



Hassan Bousetta, Sonia Gsir and Dirk Jacobs

**Active Civic Participation
of Immigrants in
Belgium**

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POLITIS – a European research project

Project information

POLITIS is short for a research project with the full title: Building Europe with New Citizens? An Inquiry into the Civic Participation of Naturalised Citizens and Foreign Residents in 25 Countries. The European Commission funds the project that mainly seeks to improve our understanding of different factors that promote or inhibit active civic participation of immigrants. A unique project construction is developed that includes workshops with foreign-born students who are recruited as discussants and interviewers. National experts in all 25 EU countries have prepared country reports on the contextual conditions and state of research concerning civic participation of immigrants. These reports can be downloaded from www.uni-oldenburg.de/politis-europe

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International Coordination and Contact

POLITIS

Interdisciplinary Center for Education and Communication in Migration Processes (**IBKM**)

Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg

Ammerländer Heerstr. 114-118/ Postbox 2503

26111 Oldenburg

dita.vogel@uni-oldenburg.de

Partner Organisations:

Hellenic Foundation of European and Foreign Policy (**Eliamep**)

Athens

www.eliamep.gr

Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies

European University Institute (**EUI**)

Florence

www.iue.it/RSCAS

Churches' Commission of Migrants in Europe (**CCME**)

Brussels

<http://www.cec-kek.org/content/ccme.shtml>

The author(s)

<p>Dr Hassan Bousetta Université de Liège Researcher at the National Fund for Scientific Research CEDEM - Faculté de Droit - Science Politique 7 Boulevard du Rectorat - Bât. 31, box 38 4000 Liège - Belgium Hassan.Bousetta@ulg.ac.be GSM: +32 (0) 473 74 12 30 Tel.: +32 (0) 4 366 30 17 Fax.: +32 (0) 4 366 45 57 http://www.ulg.ac.be/cedem</p>	<p>Sonia Gsir Université de Liège Researcher Centre d'Etudes de l'Ethnicité et des Migrations (CEDEM) 7 Bvd du Rectorat, Bât.31, box38 4000 Liège - Belgium Sonia.Gsir@ulg.ac.be Tel. + 32 4 366 31 28 Fax. + 32 4 366 45 57 http://www.ulg.ac.be/cedem</p>	<p>Dirk Jacobs Professor Institut de Sociologie Groupe d'études sur l'Ethnicité, le Racisme, les Migrations et l'Exclusion (GERME) Université Libre de Bruxelles 44 avenue Jeanne 1050 Brussels - Belgium dirk.jacobs@ulb.ac.be Tel. + 32 2 650 32 72 http://www.ulb.ac.be/socio/germe</p>
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Abstract:

This report provides a state of the art of existing research on active civic participation of immigrants in Belgium. The report is divided in three parts. The first is an overview of the general condition of Belgium as an immigration country. The history of migration movements in the post-war era is presented alongside a description of the current foreign population in the country. Being a linguistically divided country, the report explains how this cleavage has been central in defining two divergent types of attitudes and reaction to the inflow and settlement of immigrants. While the Flemish speaking community has pursued a multiculturalist policy influenced by Dutch and anglo-american ideas, the French speaking community has opted for a less specific approach more in line with French republican assimilationism. The point is however that, in comparison to other European immigration countries, both the Flemish and French speaking communities have started devising immigrant policies quite belatedly. Until 1989 and the first electoral breakthrough of the extreme-right in Flanders, the political establishment at the national federal level had turned a blind eye to this issue, assuming that immigration was a temporary phenomenon.

The second part of the report looks more specifically at the notion of active civic participation by providing a review of existing academic research. The reports looks at the various facets of active civic participation and takes a broad view on the subject. Considering the increasing involvement of immigrants in electoral politics, a large discussion is provided on the issue of political participation. A special account is given to the local election of October 2000 which saw a remarkable breakthrough of immigrant politicians in Brussels. This development has been facilitated, among others, by the very broad opening of the nationality legislation. On both these aspects (i.e. nationality laws and political representation of immigrants), Belgium has become an exceptional, and quite advanced, case in Europe.

There are however a number of other areas where immigrants have been actively involved in Belgian public life. Since the seventies, immigrants have the right to vote and stand as candidates in so-called social elections (i.e. for worker councils). No specific research has been achieved on the extent of immigrant participation in workers participatory institutions, but it is generally considered to be important. The model of voting rights in private companies has served since it was put in place as an example to extend to the arena of local politics. Trade unions, for instance, have pleaded for the local enfranchisement of immigrant workers since the seventies. This has resulted only in 2004 in a decision to allow non European citizens to participate (only as voters and not as candidates).

Among younger waves of immigration, especially among those originating from the Muslim world, Islam is becoming the language through which participation is increasingly sought. A review is proposed of the rise of Islamic parties in Brussels and Antwerp and a discussion is proposed of the peculiar relationship established by the Belgian State with a number of institutionnaly recognised religions (including Islam). Belgium has indeed implemented a unique system allowing Muslims to select their representatives before the State through a nation-wide general election.

As in many other immigration countries, participation through voluntary associations remains an important avenue of public and civic involvement. The report discusses the results of a large survey in Brussels based on a representative sample of Moroccans, Turks and low educated Belgians. Several important findings are presented concerning the relationship between associational membership and political involvement.

By way of conclusion, we propose in the final part of the report an expert assessment on the knowledge produced by Belgian academic research on the notion of active civic participation.

