

---

## Original Article

# Ethnic voting in Brussels: Voting patterns among ethnic minorities in Brussels (Belgium) during the 2006 local elections

Celine Teney<sup>a,\*</sup>, Dirk Jacobs<sup>a</sup>, Andrea Rea<sup>a</sup> and Pascal Delwit<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Institut de Sociologie – METICES – ULB, CP 124, 44 Avenue Jeanne, 1050 Bruxelles, Belgium.  
E-mail: celine.teney@ulb.ac.be

<sup>b</sup>CEVIPOL, Department of Political Sciences, ULB.

\*Corresponding author.

**Abstract** In recent years immigrant origin ethnic minorities have become a non-negligible electoral group in Belgian cities. Numerous studies have been undertaken in Belgium on the link between immigrant associational life and political participation and on the profiles of politicians of immigrant origin, but not yet on party choice and voting patterns among ethnic minority groups. In this article, we present the first analysis of voting patterns of ethnic minority groups in Belgium, making use of exit poll data on the local elections for three municipalities of the Brussels Capital Region. We investigate whether non-EU immigrant origin voters have a particular party preference which cannot be explained by other background variables such as educational level or socio-economic position. We also look into the issue of preferential voting for candidates of immigrant origin. According to the theory on political opportunity structures, one would expect a lesser importance of ethnic voting in the Belgian context (in which ethnic mobilisation is discursively discouraged). Ethnic voting, however, turns out to be quite important in the Brussels' context.

*Acta Politica* (2010) **45**, 273–297. doi:10.1057/ap.2009.25

**Keywords:** electoral participation; ethnic minorities; Brussels; Belgium

---

## Introduction

Given the important numbers of non-EU foreigners having acquired Belgian state citizenship over the last two decades, combined with demographic developments in the major cities, ethnic minorities have become a non-negligible electoral group. This is especially the case in Brussels, the capital region of Belgium and of the European Union (EU). In the Brussels Capital

Region, 26 per cent of the population is non-Belgian. According to our estimates,<sup>1</sup> about 42 per cent of the population (of 1.1 million inhabitants) is of foreign descent. Interestingly, newcomers of EU origin (who make up half of the foreign population in Brussels) are almost invisible in local politics, whereas immigrants of non-EU origin have recently acquired considerable political clout. Being the Belgian capital, Brussels is institutionally a bilingual region (with guaranteed power sharing by the Francophone and the Flemish community), but French is indisputably the *lingua franca* and the Francophone population is clearly in the majority.

Numerous studies have been undertaken during the last couple of years in Belgium on the link between immigrant associational life and political participation (Jacobs *et al*, 2004; Bousetta *et al*, 2005) and on the profiles of politicians of immigrant origin (Jacobs *et al*, 2006), but not yet on party choice and voting patterns among ethnic minority groups. In this article, we will present the first analysis of voting patterns of ethnic minority groups in Belgium, making use of exit poll data on the local elections for three municipalities of the Brussels Capital Region. We will investigate whether non-EU immigrant origin voters have a particular voting pattern. We will also look into the issue of ethnic voting. We will thus for the first time be able to evaluate whether the same patterns can be found in Belgium as those which were observed in neighbouring country, the Netherlands. This has often been assumed based on scant comparisons, but can now for the first time be empirically assessed. The comparison with the Netherlands is interesting, as it has a comparable immigration history, a similar political structure, a comparable electoral system and a strong empirical tradition with regard to the study of electoral participation of immigrants (Tillie, 2000; Heelsum and Tillie, 2006).

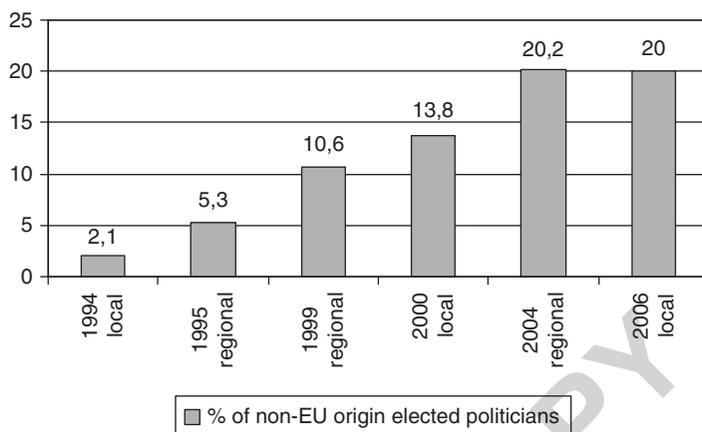
The broader relevance of the outcome of this Belgian case study for political science theory is to be situated at the intersection of two debates: the debate on determinants of electoral participation of immigrants and the debate on the impact of political opportunity structures on immigrant mobilisation. First of all, it is a contribution to the debate on voting behaviour of immigrant populations. We know that socio-economic status (SES) is a primary determinant of individual political participation (Verba *et al*, 1995) and it is readily assumed that this equally applies to ethnic minority group members. Leighley (2001), however, stressed that contextual characteristics such as candidate and group mobilisation are equally important in understanding ethnic minority political participation. Indeed, individuals of lesser social status rely on collective mobilisation more heavily than individuals of greater social status do. Mobilisation by immigrants around their ethnicity as a group characteristic is therefore to be expected as a cost-reducing strategy (Verba *et al*, 1978).



It is here that the academic debate on the impact of political opportunity structures on immigrant mobilisation kicks in. Koopmans *et al* (2005) have shown that political opportunity structures – including discursive opportunity structures stemming from citizenship models and immigration regimes – shape claims of immigrants, their public representations and even their mobilisation strategies. Given the dominance of the French-inspired republican-assimilationist model in Brussels (Bousetta *et al*, 2005), in which political mobilisation along ethnic lines is largely criticised as leading to segregation and being a threat for social cohesion, ethnic electoral mobilisation is not actively stimulated but at best condoned. The situation is quite different in urban areas of the neighbouring country the Netherlands, where immigrant political mobilisation has – at least until the end of the 1990s – been actively applauded and stimulated. In line with the literature on discursive political opportunity structures, one can expect that ethnic voting and ethnic mobilisation, over and beyond class mobilisation, will be of less importance in the Brussels case than in the Dutch case.

### **The Advent of Immigrant Origin Politicians**

As a result of their demographic weight, the increased attention for the immigrant origin electorate and the preferential voting system in Belgian elections, immigrant politicians of non-EU origin have been steadily becoming more and more successful. Since the mid-1990s, the immigrant origin population (coming from outside the current EU), rapidly acquiring Belgian state citizenship (and thus voting rights on all levels), has been given increasing attention by political parties in Brussels. In the neighbourhoods with high concentrations of immigrants – which tend to largely overlap with the disfavoured areas of the city – there have been very lively and intense campaigns of all parties. Indeed, since a couple of years it is really only in the immigrant neighbourhoods of Brussels that one cannot help noticing when elections are being held. It is worth noting that a lot of shops in the immigrant neighbourhoods have had several posters of candidates of foreign origin from different political parties hanging in the same window. Although collections of posters of candidates of the same ethnic background were still predominant, there were also several shops and bars which had posters of candidates from different ethnic backgrounds (and different parties) in their windows. Indeed, street-level campaigning in immigrant neighbourhoods seemed to be both relying on ethnic and anti-racist identities. Interestingly, the process of cooptation of immigrant origin politicians and the targeting of immigrant voters took place in a discursive context which still continued to condemn *communautarism*<sup>2</sup> and depicted ethnic voting as phenomena to be avoided (Bousetta *et al*, 2005).



