

hoods, particularly social neighbourhoods, have lost a third of their representation, but this involves a relatively limited group.

### A higher policy level, a more prosperous living environment

In this final section the neighbourhoods where the municipal councillors live are compared to where members of parliament for the Brussels Capital Region live. The members of this parliament are in most cases recruited from municipal councils or executives. 62% of the parliamentary members are still members of a municipal council or executive. This value is nevertheless lower than in the other regional parliaments. For the Walloon Parliament the figure is 80%, which is partly explained by the smaller constituencies used for the Walloon Parliament (Delwit et al., 2005b). However, also the Flemish Parliament (73%) and even the Federal Parliament (67%) score higher. This may be related to the smaller ratio between the number of municipalities and members of parliament in Brussels, and also to the existence of double mandates with other institutions, particularly the community commissions.

The neighbourhoods where the municipal councillors lived during 2000-2006 and during the present legislature is compared respectively to the neighbourhoods where the 75 members of parliament lived during the 1999-2004 legislature and

where the 89 members of parliament who were elected in 2004 live. The data concerning the members of parliament come from De Maesschalck (2005) and only relates to sitting members. The MR members of parliament were taken as one group. The comparison was made using the average income and the average index of deprivation. It was found that, on average, members of parliament live in more prosperous neighbourhoods than the municipal councillors. This is the case for both legislatures. There is therefore some sort of selection mechanism at work here. Whilst the majority of the members of parliament come from municipal councils, it is mainly the municipal councillors in the more prosperous neighbourhoods that end up in the parliament. Like it was the case for the municipal councils, a decline in the average level of prosperity for the members of parliament is also observable. This can also be accounted for by an increase in the number of parliamentary members of non-European origin. When only the elected members of European origin are taken into consideration, an increase in the level of prosperity is observable. The number of elected members of non-European origin increased from 5 in 1995 (6.7%) to 8 in 1999 (10.7%) to 17 in 2004 (19.1%).<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, there has been an observable decrease in the average level of prosperity in the neighbourhoods where this group live since 1995, which was not the case for the municipal councils. However this average is still much higher than that for the municipal councils. In 1995 the members of parliament of non-European origin even lived on average in neighbourhoods with a higher income and a limited level of deprivation than the average for the Brussels Capital Region. This seems to indicate that the selection of parliamentary candidates of migrant origin occurred very selectively in the past – in contrast to the municipal councils - whilst this now occurs somewhat more flexibly.

The level of prosperity in the neighbourhoods where the members of parliament live is also higher than that of the municipal councillors for each political ideology. Only the Greens are the exception to the rule in the present legislature.<sup>9</sup> Figure 13 shows the averages for the different political ideologies in 1999 and 2004.<sup>10</sup> The same order largely prevails as for the municipal councillors, but the Greens are actually positioned relatively lower, remaining under the general average in both periods. This is even more striking when only the elected members of European origin are taken into consideration (see Figure 14). The Social Democrats are then positioned well above the general average. In both 1999 and 2004, they had the largest group of parliamentary members of non-European origin, respectively 4 and 13 members of parliament, which accounted for 50% and 77% of the total. Finally, the evolution of the

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<sup>8</sup> This group was also identified using data from Pierre-Yves Lambert (<http://suffrage-universel.be>).

<sup>9</sup> Whilst each member of parliament represents the same number of inhabitants, this is not the case for each municipal councillor. Smaller municipalities have a larger number of municipal councillors per inhabitant. This effect can be eliminated through standardisation. The level of prosperity in the neighbourhoods where municipal councillors live is lower in the standardised data than in the non-standardised data. This is the case for both legislatures and for each political ideology, although the relations between legislatures and political ideologies remain the same. When the standardised data is taken into consideration, the level of prosperity in the neighbourhoods where Green municipal councillors live is actually lower than that of the Green members of parliament.

<sup>10</sup> The Independents and the Flemish Nationalists are not shown here as both groups only had one member of parliament in 1999. In 2004 this was zero and two respectively.