Part I: Understanding the conditions for immigrant participation

1. Key events and demographic developments in the migration history of Belgium

During the last months of the Second World War and immediately after the German defeat, the Belgian government made a priority of revitalising the exploitation of the Belgian coal mines in order to rebuild Belgian economy. The mining sector was seen to be so crucial in rebuilding the country, that the government even used war rhetoric to underline the strategic importance of coal for the Belgian economy. The revitalisation of the coal mines was said to be no less than a ‘battle of coal’. Despite an improvement of working conditions, the introduction of a special (favourable) social-legal status of miners and compulsory reintegration of former Belgian miners (Lewin, 1997: 20), the government was still confronted with a shortage of miners. As a result, from May 1945 onwards, German prisoners of war were forced to go and work in the mines. In January 1946 nearly 46,000 German POW's worked in the mines. Anticipating the release of the German POW's (in May 1947), the Belgian government started negotiations with the Italian government in order to systematically recruit workers to be employed in the mines (Martens, 1973: 161). In June 1946 the Belgian government made a deal with the Italian government to exchange Italian guest workers for a set amount of its coal production to be sold to Italy. As a result of the bilateral agreement, every week 2,000 (new) Italian workers would be transferred from Milano to Belgium by train. The majority was recruited from Northern-Italy and attempts were made to prevent ‘undesirable’ political elements – i.e. communists – of joining the foreign Italian labour force in Belgium (Morelli, 1992: 202). In spite of prior promises, the foreign labourers encountered rather harsh working and housing conditions. In the period 1946-1949, over 77,000 Italian workers would arrive through active recruitment in Belgium (Martens, 1973: 163), of whom the large majority were to be employed in Wallonia. Sustained foreign recruitment was necessary given the fairly high drop out rates of the miners (Martens, 1973: 102). In addition to the Italian workers, the management of the coal mines recruited over 23,000 new miners amongst the Eastern-European ‘displaced persons’ in occupied Western-German territory in order to counter the shortages of labour resulting from the return of the German POW's.

In 1949-1950 foreign recruitment was shortly put to a halt, as the result of a cyclical recession and pressure from the trade unions. It would be taken up again in 1951. Between 1951 and 1953 in total over 44,000 (new) Italians were attracted to the Belgian – mainly Walloon - mines (Martens, 1986: 101). In the period 1952-1955 foreign recruitment was in principle again put to a halt - although there was some lenience for the mines in 1952 and 1953 -, to be reinstalled in May 1955. In the period 1955-1957 over 20,000 Italian miners came to Belgium. After 1955, foreign recruitment of labourers would no longer be limited to the coal mines, but was gradually extended to the steel industry and the construction sector. In addition, foreign miners increasingly sought (and found) new employment in these other sectors, what in turn led to a new need for other (foreign) miners.

In February 1956 a mining accident at Quaregnon caused the death of 7 Italian miners. In August 1956 a mining accident at Marcinelle caused the death of 262 miners, of whom 136 were Italian. These incidents prompted Italy to demand better working conditions for the Italian guest workers in Belgium. Given the security related demands of the Italian

government, Belgium decided to turn more actively to other countries to recruit foreign workers (Morelli, 1992: 206; Lewin, 1997: 22).

As an indirect consequence of the disasters at Quaregnon and Marcinelle and prompted by the new Italian demands regarding security, Belgium increasingly turned to other countries to attract blue-collar workers (especially miners). Up to that point, Italian immigration had clearly been the most important segment of the total immigration to Belgium: between 1948 and 1958 on average 48.5% of immigration to Belgium had originated from Italy (Grimeau, 1993: 118). At the end of the fifties, and especially in the course of the sixties, the composition of migration flows to Belgium would become more diversified, amongst other factors due to the signing of new bilateral agreements with other Mediterranean countries. After already having attracted 5,000 workers from these countries in 1955-1956, in November 1956 a first new bilateral agreement was signed with Spain and in August 1957 an arrangement was made with Greece. These agreements ensured the recruitment of about 12,000 workers in 1957 (Martens, 1973: 210). Due to cyclical recession, the closing of some mines in accordance with the CECE-agreement and pressure of the trade unions in the mining sector, foreign recruitment was put to a halt from 1958 to 1961. In 1962, however, foreign recruitment was reinstated because several sectors of industry experienced a shortage of low skilled labourers. Due to competition for foreign labourers with the neighbouring countries, Belgium was forced to further expand its area of recruitment. In 1964 bilateral agreements were thus made with Morocco and Turkey. In 1969 and 1970 bilateral agreements were made with Tunisia and Algeria. The largest group of immigrant low skilled labourers to settle in Belgium in the sixties undoubtedly came from Morocco. It is important to note that these Moroccan guest workers – just like other foreign workers - were explicitly invited to bring their families along (Atar, 1993: 302). A large majority of them settled in the major cities and especially in Brussels. From 1962 to 1965 – ‘the golden sixties’ - over 125,000 working permits were granted to foreigners. In the entire period 1956-1967 a total of 214,454 working permits (for new immigrants) had been granted (Martens, 1973: 105). Between 1962 and 1971 in total more than 544,000 foreigners came to Belgium, while 260,000 foreigners emigrated during the same period, resulting in a migration surplus of 284,000 foreigners (Martens, 1973: 50). The effects of the large scale recruitment of foreign labourers (combined with the advent of families of those staying in Belgium and birth on Belgian soil of immigrant children) on the proportion of foreigners in the total population were quite considerable. The foreign population increased from 379,528 in 1954 to 716,237 - over 7% of the total population - in 1970 (Martens, 1973: 47). In the sixties, a considerable amount of the new immigrants were non-active dependants of guest workers (Lewin, 1997: 23). Immigration of dependants (through family reunion) was indeed even actively stimulated in the sixties, resulting out of the wish of Walloon politicians to use immigration for demographic purposes (Sauvy, 1962; Martens, 1973: 235-236; Lewin, 1997: 23) and in order to compete with neighbouring countries trying to attract foreign labourers (Martens, 1973: 107).

Due to economic recession, the decision was made by the Belgian government in August 1974 to stop all new immigration and active recruitment of non-EC guest workers. However, for certain categories of specialised workers (for instance Polish mechanics) an exception was made to this general rule. The policy change did not lead to a complete halt of legal non-EC migration flows to Belgium. The government still allowed for family reunion of non-EC-immigrants, partly as a consequence of demographic problems in Wallonia (ageing of the population). Nevertheless, within the migration flows to Belgium, EC-immigration, and especially immigration from the neighbouring countries, gained momentum. While the neighbouring countries and the UK had accounted for 24% of immigration to Belgium in the

period 1962-1966, they would account for 36% of immigration to Belgium in the period 1967-1982 (Grimeau, 1993: 119).

Before turning to a short discussion of migration flows in the nineties, it is important to note that Belgium, a former colonial power in Central Africa (Congo, Ruanda, Burundi), never opted for recruiting colonial labourers. The main for that is the need to preserve a sufficient workforce for colonial exploitation in Africa. On that specific point, the Belgian attitude diverged from most of its neighbours.