**Figure 1:** Percentage of non-EU origin elected politicians in the local and regional elections of the Brussels Capital Region.

Figure 1 depicts the steady increase of the percentage of elected politicians of foreign non-EU origin in the local and regional assemblies in the Brussels Capital Region over the last decade and a half. We will detail in the remainder of this paragraph what happened in each of these elections.

Remarkably, the success of immigrant origin politicians is not directly linked to enfranchisement of non-nationals on the local level. In October 2000, some of the foreign residents – people not holding Belgian state citizenship – were for the first time able to vote and stand as a candidate in Belgian municipal elections (after having registered as voters). Indeed, owing to the implementation of the Maastricht Treaty, non-Belgian EU citizens were able to register as voters and participate in the local elections. Non-EU residents, however, were not allowed to vote or stand as a candidate. EU citizens hardly made use of their newly granted rights to local participation. Of the 120 246 potential voters, only 11 520 (or 9.6 per cent) bothered to register as voters. While in theory they could have had an electoral impact of 18.1 per cent in the municipalities of the Brussels Capital Region if they had all registered, EU citizens in the end only stood for 2 per cent of the total electorate. Only a few EU citizens got elected in the local councils.

Nevertheless, the October 2000 elections did constitute a landmark for the political participation of immigrant origin citizens, at least in the Brussels Capital Region. There was a remarkable increase of elected Belgian politicians of non-EU – mainly Moroccan – origin (Jacobs *et al*, 2002). In the local elections of 1994, on a total of 650 elected councillors still a relatively small



number of 14 were of non-EU origin (or 2.1 per cent). In the 2000 local elections, a striking number of 90 out of the 653 elected councillors were of non-EU immigrant, mainly Maghrebian, origin (Jacobs *et al.*, 2002). This amounts to a representation rate of 13.8 per cent. These immigrant origin politicians most probably got elected because of the support of Belgian voters of immigrant origin,<sup>3</sup> who's numbers have been steadily rising since the mid-1980s.

The results of the regional elections in Brussels in the second half of the 1990s already announced the growing importance of immigrant origin politicians on local level. Regional elections are now held every 5 years, but used to coincide with the federal elections, which are organised every 4 years. In the regional elections of 1995, on a total of 75 MPs, four candidates of foreign origin (three Moroccan and one Tunisian) were elected into Parliament (or 5.3 per cent). After the 1999 regional elections, no less than eight members of the Brussels' parliament would be of foreign origin (or 10.6 per cent). All were actually Belgian–Maghrebians (seven of Moroccan and one of Tunisian origin) origin.

In the 2004 regional elections, Belgians of non-EU immigrant background once again would play a prominent role in electoral campaigns and had quite some electoral success. Of the 72 Francophone members of the Brussels regional parliament, 17 are of non-EU origin. Among them 12 are of Moroccan origin, two of Turkish origin, one of Tunisian origin, one of Congolese origin and one of Guinean origin. Of the 17 Flemish members of the Brussels regional parliament, one is of Moroccan origin. In total, 20.2 per cent of the 89 MPs are of non-EU immigrant origin.

In addition, the growing success of politicians of immigrant origin was translated into executive power. On the local level, following the 2000 local elections, 12 politicians of immigrant (Moroccan, Turkish and Congolese) origin have become aldermen. In 2004, a Francophone politician of Turkish origin (Mr Emir Kir) was appointed as Secretary of State in the Brussels government. At the same time, a lady from Brussels of Moroccan origin (Mrs Fadila Laanan) was appointed as Minister of French Culture, Youth and Public Broadcasting in the government of the French Community of Belgium, while a Brussels politician of Congolese origin was appointed as secretary of state for Family Affairs at the federal level (Mrs Gisèle Mandaila).<sup>4</sup>

In the October 2006 municipal elections, the remarkable success of immigrant – mainly Moroccan – origin politicians was confirmed in Brussels. Of the 663 local councillors, 138 (20 per cent) were of foreign origin and most of them were of Moroccan descent, followed by politicians of Turkish and of Congolese origin. One novelty of the 2006 elections was that non-Belgians of non-EU origin could for the first time cast their vote (although they could not

stand as a candidate). We can, however, assume that the enfranchisement of non-Belgians in the 2006 elections is not the main explanatory factor for this ongoing success of immigrant origin politicians. Of the 42 298 potential voters among the so-called ‘third country nationals’ (foreigners who are not EU citizens), only 6622 bothered to register as voters, thus standing for only 1.12 per cent of the total electorate. We can therefore readily assume that the success of Belgian politicians of foreign origin is still predominantly related to the fact that Belgian voters of foreign origin – but probably also Belgian voters not having a link to the history of immigration – have cast a preferential vote for immigrant origin candidates.

Let us finally note that in October 2006, EU citizens could make use of their right to vote and to stand as a candidate for the second time. Once again their participation rate was rather low. Of the 136 482 potential voters among the non-Belgian EU citizens only 18 682 (or 13.7 per cent) registered as voters. While they could, in theory, have a potential impact of 18.31 per cent in the electorate if they would all register, this boils down to a real impact by EU citizens of 3.16 per cent. Even though 3 per cent is still not negligible, very few EU citizens not holding Belgian citizenship got elected and there were equally hardly any Belgians with foreign EU origin who participated and scored well. In other words, EU citizens are politically invisible on the local level in the European capital. Apparently the overall majority could not care less that their European citizenship entitles them to participate in the Belgian local elections.

### **Ethnic Minorities as a New Electoral Force?**

It has been documented that ethnic minority voters in the Netherlands have been able to substantially influence the outcome in major cities during the 2006 local elections (Heelsum and Tillie, 2006). In Rotterdam, for instance, they brought the social-democratic party back into power, thus indirectly ousting the populist and moderately anti-immigrant party *Leefbaar Rotterdam*, founded by the late Pim Fortuyn. Interestingly, the overwhelming support by ethnic minority voters for one party in 2006 reversed an earlier trend in Dutch cities of increasingly diversified voting behaviour among ethnic minority groups (Tillie, 2000). Most probably this has to be understood in the context of a changed Dutch political climate and public opinion which has become far less tolerant for ethnic minority groups (Vasta, 2007). Immigrants withdrew their support for centre and right wing mainstream parties flirting with xenophobic discourses and tough policy proposals, realigning to the social-democratic party, which was apparently seen as a safeguard for ethnic minority interests.