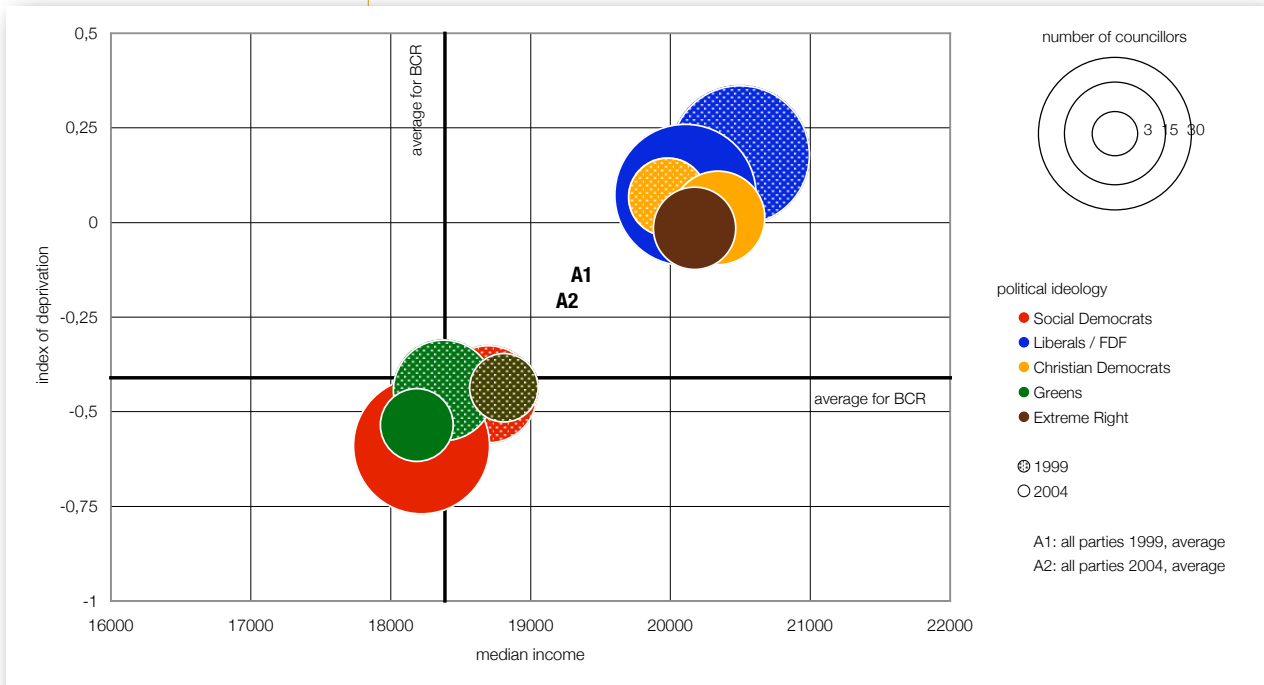


Figure 13. Average prosperity of neighbourhoods where members of parliament live, according to political ideology and legislature.