After 1974, immigration of EC-citizens (for instance in 1991 involving 24,855 persons) was fairly stable (in comparison to earlier levels) and remained more important than EC-emigration (for instance in 1991 officially involving 12,521 persons), with an exception for Italians, Spaniards and Greeks who seem to be involved in forms of return migration. As far as non-EU-citizens are concerned, it can be noted that at the end of the eighties, a ‘new’ category of immigrants came to the foreground, consisting of asylum seekers. Migration of political refugees to Belgium was by no means a new phenomenon, but clearly one which gained importance in the overall migration flows at the end of the eighties and throughout the nineties - and increasingly became the object of political debate (See Figure 1). It should be noted, however, that in the post Cold War period after 1989 it was (and is) increasingly difficult to differentiate between ‘economic migrants’ and ‘political refugees’. In addition, it should be stressed that only figures are at hand of refugees applying for asylum (in accordance with the 1951 Geneva Convention) and that there is no clear view on undocumented refugees (or other undocumented immigrants). Moreover, it is extremely difficult – if not impossible – to precisely know how many applicants of whom the asylum demand was rejected, actually left (or were expelled out of) the country or remained in the country with an irregular or semi-irregular status. The refugees who applied for (official) asylum mainly originated from Eastern Europe, from African countries and Asia. Although the asylum seekers came from over 113 different countries, a majority originated from particular countries (or regions): ex-Yugoslavia, ex-USSR, Rumania, Congo (former Zaire), Pakistan, Nigeria, Bulgaria, Turkey and Ghana. Over the years, the number of asylum seekers from Eastern European countries had become increasingly important. In 1996, 54.8% of the asylum seekers originated from Europe (former-Yugoslavia, other Eastern-European countries and the former-USSR), 28% originated from Africa (of which the Congolese with 6.9% constitute the largest group) and 11% originated from Asia (mainly Turkey and Pakistan). Former-Yugoslavia (Bosnia, Serbia, Kosova, Montenegro, Croatia, Slovenia en Macedonia) in 1996 accounted for almost a fourth of all asylum seekers.

Table 1. Foreign population in Belgium on January 1st (1999-2004) per Regions

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Belgium	891.980	897.110	861.685	846.734	850.077	860.287
Brussels	272.146	273.613	262.771	260.040	260.269	263.451
Flanders	289.065	293.650	280.962	275.223	280.743	288.375
Wallonia	330.769	329.847	317.952	311.471	309.065	308.461

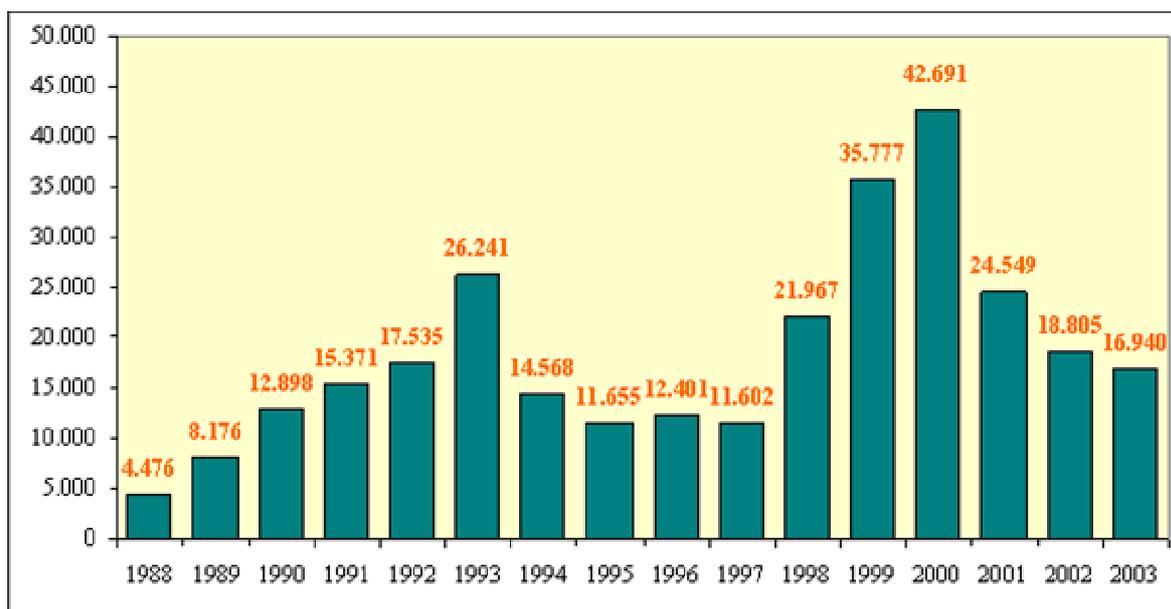
Source: Institut National de la Statistique (INS)

Table 2 Foreign population in Belgium on January 1st 2002 per groups of nationalities

Nationality	Absolute	% total pop	% foreigners
EU	576.621	5,59%	68,1%
Non EU	270.113	2,62%	31,9%
Total foreigners	846.734	8,1%	100%
Belgians	9.462.991	91,79%	/
Total population	10.309.725	100%	/

Source : http://www.antiracisme.be/fr/cadre_fr.htm

Figure 1: The evolution of the number of asylum seekers between 1998 and 2003



Source : http://www.antiracisme.be/fr/cadre_fr.htm

Table 3. Foreigners acquiring Belgian nationality (1994-2003)

Year	Change of nationality
1994	25,787
1995	26,129
1996	24,581
1997	31,687
1998	34,034
1999	24,196
2000	61,980
2001	62,982
2002	46,417
2003	33,709

Source: ECODATA, Federal Ministry for Economy

Of the three regions in Belgium (Flanders, Brussels and Walloon), the Region of Brussels-Capital is in proportional terms hosting the largest number of foreign residents (close to 30

per cent). European and non European citizens account for more or less similar shares of 15 per cent of the population. It can be noted that fifty percent of the non-EU citizens in Brussels are Moroccans.

It is unknown how many children of foreign residents in Brussels acquired Belgian nationality due to the introduction of *ius soli* in 1985 (and its extension in 1991) (See further). We do know that in the Census of 1991, 53,983 Belgian persons did not have Belgian nationality at the time of birth (and hence made use of the naturalisation procedure). As a result, we know that at least 34.1 per cent of the inhabitants of Brussels was of foreign origin in 1991. It may be noted that Belgium throughout the nineties liberalized its nationality legislation, to the extent that the country as a result has one of the most open legislations in the world (See further). One can apply for naturalization after three years of residence, while seven years of legal residence gives the right to semi-automatic access to Belgian citizenship. Due to the evolution of the nationality legislation and demographic developments, in 2005 probably around 10 per cent of the Brussels population are Belgians of foreign descent (who acquired citizenship through *ius soli*, naturalisation or the other systems for acquiring Belgian nationality). One can thus estimate that today approximately 40 per cent of the inhabitants of Brussels is of immigrant – non-Belgian - origin.