During debates on local enfranchisement of non-nationals in Belgium, one recurring topic was the question what political parties would gain the most by granting voting rights to foreigners. It was widely assumed that left-wing parties, and mainly the socialist and ecologist parties, would profit the most. Given the increasing demographic – and hence electoral – importance of Belgians of foreign origin in the major cities, almost all parties had, nevertheless, already started investing in attracting candidates of immigrant background to their lists, even long before third country nationals were enfranchised. They apparently all – at least on Francophone side – made the assessment they could gain from the enlargement of the electorate owing to immigrant origin votes. When examining the candidate profiles during the 2004 regional elections and 2006 local elections in Brussels, one can even see a pattern arising that political parties try to consolidate a particular ethnic electoral niche (Jacobs *et al*, 2006). While the socialist party clearly has the most diversity on its lists, thus outperforming the ecologist party, which was the first to put immigrant origin politicians prominently in eligible positions; the Christian-democratic party is trying to catch up and seems to be increasingly focusing on the sub-Saharan African community. The (Francophone) right-liberal party has invested less in attracting immigrant origin candidates on its list, but has not remained totally absent in the competition for immigrant voters either. Undoubtedly, this competition is one of the explanatory factors for the remarkable success – in terms of descriptive representation – of ethnic minority politicians in Brussels. We would like to remind the reader that this inclusion of immigrant origin politicians took place in a discursive context in which political mobilisation on an ethnic ticket was – fairly hypocritically – being presented by all political parties as something undesirable. Ethnic minority voters were supposedly just your ordinary voters, as there was nothing particular about ethnic minority candidates either.

In the remainder of this article, we want to focus on the voting behaviour of non-EU immigrant origin voters in three municipalities in Brussels during the October 2006 local elections. We want to assess whether ethnic minorities vote for a particular party, but more importantly, want to verify to what extent ethnic origin as such is an explanatory variable for voting behaviour. Indeed, immigrant origin voters might indeed very well be ‘just your ordinary voter’. Perhaps ethnic origin or migration history has no particular additional explanatory importance once we take into account structural socio-demographic factors for party choice such as gender, education and socio-economic position. Furthermore, we want to assess to what extent the so-called ‘ethnic voting’ takes place, by which we mean preferential voting for immigrant candidates of the same ethnic origin. It is largely assumed that the success of immigrant origin politicians is because of the ethnic voting by immigrant origin

citizens. Perhaps this is a misconception. Immigrant origin citizens can just as well vote for ethnic majority candidates, as ethnic majority citizens can vote for ethnic minority candidates. Indeed, in a first study of this kind for Belgium, Swyngedouw and Jacobs (2006) have shown that a considerable proportion of left-wing post-materialist voters of the ethnic majority group in Flanders deliberately cast a vote for an immigrant candidate. Furthermore, given the unfavourable discursive climate with regard to ethnic political mobilisation, immigrants perhaps might want to refrain from having a particular political strategy linked to their ethnic identity, as one might expect in the line of reasoning put forward by the literature on political opportunity structures (Koopmans *et al*, 2005). In order to answer these questions, we will make use of exit poll data gathered by CEVIPOL-ULB during the 2006 elections in three municipalities in Brussels.

### **The CEVIPOL Exit Polls During the 2006 Local Elections**

On 8 October 2006, local election day in Belgium, the *Centre d'étude de la vie politique* (CEVIPOL) of the *Université Libre de Bruxelles* (ULB) organised exit polls in three municipalities of the Brussels Capital Region: Forest, Schaerbeek and Molenbeek. During the entire day, voters were polled on a random basis in several voting booths after having cast their vote. In a short questionnaire, the CEVIPOL team asked voters about their voting behaviour, a limited number of socio-demographic questions and a small set of questions on political topics. In total 533 voters participated in Forest, 427 voters were polled in Molenbeek and 592 voters participated in Schaerbeek. The results of the exit polls corresponded fairly well with the official end result of suffrage (as can be seen in Tables A–C in the Appendix), so we can be confident that our samples were more or less representative for the electorate in the three municipalities. There is, nevertheless, a bias in that voters for extreme right-wing parties are underrepresented, whereas ecologist voters are overrepresented. Voters for (small) Flemish parties also tend to be underrepresented. It is impossible to assess to what extent our samples correspond to the actual ethnic composition of the three municipalities as there is no census or other official population data on ethnicity publicly available in Belgium (see Jacobs and Rea, 2009). However, the characteristics of our samples correspond to what we might expect based on local knowledge.

Schaerbeek is a municipality with a large visible Turkish and Moroccan community, whereas Molenbeek is a municipality with a large visible Moroccan community. Forest has a more mixed ethnic composition (although with an important Moroccan presence) and a larger Belgian population without immigrant background. Taken together these three municipalities are



representative for the northern and western part of the Brussels Capital Region (often called ‘the lower town’ as it is mainly situated down hill) in which mainly working class and middle class neighbourhoods are to be found and where most non-EU origin immigrants live. We did not organise an exit poll in the southern and eastern part of the Brussels Capital Region (often called ‘the upper town’ as it is mainly situated up hill) in which mainly upper class neighborhoods are to be found and non-EU origin immigrants are under-represented. We cannot claim that our three municipalities are representative for the entire Brussels Capital Region but we can fairly well claim that they give a good assessment of the electoral patterns in the ‘lower’ part of the city-region. For further information on the socio-geographic characteristics of the Brussels Capital Region we advise interested readers to consult the body of English contributions to *Brussels Studies*, the peer-reviewed e-journal for academic research on Brussels.<sup>5</sup>

We cannot pool the data together for the three municipalities in an analysis of party choice, as the main Francophone political parties did not participate independently, nor in the same combinations, to the three local elections. In Forest, MR (the right-liberals) and CDH (the Christian-democrats) had a joint list under the wing of the incumbent mayor, while they participated separately in Schaerbeek. Moreover, in Molenbeek CDH was on a joint list headed by the incumbent mayor of the PS (the socialists).

In our analysis, we do, however, focus our attention to parties linked to one of the four main political tendencies in the Francophone political landscape: the ecologists, the socialists, the right-liberals and the Christian-democrats. Often (but not always), politicians of ‘sister’ Flemish parties stood as candidates on the list of their Francophone counterpart. All other – often small – parties will be pooled together for each municipality once we try to explain patterns in voting behaviour. The category ‘other’ corresponds to those persons who voted for another party than those listed above, or who voted void. Given the mixed character of this category (combining both small Flemish parties and small Francophone parties of all sides of the political spectrum) no particular meaning can be attributed to its parameters.

In the exit poll questionnaire, we asked information on gender, age, the party for which one had voted (in these 2006 local elections), the party for which one had voted in the 2004 regional elections, socio-professional status, educational level, religious beliefs, citizenship and citizenship of parents. We equally invited respondents to position themselves on a left-right scale, to assess their expectations about the future, to tell us whether they had cast a preferential vote for a woman or a person of foreign origin and to answer six attitudinal questions. We will, however, not use the attitudinal variables because they could not be appropriately scaled.

## Party Choice by Ethnic Minorities in Brussels

In each of the municipalities, over 90 per cent of the polled individuals have Belgian citizenship (which corresponds to their share in the overall electorate). Given the small absolute numbers of non-Belgians who were polled, we refrain from discussing in detail the party preferences of non-Belgian voters, as compared to the preferences of Belgians. We can simply note there is no statistically significant relationship between citizenship type (EU, non-EU or Belgian) and party preference. We cannot infer, however, that there are no differences at population level. We would need a larger *N* or a stratified sample in which non-Belgians are overrepresented to verify this. This study can therefore not inform us on the voting behaviour of non-nationals during the local elections in Belgium. We have stated earlier that, given the low registration rates, foreigners have only had a very minor impact on the overall electoral results.