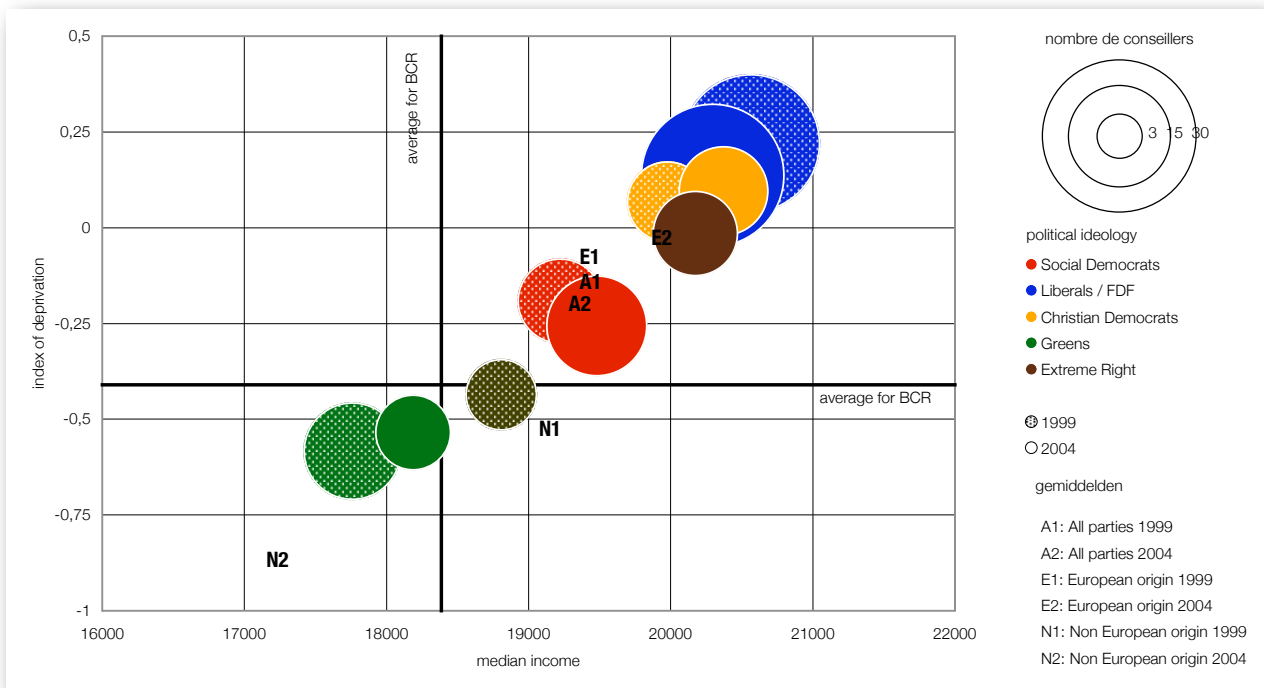


Figure 14. Average prosperity of neighbourhoods where MP's of European origin live, according to political ideology and legislature

Extreme Right members of parliament is striking, as they also underwent a distinct evolution between the two legislatures towards more prosperous neighbourhoods.

Although the average prosperity in the neighbourhoods where members of parliament live is higher than that for municipal councillors – with the exception of the Greens in the present legislature – we see thus similar differences between the political ideologies at a higher policy level. Even though the municipal boundaries no longer play a role in the selection of candidates, this similarity is also the case for spatial patterns (see Figure 15). The Greens have a preference for neighbourhoods undergoing Gentrification and upgrading, the Social Democrats have a relatively important representation in the more central neighbourhoods, often with a certain level of deprivation, and the majority of Liberals and the FDF live in a relatively prosperous environment, usually in the suburbs. This is also the case in the present legislature for Extreme Right.

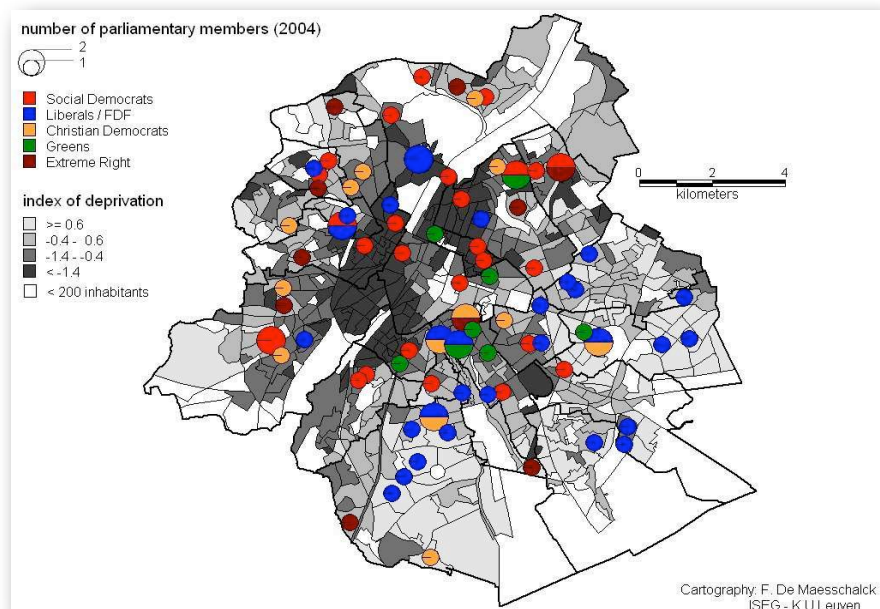


Figure 15. Where members of parliament for the Brussels Capital Region live in the present legislature.

## Conclusion

The more prosperous a neighbourhood is, the better it is represented within the municipal councils of the Brussels Capital Region. Neighbourhoods in difficulty therefore suffer double deprivation: not only do they accumulate a number of urban problems, but they are also underrepresented within the municipal policy-making bodies. This also means that the introduction of voting rights for foreign residents at municipal level has not led to representative representation of the neighbourhoods in difficulty. Worse still, these neighbourhoods are presently no better represented than in the previous legislature. However, there is an intrinsic difference. The neighbourhoods that accumulate the most urban problems, the migrant neighbourhoods in significant difficulty (Vandermotten et al., 2006), are less underrepresented than in the previous legislature. This is mainly a result of an increase in the number of municipal councillors of non-European origin, from fourteen to twenty two percent. These elected members live, in contrast to their colleagues of European origin, in poorer neighbourhoods with a higher degree of deprivation than average in the Brussels Capital Region. This increase has also caused the average level of prosperity in the neighbourhoods for all municipal councillors to fall slightly, despite an increase in this level of prosperity for elected members of both European as well as non-European origin.