2. Major issues discussed with relation to immigration and active civic participation

One of the consequences of 9/11 in Belgium is without any doubt that the issue of multiculturalism and the position of Islam within Belgian society has been put centre stage in political and public debate. Any observer who would undertake a quick scan of the focus of contemporary Belgian media attention would have to conclude that the issue of cultural diversity – and in particular the position of immigrant Muslim minority groups - is currently seen to be standing at the heart of public life. The preoccupation of managing ethnic, cultural and religious diversity in the public space did not bluntly appear with the tragic events in New York and Washington. Indeed, it has been a recurring issue for – albeit fragmented - debate in Belgium ever since the mid seventies (Jacobs & Swyngedouw, 2002).

What is new in the content of the debate, however, is the peremptory negative character of the arguments produced. The most radical opponents to multiculturalism have shaped a space of dialogue in which the claim for identity difference and recognition of minority groups is deeply questioned. Authoritative arguments *vis-à-vis* ethnic and religious minorities have heavily challenged the discourse and ideal of a society where difference is mutually enriching. In many such debates, the incorporation of Islam and Muslims is central, both implicitly as explicitly.

In the Belgian context, the question of dealing with ethnic diversity – at least when being considered independently from the linguistic divide in the country - was initially conceived as an issue limited to handling the consequences of recruitment of a temporary foreign labour force in an *ad hoc* manner. In the course of the seventies and eighties the issue of multiculturalism gradually became to be seen independently from issues of migration and mobility. If the management of cultural diversity in the public space can today no longer be thought in the framework of earlier migration waves alone, it can neither be conceived as a matter to be merely dealt with in the private sphere.

Fundamentally, the issue at stake is how to conceive a public space able to welcome and organise a peaceful coexistence of culturally and religiously different minority and majority groups. Such challenge raises the question of the principles along which we need to reorganise the public space in an accommodating way for all involved groups. Just like the nineteenth century struggles of the working class were articulated in terms of social justice, the contemporary claims of minority groups manifesting themselves in multicultural societies need to be read as a quest for what political philosophers have called a principle of ethno-cultural justice (Kymlicka, 2001).

One would wish for a serene climate for pursuing the debate on multiculturalism, but this is far from being a readily available condition. These debates are, on the contrary, developing in a nervous atmosphere. In Belgium, the context is marked by the fact that the question has reached a high level of political centrality, especially in Flanders (the Dutch speaking part of Belgium) where the extreme-right wing party Vlaams Blok – which changed its name to ‘Vlaams Belang’ in November 2004 immediately following a conviction in court for its racist propaganda - has obtained no less than 25% of the popular vote in the June 2004 regional and general elections. Pushed in the back by a strong xenophobic far-right movement, the government and political parties are ceaselessly led to comment and make political statements about the perceived failures of multicultural coexistence. By way of consequence, public deliberations on the issue of dealing with ethnic diversity take place against a backdrop of political manoeuvres seeking to woo either ethnic minority voters - especially in Brussels (see Jacobs, Martiniello & Rea, 2002) - or, more often, the anti-multiculturalism and/or xenophobic voters (Jacobs & Rummens, 2002). Not surprisingly, the tensions generated by international developments also shape the debate. In 2004, the war in Iraq, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the unstable situation in Afghanistan all contributed to a mutual lack of confidence between “the West” and “the Arab-Muslim world”. The consequences are not merely diplomatic, but equally impact on domestic politics in Belgium as much as in other European countries. The relationship between Arab and Muslim minorities on the one hand and the majority groups of the European societies where these minorities live and reside on the other hand, undergoes the repercussion of these tensions. The worries raised in mainstream public opinion by acts of political violence happening in the world in the name of Islam raise questions in the open about the nature of European Islam and the degree of loyalty of European Muslims. This was only exacerbated in Belgium in November 2004, following the murder in Amsterdam of the controversial Dutch cineaste and publicist Theo Van Gogh by a young Dutch Muslim extremist of Moroccan origin.

Interestingly, the focus on Islam and the pressure on multicultural discourse in Belgium has, however, not directly led to an overall change in actual policy. As has been the case in the past, policy is still often of a pragmatic nature and a wide variety of (sometimes contradicting) policy practices coexist in Belgium. At some instances a crude assimilationist line is being taken, while at other instances ethnic diversity is being stimulated to prosper. Ethnic difference can both be neglected and denied or accommodated for, depending on the issue we are dealing with and the actors involved. On the ground, policy may be de facto of a multicultural nature, while all involved will heavily deny it has anything to do with the idea of multiculturalism. Or a strict assimilationist policy scheme may be announced, but in the end not at all being implemented so strictly.

3. Institutional setting framing immigrant participation

3.A. General policy framework for immigrant / ethnic minority participation

In Belgium, migration policy (regulation of access to the territory and residence) has always been a national prerogative. Integration policy, however, is, by and large, a policy competence of the Communities (see Hubeau & Van Put, 1990). However, depending on the policy field (labour, education, housing, urban renewal, fight against poverty, etc.) or the region concerned (Flanders, Wallonia or Brussels), political authorities from all levels of powers have a share in the policies directly or indirectly related to the participation of immigrants and ethnic minorities in society.

It should be stressed that the overall framework for any policy regarding immigrants in Belgium - whatever institutional level it is stemming from - has been devised in 1989 by the Royal Commissariat for Migrant Policies (RCMP). This semi-official government body, attached to the administration of the Prime Minister, was set up in order to develop and monitor policy related to the integration of foreigners and ethnic minorities. In 1993, the Commissariat was replaced by a permanent institute, the Centre for Equal Opportunities and the Fight against Racism (CEOFR), still attached to the administration of the Prime minister.