We can, however, look into the voting behaviour of people of foreign origin (but often holding Belgian citizenship), as their numbers are sufficiently large in our samples. This fact itself already attests to the importance of ethnic diversity in the electorate in the three municipalities in Brussels under study. We took citizenship of the mother (at her time of birth) as a proxy for foreign origin of the voters. Using this indicator, we can identify both the so-called first generation as the second generation of immigrants in our sample. There is a large overlap between the citizenship of the mother and citizenship of the father<sup>6</sup> and we therefore opted to limit our attention to the citizenship of the mother.

In the Schaerbeek sample, 56.2 per cent of the voters had a Belgian mother, 12.6 per cent had a Moroccan mother (74 cases) and 10.7 per cent had a Turkish mother (63 cases). In the Forest sample, 62.6 per cent of the voters had a Belgian mother, 14.7 per cent had a Moroccan mother (78 cases), 3.4 per cent had a French mother (18 cases) and 3 per cent had a Congolese mother (16 cases). In the Molenbeek sample, 51.8 per cent had a Belgian mother, 21.9 per cent had a Moroccan mother (93 cases) and 5.4 per cent had a Congolese mother (23 cases). In the three municipalities, other origins never passed the 3 per cent mark among the electorate. In what follows, we opt to only look at the results for specific groups which have at least 30 cases, and pool the results together for the rest in two generic categories (EU origin and non-EU origin).

Tables 1–3 show the party preferences for voters of Belgian and non-Belgian origin, focussing on the major political parties. We collapse the results for smaller parties into a generic rest category together with void votes. Percentages are calculated for the columns and thus represent the proportion of every ethnic group voting for a particular party.

**Table 1:** Party preferences according to origin (nationality at birth of mother) in Schaerbeek

	<i>Belgian</i> ( <i>N</i> = 327) (%)	<i>EU</i> ( <i>N</i> = 72) (%)	<i>Moroccan</i> ( <i>N</i> = 73) (%)	<i>Turkish</i> ( <i>N</i> = 61) (%)	<i>Other non-EU</i> ( <i>N</i> = 48) (%)
PS	11.6	15.3	38.4	36.1	29.2
Ecolo	25.1	30.6	5.5	3.3	14.6
CDH	8	15.3	17.8	9.8	14.6
Liste du bourgmestre (MR)	46.2	34.7	35.6	47.5	31.2
Other parties or void	9.2	4.2	2.7	3.3	10.4
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Chi-square: 79 461; df = 16;  $p < 0.001$ ; Cramer's V: 0.185 ( $N = 581$  valid cases).

**Table 2:** Party preferences according to origin (nationality at birth of mother) in Forest

	<i>Belgian</i> ( <i>N</i> = 324) (%)	<i>EU</i> ( <i>N</i> = 87) (%)	<i>Moroccan</i> ( <i>N</i> = 78) (%)	<i>Other non-EU</i> ( <i>N</i> = 32) (%)
PS	25	26.4	42.3	43.8
Ecolo	28.7	25.3	6.4	15.6
Liste du bourgmestre (MR-CDH)	36.4	39.1	33.3	31.2
Other parties or void	9.9	9.2	17.9	9.4
Total	100	100	100	100

Chi-square: 30 376; df = 12;  $p < 0.001$ ; Cramer's V: 0.139 ( $N = 522$  valid cases).

**Table 3:** Party preferences according to origin (nationality at birth of mother) in Molenbeek

	<i>Belgian</i> ( <i>N</i> = 220) (%)	<i>EU</i> ( <i>N</i> = 65) (%)	<i>Moroccan</i> ( <i>N</i> = 93) (%)	<i>Other non-EU</i> ( <i>N</i> = 47) (%)
MR	45.9	36.9	8.6	10.6
Ecolo	11.4	9.2	7.5	12.8
Liste du bourgmestre (PS-CDH)	22.7	38.5	75.3	59.6
Other parties or void	20	15.4	8.6	17
Total	100	100	100	100

Chi-square: 91 295; df = 9;  $p < 0.001$ ; Cramer's V: 0.268 ( $N = 425$  valid cases).

We can see in Table 1 for Schaerbeek that among Belgian voters without immigrant background the *Liste du bourgmestre* (the right-liberal party MR) was most popular, followed by the ecologist party. The socialist party (PS)

scores rather weak in this group, as do the Christian-democrats (CDH). The right-liberal party scores far less among the voters of EU origin, but still achieves the best score. The Christian-democrats, ecologists and socialist score better among EU origin voters than among Belgian origin voters. Let us note that 65 per cent of the EU origin voters are Belgian nationals, 35 per cent are foreign EU citizens. Strikingly, the socialist is the leading party among the voters of Moroccan origin (of whom 92 per cent hold Belgian citizenship). The right-liberals come second and the Christian-democrats third (with almost 18 per cent of the votes) but the ecologists have a rather low score among this group. The socialists equally score well in the group of Turkish origin (of whom 84 per cent holds Belgian citizenship), but the right-liberals score even better. The ecologists score poorly, whereas the Christian-democrats hold their ground. Both parties score better among voters of other non-EU origins (80 per cent is a Belgian citizen), but in that group the MR is still the largest party, closely followed by the socialists.

The overall conclusion for Schaerbeek is that ethnic majority and ethnic minority groups have different voting patterns but they all vote in a very diversified way. Ethnic minority groups tend to support the socialist party far more than the ethnic majority group does. The ecologist party has a hard time appealing to Moroccan and Turkish voters. Ecolo scores best among ethnic majority voters and voters of EU origin. The list of the mayor, linked to the right-liberal party, scores well in all ethnic groups but most of all among Belgians without a migration history and among Turks. Clearly, in Schaerbeek voters of immigrant origin do not vote overwhelmingly for the left. The socialist party, however, did heavily make use of their support.

Table 2 gives the results for Forest. We observe that the list of the incumbent mayor (a coalition between MR and CDH) score well in all groups. The socialist obtains better scores among Moroccan origin voters (of whom 86 per cent hold Belgian citizenship) and non-EU origin voters (of whom 87 per cent hold Belgian nationality) than among ethnic majority group voters (who all are Belgian citizens) and EU origin voters (of whom 77.5 per cent are Belgian nationals).

The ecologists have a harder time appealing to non-EU origin voters, especially among the Moroccans. About 9 per cent of the Moroccan voters support the list *Alternative Forestoise* (their score is included in the category 'other'), which is considerably more than is the case in other groups. We can once again conclude that different ethnic groups have somewhat different voting behaviour. Immigrant origin voters do not vote uniquely to the left; an important proportion supports the centre-right list of the incumbent mayor. Compared to the situation in Schaerbeek, the PS has to lean less heavily on the support of ethnic minority voters for their overall score, although their support remains crucial.