The increase in representation along with the increase of a neighbourhood's prosperity is not the case for all parties and political ideologies. Whilst this pattern is very pronounced for the FDF, the Liberals and to a lesser extent the Christian Democrats, the Greens have a much flatter distribution across the different types of neighbourhoods, and the Social Democrats even follow an inverse pattern. The average level of prosperity for the different political ideologies also follows the aforementioned order. Extreme Right has a somewhat anomalous pattern, with a very high degree of overrepresentation in the moderately prosperous neighbourhoods. The patterns described are influenced by the strong presence or absence of municipal councillors of non-European origin within the different political ideologies. Without this group, which for the Social Democrats accounts for almost half of the elected members, the Social Democrats' inverse pattern makes way for an overrepresentation in neighbourhoods with a level of prosperity just under the average for Brussels. The other political ideologies see a stronger increase in representation along with an increased level of prosperity without this group. All of these findings are valid for both the present and the previous legislature, with the difference that the proportion of the municipal councillors of non-European origin has increased for all political ideologies - except for the Greens where this proportion was the highest. It is also striking that within the municipal councillors of non-European origin, approximately the same differences emerge between the political ideologies - on the basis of the level of prosperity for the neighbourhoods - than for all municipal councillors combined, albeit the level of prosperity is much lower. These differences were much more arbitrary in the previous legislature. Whilst the struggle between the political parties for the anti-racist and ethnic vote during the previous legislature sometimes led to arbitrariness in the selection of candidates, there now seems to be a more definite selection within this group according to ideology. However, this is not the case for the Christian Democrats. Extreme Right has traditionally not had any elected members of non-European origin. Still, in the previous legislature, this politi-



cal ideology had an important representation in the most deprived neighbourhoods, but this has now completely disappeared. The popular – elitist discord of this populist ideology has therefore made way for an elitist pattern.

A comparison of the municipal councillors with the parliamentary members of the Brussels Capital Region showed that the same findings are true, but the average level of prosperity in the neighbourhoods where the members of parliament live is significantly higher. Apart for the Greens in the present legislature, this is the case for all political ideologies. Perhaps more striking is the fact that despite the omission of municipal boundaries, the same living preferences prevail within the different political ideologies. Liberals and FDF members usually live in the more peripheral, prosperous neighbourhoods; Social Democrats often live in the more central, often deprived neighbourhoods. Greens have a preference for old neighbourhoods undergoing gentrification, whilst Extreme Right showed a strong preference for more recently developed neighbourhoods. The Christian Democrats show a more mixed picture. Thus, there is a clear link between the ideological profile of the parties and the neighbourhoods where their municipal councillors and members of parliament live, following a left-right continuum. This link is strengthened further by the large proportion of municipal councillors of non-European origin in the left parties – in which the difference between the neighbourhoods where the municipal councillors of non-European origin live and the others is often smaller than for the other parties. These differences between the parties partly reflect the attraction of the different ideologies within the different geographic zones. The study by Jacobs (2006) showed that not only the neighbourhoods where the parliamentary members live, but also those of the candidates for the Brussels parliament follow a left-right contrast. However, it also provides an insight into the positions that the parties may adopt on spatially-sensitive topics, as Jacobs already suggested in the aforementioned study, and indicating it as an area for further research. De Maesschalck's (2007) research does indeed suggest that, at least for the Flemish parties, there is a clear similarity between the neighbourhoods where parliamentary members belonging to a specific political ideology live and the dominant discourse that they use. Peripheral, suburban patterns of residence go hand in hand with a negative approach to urbanism that is linked to foreigners and criminality in a negative discourse. According to this discourse, these cities must be made safe and accessible by car for the benefit of the suburban user. On the other hand, very central, urban patterns of residence go together with a greater focus on the current inhabitants of the cities, for public transport – which is to the benefit of concentrated city dwellers, and more generally with a more positive approach to urbanism. This link is also present here, even at the lowest administrative level of the municipality.

The limited research into the representation at the level of neighbourhood has so far mainly focused on Brussels. De Maesschalck (2005) did find similar patterns among the municipal councillors of other large cities, but more systematic research would be able to show whether and to what extent the Brussels situation is representative. The observed underrepresentation of the poorest neighbourhoods can have important consequences in specific policy matters in the fields of housing, education, employment, culture, etc. The vision of the future for these neighbourhoods is probably different for the current residents than for those who presently formulate policy. The interests of the (by policy makers) intended inhabitants of these neigh-

bourhoods and/or inhabitants of other neighbourhoods could well outweigh the current residents' interests.

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