Of particular importance is the definition of 'integration' the Royal Commissariat introduced as the pivotal concept for government policies on migrants and ethnic minorities. The second element of this official definition of integration targets very specifically the notion of active civic participation. Indeed, integration is seen, on the one hand, to be insertion of migrants into Belgian society according to three guiding principles:

“(a) assimilation where the ‘public order’ demands this;
(b) consequent promotion of the best possible fitting in according to the orientating social principles which support the culture of the host country and which are related to ‘modernity’, ‘emancipation’ and ‘true pluralism’ – as understood by a modern western state -; and
(c) unambiguous respect for the cultural diversity-as-mutual-enrichment in all other areas”
(KCM, 1989: 38-39).

But, on the other hand, integration entails:

“promotion of structural involvement of minorities in activities and aims of the government”
(CRPI, 1989: 39).

The Flemish and Francophone policies towards immigrants and ethnic minorities have all taken over the integration framework of the RCM and CEOFR as guidelines for their own policy efforts. They have, however, put the stress on other dimensions. The Flemish government has had a clear preference for supporting active participation through self-organisations of migrants which are willing to co-operate in federations and which accept to be co-ordinated by quango's. In addition, the Flemish government has financially supported local participatory initiatives aimed at urban renewal and integration of deprived groups in disfavoured neighbourhoods. In 1998, the Flemish government adopted a new overarching policy framework clearly based on the recognition of ethnic-cultural groups and including both (settled legal) migrants on the one hand and refugees and groups with nomadic lifestyles ('gypsies') on the other hand as its target groups.

The Francophone and Walloon governments have not been willing to recognise the participation of immigrants in society as specific ethnic-cultural groups. Although in practice often primarily directed towards immigrant groups, policy initiatives are often framed in such a way that immigrants are not specifically defined as target groups. The same can be said of several measures taken by the Region of Brussels-Capital. The large numbers of foreign residents and the de facto residential concentration of ethnic minorities has nevertheless forced officials in Brussels towards a more multicultural stance. The Brussels parliament, the Flemish Community commission (VGC), the Francophone Community commission (COCOF) and the common Community commission (GGC) have thus put forward a special Charter, the *Charte des devoirs et des droits pour une cohabitation harmonieuse des populations bruxelloises*, stipulating the ground rules for coexistence of the different groups in Brussels. In addition, a 'mixed' consultative commission - 'mixed' since it consisted out of an equal number of elected politicians and representatives of immigrant groups - on immigrant issues in Brussels was created in 1991 and installed in 1992. The mixed commission disposed of a consultative power in issues particularly relevant and/or important to the immigrant communities: the issues involved education, employment, housing, living conditions, relations with the police, problems associated to non-implementation of laws, teaching of Islam religion, local political participation, the rights and the position of women in society and refugees. It is worth noting that instead of starting its second term in 1995, the mixed commission was split up into one separate Francophone mixed commission and one separate Flemish mixed commission.

3.B. Competing Flemish-Francophone approaches towards the participation of immigrants in society

Both the Flemish Community Commission (VGC) as the Flemish Community subsidise migrant self-organisations in Brussels. To be eligible for funding an organisation has to be oriented towards emancipation, education and integration, has to function as a meeting point and has to fulfil a cultural function. In addition, the organisation has to operate using (also) the Dutch language - if not always, then at least at the executive level. It should be underlined that the creation and functioning of 'Flemish' migrant self-organisations is indeed very actively stimulated by the Flemish Community Commission and that this has given an important energy-boost to immigrant associational life in Brussels. In the second half of the nineties, the Flemish Community Commission has even given the organisation *Intercultureel Centrum voor Migranten* (ICCM) the task to co-ordinate and support the 'Flemish' migrant self-organisations. The ICCM has, since its creation on 31 March 1993, thus already supported a significant number of migrant associations in Brussels.

Substantial efforts were undertaken to ensure good contacts with these and other immigrant associations. As an example we can cite the fact that the Flemish authorities invited all interested spokespersons of immigrant associations to extraordinary sessions in parliament in november and december 1998. In addition, the mixed commission organised a highly advertised 'day of dialogue' in March 1999 - with concerts, free food and drinks - to promote the Flemish community among immigrant associations. It is definitely not too far fetched to denounce these (and other) activities as - at least partially - strategic attempts of the Flemish government in Brussels to incorporate immigrant (often Francophone) self-organisations into its policy networks, thus hoping to strengthen the sphere of influence of the Flemish community within the Region of Brussels-Capital. Immigrant associations, of course, welcome the Flemish efforts as interesting new possibilities for funding and lobbying. The

lack of governmental financial support of immigrant organisations had before in an important way frustrated the creation of strong immigrant associations and had stimulated incorporation of immigrants into existing (Belgian) religious and syndical organisations (Layton-Henry, 1990). The recent financial support by the (Flemish) government has, in contrast, given a boom to immigrant associational life.

3.C. Enfranchisement of foreign residents

Until recently only Belgian citizens were allowed to participate in formal elections. Belgian politicians have been remarkably reluctant in enfranchising foreign residents. This was, as we have extensively discussed in earlier work (Jacobs, 1998, 1999, 2001), mainly due to polarisation and electoral struggle over the anti-immigrant vote in the 1980s and early 1990s and to the disruptive effect of the Flemish-Francophone cleavage in the second half of the 1990s. It took till early 1999 before Belgium finally enfranchised EU-citizens in compliance with the Maastricht Treaty and the derived European directive. Foreign residents from EU-countries were thus able to participate in the most recent local elections which took place in October 2000. To be able to participate, they had to register as voters in advance. For Belgians voting is compulsory. Non-EU citizens, however, were not allowed to vote in the local elections. A special clause in the constitution stipulated that the electoral laws could only be modified in order to enfranchise third country nationals after the year 2001. The electoral law has been modified in 2004, following a heated political debate, which brought the government very close to a crisis. The next Belgian local elections are to be held in 2006. It will be the first election providing for the participation of third country nationals, albeit only as voters and not as candidates.

3.D. Nationality Legislation

Nationality is an essential instrument for any discussion on participation, especially political, since the vast majority of political rights are associated with nationality. As in most European countries *ius sanguinis*, the intergenerational transmission of citizenship, constitutes the basic principle of access to Belgian state-citizenship. Children born to Belgian nationals are automatically attributed Belgian nationality at birth. However, progressively (in 1984, 1991 and 1999) *ius soli*, the acquisition of nationality due to the place of birth, has been introduced in Belgian citizenship law. Although the 1999 reform was supposed to allow a larger participation of former foreign residents in the 2000 local elections, it only had limited effect on the increase of Belgian voters for the October elections due to slow implementation. For the political participation of Belgians of immigrant origin in the 2000 local elections, the 1984 and 1991 reforms are hence to be considered most relevant (See Part II).