Table 3 presents the results for Molenbeek, where there seems to be a rather big difference in voting patterns according to origin. The list of the incumbent mayor (PS in coalition with CDH) gets an overwhelming support among the non-EU origin voters (of whom 81 per cent have a Belgian passport), notably when they are of Moroccan origin (of whom 93 per cent hold Belgian citizenship). Support is a lot less outspoken among Belgians without a migration background. These voters mainly support the right-liberal party MR. All support in our exit poll for the far right (*Vlaams Belang* or FN) comes from this 'autochthonous' group. In contrast to the situation in Schaerbeek and Forest, the ecologists are able to hold ground among all ethnic groups, but we should at the same time keep in mind that Ecolo overall scores a lot worse in this municipality than in other places in Brussels. One could argue that ethnic minority groups in Molenbeek indeed vote predominantly and overwhelmingly to the left.

In sum, the data for Schaerbeek, Forest and Molenbeek suggest that there is quite some variation in party preference by different ethnic groups from one municipality to the other. Immigrant origin voters do not necessarily vote to the left, but the socialist party does often have to heavily rely on them for obtaining their overall result. Incumbency seems to play a role for being able to attract support of the immigrant origin voters.

### **Does Ethnicity Really Play a Role in Party Preference?**

We have established that there is an association between ethnic background and party preference. Does this also mean that ethnic origin is a relevant explanatory variable for voting behaviour? A lot of studies of immigrant voting patterns stop the analysis here, after having done some bivariate test establishing voting preferences of particular immigrant groups (Tillie, 2000; Heelsum and Tillie, 2006), but we want to go a step further. Perhaps ethnic origin or migration history has no particular additional explanatory importance once we take into account structural socio-demographic factors for party choice such as gender, education and socio-economic position. Indeed, immigrant voters might have a particular voting pattern which is unrelated to their ethnic background but can, for instance, be totally attributed to their socio-professional status or educational level. If working class people are more represented among ethnic minority groups than among the ethnic majority group, it should not come as a surprise that the socialist party is able to attract more voters among immigrant origin groups.

In order to estimate the impact of several structural characteristics on the vote for a particular party, we made use of multinomial logistic regression using the SPSS-NOMREG procedure. The resulting effect parameters are

difficult to interpret, as the dependent variable is not the probability to vote for a particular party but the odds to vote for a particular party against the odds to vote for another party (that is the reference category) given the category of the background variables to which the respective voters belong. These odds are difficult to interpret at face value. We therefore transformed the effect parameters into deviations (expressed in percentage points) from the overall percentage for each category, with the software LEM (Vermunt, 1997), following the procedure suggested by Kaufman and Schervish (1986), instead of reporting the odds. This approach was introduced in Belgian electoral studies by Swyngedouw (1989), to whom we are largely indebted as a source of inspiration (Swyngedouw *et al*, 2007).

Table 4–6 provide an overview of the strength of the effect of each of the structural determinants of voting behaviour. The strength of the impact can be assessed through the  $L^2/df$  ratio. The larger this number is, the stronger the effect is.

For Schaerbeek (Table 4), we notice that there is an important impact of origin, which is even stronger than the effects of education and SES. Gender has no significant impact. So it seems ethnic groups do have their own voting patterns, which are independent of their educational level and SES. For Forest (Table 5) there is equally no significant impact of gender. Origin has an important impact which is comparable to the effects of education and SES. So

**Table 4:** Multinomial logistic model for voting behaviour during the 2006 local elections in Schaerbeek

	$L^2$	$df$	<i>Significance</i>	$L^2/df$
Gender	3.639	4	0.457	0.909
Education	37.005	12	<0.001	3.083
SES	39.541	20	0.006	1.977
Origin (nationality mother)	67.188	16	<0.001	4.199

Likelihood ratio chi-square ( $L^2$ ) = 169 007;  $df$  = 52;  $p$  < 0.001.

**Table 5:** Multinomial logistic model for voting behaviour during the 2006 local elections in Forest

	$L^2$	$df$	<i>Significance</i>	$L^2/df$
Gender	1.902	3	0.593	0.634
Education	19.477	9	0.021	2.164
SES	29.905	15	0.012	1.993
Origin (nationality mother)	20.317	9	0.016	2.257

Likelihood ratio chi-square ( $L^2$ ) = 85 490;  $df$  = 36;  $p$  < 0.001.

**Table 6:** Multinomial logistic model for voting behaviour during the 2006 local elections in Molenbeek

	$L^2$	$df$	<i>Significance</i>	$L^2/df$
Gender	2.574	3	0.462	0.858
Education	8.966	9	0.440	0.996
SES	14.289	15	0.504	0.952
Origin (nationality mother)	70.437	9	>0.001	7.826

Likelihood ratio chi-square ( $L^2$ ) = 122 915;  $df$  = 36;  $p$  < 0.001.

also in Forest, ethnic groups seem to have a particular voting pattern independent of educational level and SES. For Molenbeek (Table 6) there only seems to be a significant effect of ethnic origin, dominating over all other effects.

To get a better insight in the effect of each of the structural characteristics, we look into the effects of all categories of the different variables on voting behaviour in Tables 7 (Schaerbeek), 8 (Forest) and 9 (Molenbeek). In these tables, the effects are expressed as percentage point differences to the overall percentage that every party obtained in the 2006 local elections. In reading this table, one has to bear in mind that net-effects for each predictor are indicated, controlled for the impact of all other predictors in the model. Note that a difference to the overall percentage of a party should be interpreted in light of the importance of that overall percentage. A difference of 5 per cent points for a particular category is of much more importance for a small party than for a big party.

Without going into detail on all the results, we can observe that in Schaerbeek (Table 7), being of Moroccan or non-EU origin significantly increases the probability of a socialist vote. While keeping educational level and socio-professional status constant, voters with a Moroccan background are 14 per cent points more likely to support the socialists in Schaerbeek. Controlling for all other effects, 34 per cent of the voters of Moroccan origin vote for the socialist party. It is, however, the right-liberal party which won the elections among the voters of Moroccan origin. Controlling for educational background and social class, 40 per cent of the voters of Moroccan origin voted for the right-liberal list of the incumbent mayor. Voters of Turkish origin voted up to 54 per cent (42 per cent average plus 12 per cent points for the 'Turkish' effect) for the right-liberal list, whereas 28 per cent of the Turkish voters voted socialist.

Let us stress that we should be careful when interpreting the net effects represented in Table 7. We are confronted each time with additive effects in these regression models. If we, for instance, perform the exercise for low-educated people, the results get a different twist. Among low-educated