In 1991 the importance of *ius soli* in the Belgian Nationality Law was significantly enhanced. While in 1984 double *ius soli* was still linked to a voluntary act of the parent(s), i.e. a declaration on behalf of the child before the age of 12, it is implemented (quasi-) automatically from the 1st of January 1992 onwards. The new procedure is introduced for the so-called 'third generation immigrants': Every child born on Belgian soil from a parent also born in the territory, automatically (and in 1992 retro-actively) acquires Belgian nationality. There is, however, a 'residence' condition for the parent(s): he or she has to have been living in Belgium for at least five years of the ten years preceding the birth of the child. In addition, a new option-procedure was introduced for 'second generation immigrants' born on Belgian

soil. The Belgian nationality can be acquired for a child born on Belgian soil by declaration made by the parent(s) on behalf of the child before the age of 12. The child must have been staying in Belgium since birth and the parents must have been living at least ten years in Belgium before its birth. Belgian state-citizenship is automatically granted unless the 'district attorney' within two months judges the parents have other motives for applying the Belgian nationality for their child (for example: an improvement of the own residence status) than the well-being of the child. If the parents have not made (or could not make) use of this possibility to opt for Belgian nationality for their child born on Belgian soil, the person involved can him- or herself still opt for Belgian nationality between the age of 18 and 22 (option-procedure of 1984). In addition, a new procedure was introduced allowing to persons (born on Belgian soil and since birth residing there) to demand Belgian nationality between the age of 18 and 30. Belgian nationality is automatically granted unless the 'district attorney' within two months judges that the applicant has an unfavourable penal record. In 2000 the conditions for the option-procedure were simplified. Adults born in Belgium or who have been living in Belgium for seven years and have a permanent residents status, can opt for the Belgian nationality. The 'district attorney' has one month time to block the acquisition of Belgian citizenship.

In Belgium, naturalisation is discretionary. It can be refused and there is no right of appeal against a refusal of citizenship. Discretionary naturalisation is in essence not a right one can make use of but a favour which one can be granted¹. This is symbolically made clear in the Belgian system in which naturalisation is still 'politically' decided upon by parliament. Loss of the old nationality is in principle not a condition to acquire Belgian nationality (albeit that simultaneous possession of Belgian state-citizenship in combination with possession of state-citizenship of most other European countries is ruled out by the Treaty of Strasbourg). Since 1996, all adults who have been residing for five years (three years if one has a refugee-status) can apply for naturalisation. The applicant has to fill in a form giving information about his income, education, knowledge of language, etc. and has to give a motivation for the application. In addition some Belgian people have to vow for the applicant. The 'district attorney' there upon has four months time to investigate the 'will to integrate' and the penal record of the applicant. The application is then sent to the Chamber (one of the two bodies of parliament) that decides if the applicant will be granted Belgian nationality. Since 2000 the residence requirement has been dropped to three years (and two years for refugees), the 'district attorney' has one month to investigate the demand and the test of integration has been dropped.

Box 1 – Participation rights according to main categories of newcomers

	Type of residence permit	Participation rights
Naturalised foreigners	No restriction	No restriction
Foreigners with a right of abode	Renewable 5 or 1 year residence permit	Right to vote in local elections after 5 years of residence, but not to stand as candidate
Foreigners without right of abode	Renewable 1 year residence permit	Right to vote in local elections after 5 years of residence, but not to stand as candidate
Undocumented	None	None

¹ Note that there exist several procedure of nationality acquisition and attribution. This is only valid for the procedure adjudicated by the Parliament. Non Belgians with a certain length of residence, as well as second and third generations, have access to forms of automatic and semi-automatic nationality attribution.

Part II: Active Civic Participation of Third Country Immigrants

1. Introduction

Immigrants and their offspring have for a long time been perceived in Belgium as workers and not so much as civic and political actors. However, despite this infra-civic condition, they have always developed forms of political activity either at the margins or outside the political institutions of the Belgian State ; this in order to improve their living conditions or more generally to improve their position in society and power relations struggles.

The forms of participation of immigrant origin people largely depend on the political opportunity structure available at certain moments in time, namely the conditions for access to political and civil rights, the degree of openness of political parties and civil society associations, the electoral system, ec. This in turn depend on the implementation of mechanisms of inclusion/exclusion by the State and other civil society actors. This institutional view of immigrant active civic participation is dominant in the Belgian literature. As an inscreasing number of research has shown, institutional factors can indeed explain a large part of the conditions under which immigrants may participate in society. The evolution of nationality legislation, for instance, has allowed a very effective opening of Belgian political institutions to the multicultural reality of the country. This is also true for the citizenship of the European Union which has allowed EU citizens to actively participate in local and European elections without any nationality requirement.

These institutional dynamics have been studied particularly well in the last decade. Academic research has documented and analysed the fact that immigrants have gradually moved from non-State bounded to increasingly State-centric forms of participation. In the following, we will shed light on the most relevant research in this respect. By doing this, we will touch upon significant developments of the Belgian political context in its relation with multicultural issues such as the rise of electoral mobilisation among immigrants, the emergence of immigrant origin politicians, the role of social capital and associational membership, the outbreak of confrontational political mobilisations, etc.

2. Active civic participation

2.A. Social citizenship and active participation of immigrants as labourers

In 1967 EEC-foreign workers were granted rights on equal footing with Belgians in order to participate in social elections (i.e. worker councils): elections within private and public companies of a certain size. Pressure of the trade unions led to the same opening for non-EEC-workers in 1971 (Poncin & Wolf, 1975: 17). The right to vote and to stand as a candidate in social elections regardless of nationality that migrants have obtained in 1971 is considered by the trade union to be a model. Historically, it is indeed the first arena of legitimate active civic participation of migrants. In this context, it is no surprise to observe that the same trade unions that fought for the representation rights of non Belgian workers at the workplace very quickly lobbied for extending similar participation and representation rights to local elections (Rea, 1997: 52; Jacobs, 1998: 154). Although, there is an abundant literature on social relations, it should be noted that there is no specific attention of Belgian academics for the specific position of migrant social representatives and voters. It is generally considered by labour market specialists that this kind of participation is more important for

some groups than for others. Older waves of immigration like South Europeans (especially Italians), have been more active than more recent immigrants.

2.B. Associational and political participation: four doctoral research theses

Although, there is some journalistic and intellectual interest for the issue of active civic participation of immigrants in Belgium since the seventies, academic research turned its focus to the subject matter in a consistent way only at the turn of the nineties. Within this strand of research, there are four doctoral theses which deserve specific attention.

In his PhD research, Marco Martiniello (1992), echoing American and French debates led by authors such as Miller (1981) and Catherine Withol de Wenden (1988), was among the first Belgian scholar to systematically challenge the idea that immigrants were politically quiescent. Studying Italian elites and leaders, he showed that the lack of political rights was not leading to a vacuum in terms of participation. Martiniello argued that the Belgian political system did not only disenfranchise non nationals, but disempowered them. Articulating a theory of power to the case in point, Martiniello showed that Italians were politically active but powerless and the cause for lied in that the Belgian political system had marginalised identity claims in the political sphere.

Three other doctoral dissertation, two being comparative, have studied aspects of civic and political participation in recent years. Dirk Jacobs (1998, see also section 3.C. above) compared the parliamentary debate on voting rights for non State citizens in Belgium and the Netherlands. Jacobs' focus was on the precondition for active civic participation and explained how the Netherlands managed to reach a consensus on the enfranchisement which had as consequence to stimulate the active participation of immigrant minorities. In the meanwhile, he showed that Belgium, with its institutional and linguistic complexity, had been debating the question for more than two decades with very difficult step forwards. Methodologically hinged on discourse analysis, Jacobs thesis scrutinised the internal logic of argumentation of parliamentary actors in both countries and concluded that a shift in the traditional conception of citizenship was at work in both countries whereby nationality could not anymore be taken as an absolute requirement for local political rights and participation.

Andrea Rea presented another account of the issue by looking at the links between integration policies and immigrant responses to them. Starting from an anthropological perspective and using participant observation, Rea provides in his thesis one of the finest analyses of a specific type of reaction, although exceptional, of second generation youth to prejudice and discrimination: the "race riot". Rea's focus is on the 1991 events in the municipality of Forest. He introduces a number of concepts developed by American scholars such as the notion of racialisation which helps identify the resulting context of a process of social change marked by symbolic exclusion, domination and inferiorisation. Racialisation is, in his view, the pre-condition for the outbreak of this type of reactive violence which is, however, only unleashed because the rioters are collectively and individually experiencing racial discrimination (at school, at work and with police and justice authorities), on the one hand, and social disadvantage, on the other hand. Drawing on social movement literature, he further argues that the opening of the political opportunity structure at the turn of the nineties made possible this confrontational repertoire of collective action. In other words, the confrontation between the youth and the police happened in the context of a reflux of institutional and political racism in Brussels and not the converse. Rea has also shown how daily confrontation with the police and justice system created a deep-seated feeling of injustice

among his respondents. Introducing Garfinkel's concept of "ceremonies of degradation", he shed light on one aspect of a broader theme which is criminalisation. This is an issue of central importance in Brussels and other large cities and which impact on the active participation of immigrants and their offspring.

In 2001, Bousetta presented the first comparative study of the political participation of Moroccans. Dwelling on four case-studies (Antwerp, Liège, Utrecht and Lille) in three different countries (Belgium, the Netherlands and France), Bousetta analysed the involvement of his study group in the public and political life in a contextual manner. Using the Bourdieusian notion of field of integration, he showed that the difference invoked by the classical models of integration and citizenship developed by authors such as Castles (1994) is overplayed. Locally, there are similar mechanisms of internal differentiation between actors which lead to a situation where only a minority of successful collective actors make a breakthrough in local policy communities. The majority of the respondents interviewed by Bousetta has what he calls an infra-political type of activity. In other words, there is a sphere of political activity within the local fields of integration whatever the country considered which involve a set of actors taking positions and decisions in relation to one another and which are not primarily aimed at influencing the course of mainstream public policy or the selection of political representatives through democratic procedures. As a matter of consequence, Bousetta concludes that the performance of the political mobilisation of Moroccans in the four cities studied remains marginal and mainly introverted.

These four doctoral dissertation, all using qualitative methodologies, have been expanded into subsequent work (See the numerous research and publications in bibliography), most of them by the same authors, on various aspects of the active civic and political participation of immigrants.

2.C. Electoral participation²

Until recently, academic research gave greater attention to non-electoral channels of participation. But considering the increasing involvement of immigrant origin citizens in elections since 1994, things have changed. In addition, some of the foreign residents were for the first time able to vote and stand as a candidate in Belgian municipal elections in October 2000. Indeed, due 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.

Although research showed that EU-citizens did not use very much their newly granted rights to local political participation, the October 2000 elections did constitute a landmark for the political participation of immigrant origin citizens, especially in the Brussels Capital Region (See also Rea, 2002). In the previous municipal elections, held in 1994, the participation and success of Belgians of non-EU foreign origin was modest. Only 14 Belgians of non-EU foreign origin were elected on a total of 650 local councillors for the 19 municipalities of Brussels. This was already a progress since until then, the representation of immigrant ethnic minorities in local political life has been non-existing even in the municipalities and neighbourhoods where immigrant origin citizens were significantly concentrated.

² Insofar as the electoral behaviours of ethnic minorities in Regional elections is very much connected to linguistic power struggle, we introduce this discussion in a separate section below.

In October 2000, there was a remarkable increase of elected Belgian politicians of non-EU - mainly Moroccan – origin. As can be seen in Table 3, of 652 municipal councillors, no less than 90 (or 13.8 per cent) are of non-EU immigrant background. As a result, 20-25% of the politicians of the municipal councils in the boroughs of Brussels, Schaarbeek, St-Josse and Molenbeek are now of immigrant Turkish or Moroccan descent. This is quite remarkable, since the Belgians of non-EU-immigrant origin only make up maximum 9% of the electorate. After the October 2000 election, several Belgians of immigrant non-EU origin have become aldermen for the first time. As argued by Jacobs, Martiniello and Rea, this was the sign of a changing pattern of political participation of immigrant origin citizens in the Brussels Capital Region (2002). These authors studied the electoral success of Turkish and (mainly) Moroccan politicians and the poor involvement of EU-citizens in these elections. They stressed that the phenomenon of preferential voting for immigrant (non-EU origin) candidates which was already observed in in the regional election of 1995 and 1999 reappeared and even shattered all expectations.