**Table 7:** Net-effects of socio-demographic variables on voting behaviour for Schaarbeek ( $N=577$ )

	<i>Parti Socialiste</i>	<i>ECOLO</i>	<i>CDH</i>	<i>Liste du Bourgmestre</i>	<i>Other or void</i>
Average score (%)	19.6	20.1	10.9	42.1	7.3
<i>Gender (not significant)</i>					
Male	+0.973	-1.332	-1.212	-0.074	+1.644
Female	-1.164	+1.555	+1.447	+0.116	-1.954
<i>Education (significant)</i>					
Low level	+15.357	-4.838	-3.477	-8.613	+1.571
Intermediate level	-1.103	-4.486	-1.743	+1.335	+5.997
High level (no university)	-3.112	+2.653	+3.548	+1.971	-5.060
High level (university)	-7.945	+6.823	+1.991	+3.472	-4.342
<i>SES (significant)</i>					
Blue collar	-1.926	+1.767	+5.133	-3.754	-1.220
White collar	+4.285	-1.389	+0.883	-1.879	-1.900
Management, professional or independent	-4.141	-7.538	+0.156	+9.848	+1.674
Unemployed or on welfare	+5.582	+9.780	-3.064	-22.382	+10.084
Retired	-4.763	-9.767	-4.588	+18.258	+0.860
Others	-1.926	+1.767	+5.133	-3.754	-1.220
<i>Origin (significant)</i>					
Belgian mother	-6.208	+5.029	-2.571	+1.112	+2.638
EU mother	-3.576	+12.758	-4.974	-3.977	-0.229
Non-EU mother	+10.661	-5.263	+8.686	-12.139	-1.944
Moroccan mother	+14.514	-15.277	+7.960	-1.477	-5.721
Turkish mother	+9.075	-16.819	+0.990	+12.181	-5.427

voters of Moroccan origin, the socialist party scores 49 per cent (34 per cent for being a Moroccan socialist voter plus 15 additional per cent points for the 'low-educated' effect), whereas the mayor's list 'only' scores 32 per cent (40 per cent for being a Moroccan right-liberal voter minus 8 per cent points for the 'low-educated' effect). In comparison, 43 per cent of the low-educated voters of Turkish origin support the socialist party (28 per cent plus 15 per cent points for the 'low-educated effect'), whereas the mayor's list achieves a score of 46 per cent in this group (54 per cent minus 8 per cent points for the 'low-educated effect'). The same calculations can be made for any of the other subgroups (in which, each time we can combine the effect of a particular ethnic origin with the effect of a specific educational level and/or socio-professional status).

The evidence for Schaarbeek is quite clear: immigrant origin voters do have a particular voting behaviour, independent from their educational level or SES.



In Schaerbeek immigrant origin voters do not, however, overwhelmingly vote to the left. The right-liberal list is able to attract quite some support from voters of non-EU background (as it also is among Belgian voters without an immigrant background). In contrast, the socialist party heavily depends on the immigrant vote. The ecologists seem to be unable to be an attractive option for the non-EU immigrant voter in Schaerbeek, although historically being among the first parties opening up their lists to candidates of foreign origin. Compared to the ecologists, the Christian-democratic party has more appeal among immigrant voters.

The existence of a typical immigrant vote is confirmed in the data for Forest (Table 8). Once again, ethnic origin has a significant effect on party preference, controlling for educational level and SES. The socialists profit the most from the non-EU origin immigrant vote, while the ecologists once again fail to attract the immigrant vote. The right-liberal party of the mayor, joining forces with the Christian-democrats in Forest, hold their ground among

**Table 8:** Net-effects of socio-demographic variables on voting behaviour for Forest ( $N=514$ )

	<i>Parti Socialiste</i>	<i>ECOLO</i>	<i>Liste du Bourgmestre</i>	<i>Other or void</i>
Average score (%)	28.6	24.1	36.4	10.9
<i>Gender (not significant)</i>				
Male	+1.156	-2.123	-0.495	+1.462
Female	-1.158	+2.172	+0.457	-1.472
<i>Education (significant)</i>				
Low level	+0.026	-12.622	+6.012	+6.584
Intermediate level	-2.120	+7.674	-3.970	-1.584
High level (no university)	+4.814	-6.210	+1.665	-0.269
High level (university)	-2.605	+7.230	-2.028	-2.597
<i>SES (significant)</i>				
Blue collar	+11.680	-6.635	-7.863	+2.817
White collar	-4.379	+7.709	-4.371	+1.040
Management, professional or independent	-9.102	-0.359	+7.623	+1.838
Unemployed or on welfare	+13.999	-11.498	-0.483	-2.019
Retired	+1.766	-10.589	+14.757	-5.934
Others	+3.351	+4.145	-8.598	+1.102
<i>Origin (significant)</i>				
Belgian mother	-3.209	+4.249	-0.637	-0.403
EU mother	-1.644	+1.999	+1.502	-1.857
Non-EU mother	+14.381	-6.438	-5.581	-2.363
Moroccan mother	+9.313	-17.276	+3.205	+4.758

**Table 9:** Net-effects of socio-demographic variables on voting behaviour for Molenbeek ( $N=422$ )

	<i>MR</i>	<i>ECOLO</i>	<i>Liste du Bourgmestre</i>	<i>Other or void</i>
Average score (%)	32.5	10.4	40.8	16.3
<i>Gender (not significant)</i>				
Male	-3.163	-0.952	+3.522	0.593
Female	+3.403	+1.102	-3.960	-0.546
<i>Education (not significant)</i>				
Low level	-2.228	-4.165	+5.359	+1.034
Intermediate level	+0.477	+0.082	-1.040	+0.481
High level (no university)	+7.144	-1.889	-3.601	-1.654
High level (university)	-3.982	+9.289	-4.390	-0.917
<i>SES (not significant)</i>				
Blue collar	-11.194	-2.896	-4.456	+18.546
White collar	+8.339	+3.808	-7.606	-4.541
Management, professional or independent	-8.902	-1.890	+12.282	-1.490
Unemployed or on welfare	+3.861	+0.848	-2.455	-2.255
Retired	-4.308	-5.620	+6.970	+2.957
Others	-11.194	-2.896	-4.456	+18.546
<i>Origin (significant)</i>				
Belgian mother	+12.471	+0.900	-17.267	+3.896
EU mother	+3.703	-1.148	-1.766	-0.789
Non-EU mother	-18.751	+3.417	+16.336	-1.002
Moroccan mother	-22.751	-2.946	+33.626	-7.929

Moroccan origin voters (gaining 39 per cent of the votes in that category). Let us note that the number of candidates of Maghrebian origin was significantly higher on the list of the incumbent mayor (six candidates) than on the ecologist list (two candidates), an element that might have had some impact.

The importance of the ethnic vote is, however, most remarkable in Molenbeek (Table 9) and takes an entirely different form there. The mayor's list (socialists and Christian-democrats) gets an overwhelming support from non-EU origin voters, and particularly those of Moroccan origin (plus 33 per cent point, on top of an average of 40 per cent), when controlling for educational level and SES. In contrast, the right-liberal party has severe difficulty in appealing to the immigrant origin electorate (a mere 10 per cent score). They, however, score very well among voters without an immigrant background (44 per cent compared to 'only' 23 per cent for the socialist

party). The ecologist party is able to hold ground in all groups, but has to settle for a low overall result.

In all three municipalities, immigrant origin does have a significant explanatory importance, even over and beyond other socio-demographic factors such as education and socio-economic position. Although ethnic minority voters have a diversified voting behaviour (they potentially support all parties), they do seem to be systematically overrepresented among the electorate of some parties (mainly the socialist party) and underrepresented among the electorate of other parties (mainly the ecologist party). We, furthermore, must conclude that particular patterns of ethnic minority voting are just as present in the Belgian case as in the Dutch case (Tillie, 2000; Heelsum and Tillie, 2006), despite the unfavourable discursive opportunity structures for ethnic mobilisation in Brussels.

Another striking finding resides in the fact that the local context can result in quite divergent patterns. In our three municipalities, the incumbent coalition (or, at least, the list of the incumbent mayor) does particularly well among immigrant origin voters. Given that we have only done the analysis for three municipalities, we cannot claim that this is a general effect, typical for the immigrant vote. Further research, including more municipalities (or more electoral districts if the analysis were to be done for other elections than the local elections) would have to look into this more closely. What we can, however, safely conclude from our analysis is that there is indeed a phenomenon of ethnic voting to be observed in the Brussels Capital Region.

### Who Votes for Ethnic Minority Candidates?

Of all the participants to our exit poll, 35.6 per cent cast a preference vote for an ethnic minority candidate. As we can see in Table 10, both people with and without an immigrant background vote for candidates of foreign origin. It would therefore be a mistake to assume that candidates with a foreign background only or mainly get elected owing to support of voters who are

**Table 10:** Cross-tabulation of who votes for a candidate of foreign origin and birth place of mother (Schaerbeek, Molenbeek and Forest,  $N = 1507$ )

	<i>Belgian mother (N = 859) (%)</i>	<i>EU mother (N = 213) (%)</i>	<i>Turkish mother (N = 71) (%)</i>	<i>Moroccan mother (N = 240) (%)</i>	<i>Other non-EU mother (N = 124) (%)</i>	<i>Total (N = 1507)</i>
No	75.7	64.8	21.1	41.7	54	64.4
Yes	24.3	35.2	78.9	58.3	46	35.6

**Table 11:** Logistic regression model with preference vote for candidate of foreign origin as dependent variable (Schaerbeek, Molenbeek and Forest,  $N = 1507$ )

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Wald</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Significance</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>
<i>Origin (ref: Belgian)</i>	—	—	117.240	4	0.000	—
EU origin	0.457	0.175	6.783	1	0.009	1.579
Non-EU origin	1.051	0.216	23.768	1	0.000	2.861
Moroccan origin	1.496	0.174	74.226	1	0.000	4.463
Turkish origin	2.582	0.327	62.408	1	0.000	13.219
<i>Age (ref: 55 years and plus)</i>	—	—	29.705	2	0.000	—
18–34 years	0.855	0.175	23.725	1	0.000	2.351
35–54 years	0.879	0.172	26.168	1	0.000	2.410
<i>Education (ref: university)</i>	—	—	0.667	3	0.881	—
Low level	-0.146	0.181	0.648	1	0.421	0.864
Intermediate level	-0.090	0.168	0.288	1	0.591	0.914
High level (no university)	-0.067	0.178	0.142	1	0.706	0.935
<i>Preference vote woman</i>	1.354	0.139	94.561	1	0.000	3.874
<i>Gender (ref: man)</i>	-0.328	0.123	7.110	1	0.008	0.720
Constant	-2.488	0.220	128.178	1	0.000	0.083

$R^2 = 0.189$  (Cox & Snell), 0.259 (Nagelkerke); Model chi-square = 307.888;  $df = 11$ ;  $p < 0.001$ .

equally of foreign descent. Of the 537 voters who reported casting a preferential vote for an immigrant origin candidate, 209 have themselves no immigrant background (38.9 per cent).

Nevertheless, it is true that people who are themselves of immigrant origin vote significantly more often for a candidate of foreign origin than voters without an immigrant background.<sup>7</sup> This difference remains present if we control for SES and educational level.

In Table 11, we present the results of a logistic regression model by which we try and predict who votes for a candidate of foreign origin. Educational level has no significant effect, nor has SES (not shown here). The younger generation (18–34-year-old) and middle aged group (34–54-year-old) votes are more than twice as likely to cast a preferential vote for a candidate of foreign origin, compared to the older generation (55-year-old and plus). Controlling for the effect of other variables, those who cast a preferential vote for a female candidate are almost four times as likely to equally vote for a candidate of foreign origin, compared to someone who did not vote for a woman. This seems to show that there is indeed a group of voters who



deliberately cast a 'symbolic' vote with which they want to show diversity in elected bodies is important (Swyngedouw and Jacobs, 2006).

As we already noted, controlling for the other variables in the model, people of foreign origin are significantly more likely to cast a preferential vote for a candidate of foreign origin than people without an immigrant background. People who have a Moroccan mother are 4.4 times more likely and people who have a Turkish mother are 13 times more likely to vote for a candidate with a foreign background than voters who have a Belgian mother. Just as in the Dutch case (Tillie, 2000), ethnic preferential voting is thus an important phenomenon in the Belgian elections.

## Conclusion and Debate

In recent years, immigrant origin ethnic minorities have become a non-negligible electoral group in Belgian cities. Voting preferences of immigrant groups, however, remained uncharted terrain, leading to all kinds of speculation. In this article, we presented the first analysis of voting patterns of ethnic minority groups in Belgium, making use of exit poll data on the local elections for three municipalities of the Brussels Capital Region. We investigated whether non-EU immigrant origin voters have a particular party preference, which cannot be explained by other background variables such as educational level or socio-economic position. Our data clearly suggest that there is indeed a significant impact of ethnic origin on party preferences, over and beyond other socio-structural determinants. Overall, Moroccan origin voters have a strong tendency to support the socialist party, but non-EU origin voters do not systemically vote to the left. Indeed, the ecologist party seems to have a hard time in assuring support among non-EU origin immigrant groups. They fail where centrist and right-wing parties succeed in attracting immigrant support (for instance, the Turks in Schaerbeek). Our data seems to suggest political parties can conquer local ethnic electoral niches. The results also seem to suggest some importance of incumbency in attracting support from ethnic minority voters. All these findings will, of course, have to be further monitored in future research in order to evaluate whether we are confronted with structural patterns or not.

We also looked into the issue of preferential voting for candidates of immigrant origin. Both people with and without an immigrant background deliberately vote for candidates of foreign origin. It would therefore be a mistake to assume – as is often done in the Belgian political debate and media – that candidates with a foreign background only or mainly get elected owing to support of voters who are equally of foreign descent. It is, however, correct

that immigrant origin voters are more likely to vote for politicians of foreign descent than majority group voters are.

In future research, we hope to be able to compare our results with insights and empirical results with regard to political participation of immigrants in other continental European countries, which have equally seen a substantial increase of the electoral potential of ethnic minority groups in their urban areas. A first confrontation of the Belgian data with insights from the Netherlands already seems to suggest that ethnic minority electoral mobilisation is a constant phenomenon, regardless of the political opportunity structure. However, before formulating a final conclusion on this issue, more data should be gathered in other European countries as well. Such data are still relatively rare (limited to the Netherlands, the Scandinavian countries, United Kingdom and Germany), of varying quality and sometimes stopping short before undertaking a multivariate analysis. While race and ethnicity are common variables to be taken into account in Anglosaxon electoral studies (although mainly focussing on differential voter turn out), sociologists and political scientists on mainland Europe are only now starting to seriously study voting behaviour of immigrant ethnic minority groups.

### **Acknowledgements**

We thank the *Faculté des Sciences sociales, politiques et économiques/Solvay Business School* of the *Université Libre de Bruxelles* for financial assistance in organizing the exit polls. We also thank the two anonymous reviewers of *Acta Politica* for their comments and suggestions which have helped improve this contribution.

### **About the Authors**

Céline Teney (1981) is a PhD student within the programme 'Prospective Research in Brussels' at research centre METICES, *Institut de Sociologie*, at ULB. She did her MA in Sociology and Ethnology (Albert-Ludwigs Universität Freiburg, 2004) and Advanced Master in Quantitative Analysis in Social Sciences (KUBrussel, 2008).

Dirk Jacobs (1971) is Professor in Sociology at the Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB). He did his MA in Sociology (Ghent University, 1993) and PhD in Social Sciences (Utrecht University, 1998). His former affiliations are KULeuven, KUBrussel, VUB and Utrecht University.

Andrea Rea (1959) is Professor in Sociology at ULB. He is Head of the Department of Social Sciences at ULB. He did his MA in Social Sciences (ULB, 1982) and PhD in Sociology (ULB, 2000).

Pascal Delwit (1961) is Professor in Political Science at ULB. He is Dean of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences and the Solvay Brussels School of Economics and Management. He did his MA in Political Science (ULB, 1985) and PhD in Political Science (ULB, 1994).

## Notes

- 1 There are currently no official ethnic statistics available in Belgium, only figures distinguishing nationals and non-nationals (see Jacobs and Rea, 2009).
- 2 In French public discourse, *Communitarisme* refers to the valorisation of cultural difference and the process of mobilisation around an ethnic identity. It is widely seen as something negative among French political elites.
- 3 Voting is compulsory for Belgian nationals. Non-compliance leads to a fine. A large majority of 'new' Belgians thus participate in the elections.
- 4 We will not discuss the presence of immigrant origin politicians on the federal level in this article, but let us just mention there have been several MPs of Moroccan or Turkish origin in both the federal as the European Parliament since 1999.
- 5 See [www.brusselsstudies.be](http://www.brusselsstudies.be).
- 6 Cramer's V for Schaerbeek: 0.800 ( $p < 0.001$ ), for Forest 0.831 ( $p < 0.001$ ) and for Molenbeek 0.869 ( $p < 0.001$ ).
- 7 Cramer's V: 0.331 ( $p < 0.001$ ).

## References

- Bousetta, H., Gsir, S. and Jacobs, D. (2005) Active Civic Participation of Immigrants in Belgium. Oldenburg. Country Report prepared for the European Research Project POLITIS, [www.uni-oldenburg.de/politis-europe](http://www.uni-oldenburg.de/politis-europe).
- Heelsum, A. van and Tillie, J. (2006) *Opkomst en partijvoorkeur van migranten bij de gemeenteraadsverkiezingen van 7 maart 2006*. Amsterdam, the Netherlands: IMES.
- Jacobs, D. and Rea, A. (2009) Allochthones in the Netherlands and Belgium. *International Migration*, accepted, to be published.
- Jacobs, D., Martiniello, M. and Rea, A. (2002) Changing patterns of political participation of citizens of immigrant origin in the Brussels Capital Region: The October 2000 election. *Journal of International Migration and Integration/Revue de l'intégration et de la migration internationale* 3(2): 201–221.
- Jacobs, D., Phaet, K. and Swyngedouw, M. (2004) Associational membership and political involvement among ethnic minority groups in Brussels. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 30(3): 543–559.
- Jacobs, D., Bousetta, H., Rea, A., Martiniello, M. and Swyngedouw, M. (2006) Qui sont les candidats aux élections bruxelloises? Le profil des candidats à l'élection au parlement de la

- Région de Bruxelles Capitale du 13 Juin 2004. *Cahiers Migrations*, Vol. 37. Bruxelles, Belgium: Academia Bruylant.
- Kaufman, L. and Schervish, P. (1986) Using adjusted cross tabulations to interpret log-linear relationships. *American Review of Sociology* 51: 717–733.
- Koopmans, R., Statham, P., Giugni, M. and Passy, F. (2005) *Contested Citizenship. Immigration and Cultural Diversity in Europe*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Leighley, J. (2001) *Strength in Numbers? The Political Mobilization of Racial and Ethnic Minorities*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Swyngedouw, M. (1989) *De keuze van de kiezer. Naar een verbetering van de schattingen van verschuivingen in de partijvoorkeur bij opeenvolgende verkiezingen en peilingen*. Leuven/Rotterdam: KULeuven/Erasmus Universiteit.
- Swyngedouw, M. and Jacobs, D. (2006) Qui a voté en 2003 pour les candidats d'origine étrangère en Flandre (Belgique)? In: B. Khader, M. Martiniello, A. Rea and C. Timmerman (eds.) *Penser l'immigration et l'intégration autrement. Une initiative belge inter-universitaire*. Bruxelles, Belgium: Bruylant, pp. 159–176.
- Swyngedouw, M., Billiet, J. and Goeminne, B. (2007) *De kiezer onderzocht. De verkiezingen van 2003 en 2004 in Vlaanderen*. Leuven, Belgium: Universitaire Pers Leuven.
- Tillie, J. (2000) *De etnische stem. Opkomst en stemgedrag van migranten tijdens gemeenteraadsverkiezingen, 1986–1998*. Utrecht, the Netherlands: Forum.
- Vasta, E. (2007) From ethnic minorities to ethnic majority policy: Multiculturalism and the shift to assimilationism in the Netherlands. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30(5): 713–740.
- Verba, S., Nie, N. and Kim, J. (1978) *Participation and Political Equality: A Seven Nation Comparison*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Verba, S., Schlozman, K. and Brady, H. (1995) *Voice and Equality. Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Vermunt, J.K. (1997) *LEM: A General Program for the Analysis of Categorical Data*. Tilburg: Department of Methodology and Statistics, Tilburg University.

## Appendix

See Tables A–C.

**Table A:** Comparison of exit poll results and real election results for Forest (valid votes)

	Exit poll result (%)	Election result (%)
PS	30	30.73
Ecolo	24.7	19.38
Liste du bourgmestre	37.1	40.08
MCCF	3.7	2.75
VLD-CD&V-O	0.4	3.5
Alternative forestoise	4.1	3.55

Chi-square: 4.86; df = 5;  $p = 0.43$ .

**Table B:** Comparison of exit poll results and real election results for Molenbeek (valid votes)

	<i>Exit poll result (%)</i>	<i>Election result (%)</i>
MR	34.6	32.22
Vlaams Belang	2.5	6.53
Ecolo	11.0	8.34
FN	1.0	4.05
Liste du Bourgmestre	43.6	39.52
PTB	3.3	2.84
Force citoyenne	1.0	0.67
Spirit & onafhankelijken	1.5	2.46
PJM	1.5	3.38

Chi-square: 7.879; df= 8;  $p=0.445$ .

**Table C:** Comparison of exit poll results and real election results for Schaerbeek (valid votes)

	<i>Exit poll result (%)</i>	<i>Election result (%)</i>
PS	20.0	25.16
Ecolo	20.3	13.79
FN	0.7	1.94
CDH	11.1	10.90
Liste du bourgmestre	43	40.79
DEMOL	1.9	4.07
VLD-LIB	2.1	1.62
PTB	0.5	1.23
Unie	0.2	0.37
MAS-LSP	0.2	0.14

Chi-square: 6.896; df=9;  $p=0.648$ .