Table 4. Elected councillors of non-EU origin and Flemish elected councillors in the 19 municipalities of Brussels, their percentage of the total number of elected councillors in each municipality, October 2000

	Total number of seats	Elected councillors of non-EU origin (value)	% of elected councillors of non-EU origin	Flemish elected councillors (value)	% of Flemish elected councillors
Anderlecht	43	7	16,3%	11	25,6%
Auderghem	29	0	0%	1	3,4%
Berchem	24	0	0%	7	29,2%
Bruxelles	47	13	27,7%	8	17%
Etterbeek	33	6	18,2%	3	9%
Evere	31	2	6,5%	10	32,2%
Forest	35	4	11,4%	1	2,8%
Ganshoren	25	1	4,0%	7	28%
Ixelles	41	6	16,6%	1	2,4%
Jette	33	2	6,1%	7	21,2%
Koekelberg	25	3	12,0%	5	20%
Molenbeek	41	12	29,3%	5	12,2%
Saint-Gilles	35	8	22,9%	2	5,7%
Saint-Josse	27	13	48,2%	1	3,7%
Schaerbeek	47	10	21,3%	7	14,9%
Uccle	41	2	4,9%	0	0%
Watermael	27	0	0%	2	7,4%
Woluwé St-L	35	1	2,9%	4	11,4%
Woluwé St-P	33	0	0%	2	6%
Total	652	90	13,8%	84	12,8%

Source : Based on calculations by ISPO-KULeuven, a patronym analysis by GERME-ULB (see Jacobs, Martiniello & Rea, 2002), on data of the Ministry of Interior Affairs and on data of the Flemish Community Commission.

2.D. The interconnectedness of polyethnic and multinational politics in Brussels

There is a relatively large number of immigrants and ethnic minority groups living in the Belgian capital. The existence of ethnic minority groups has never been officially recognised as a reason for group differentiated rights and special representation. Ethnic minorities have no independent public recognition outside the dual Flemish-Francophone structure of the political field. Often, members of ethnic minority groups are not even individually incorporated in the Brussels polity, since non-nationals are not enfranchised. This will change in the near future. In 2006, non-Belgians will be granted the right to vote, but not to stand as candidates, for local elections.

It is striking that there is an important difference between the Flemish and Francophone approach for dealing with the immigrant groups in Brussels). The Flemish (Community) government adheres to a model for integration of immigrants in line with multicultural ideas of group-based recognition—and was influenced by the former Dutch minority policy. The Flemish government adopted a policy framework based on the recognition of ethnic-cultural minority groups, with a clear preference for co-operation with (and support of) self-organisations of immigrants. It is thus important to note that, despite the fact that one Flemish in three in Brussels voted for the extreme right wing and racist party Vlaams Blok in regional elections, the other Flemish parties have refrained from developing a form of minority nationalism hostile to immigrants. Quite the contrary, there is now in Brussels a set of well established Flemish multicultural policies.

In contrast, as in the assimilationist-republican model of France, the Walloon and Francophone (Community) government has not been willing to recognise ethnic categories. Both French speaking sub-governments are inspired to varying extents by French assimilationist ideas of republican integration. In the Walloon government approach, ethnic minorities are at best defined either as immigrants or as people of 'foreign origin' and the emphasis is on intercultural relations.

It should be pointed out that the difference between the Flemish and Francophone approach for dealing with post-immigration issues is very much interconnected with, and instrumental to, strategies used by both parties as contenders in the political field of Brussels. Their divergent positions on integration policy allow them to protect and reinforce their respective positions in the multinational political arena. The Flemish Community has done substantial effort to woo immigrant associations in Brussels. These activities are - at least partially - strategic attempts of the Flemish government in Brussels to incorporate immigrant (often Francophone) self-organisations into its policy networks, thus hoping to strengthen the sphere of influence of the Flemish community within the Region of Brussels-Capital. Immigrant associations, of course, welcome the Flemish efforts as interesting new possibilities for funding and lobbying. On Francophone side, the Flemish efforts are looked at with quite some suspicion. It is claimed by a number of militant Francophones that assimilation of immigrants into French culture is in their own best interest.

Favell and Martiniello (1998) have correctly pointed out that this peculiar multi-levelled governance situation in Brussels enables and encourages new types of immigrant opportunities and political voice. Indeed, immigrant associations can now - to give but one example - go 'shopping' for funding and influence in either the Flemish or Francophone

community and can strategically opt for different forms of collective mobilisation - stressing either ethnic identity or neutral forms of social insertion (Jacobs & Swyngedouw, 2002).

The institutional structures may further lead to pathological forms of political activity and expression among marginalised ethnic minority groups. The observation that political attention - and in its wake not only temporary harsher police control but also funding opportunities, renovation programs, youth centres - increases after urban violence as has been the case after the unrest of 1991, 1993 and 1997, does not seem to be a good incentive for more constructive political and social forms of participation. Of course, urban violence by immigrant youngsters has not been a premeditated form of political activism. However, it should be pointed out that for instance an extreme leftist organisation systematically tries to cash in on local problems and enlarges every incident involving immigrants and the police. Nearly every incident is followed by anti-police manifestations, which, as a 'safe' recipe for conflict between police and youngsters, often lead to violent outbursts. In addition, an important segment of the Moroccan and Turkish youngsters is increasingly putting into question the credibility and legitimacy of (immigrant) social workers, welfare organisations and official channels for political demands and instead prefers to opt for confrontation with local authorities and violent infrapolitics (and/or involvement in criminal activities). A structural reason is without any doubt the earlier mentioned residential concentration of Moroccan and Turkish youngsters in disfavoured neighbourhoods with high unemployment figures and little hope for short term socio-economic revival. In order to tackle this problem, both Flemish as Francophone authorities support initiatives aimed at sustaining the (re)development of disfavoured neighbourhoods. These programs, however, only very slowly lead to major improvements. The situation in the disfavoured neighbourhoods, where often over 40% to 50% of the inhabitants is disenfranchised because they are foreign residents, has been one of the main reasons for antiracist lobbying in favour of enfranchisement of non-nationals.

The interconnectedness of multinational and polyethnic politics, however, also (re)produces problems of exclusion and non-representation of immigrant groups. This has particularly been the case in the debate over local enfranchisement of foreign residents. In earlier work by Jacobs (1999) it has been shown how polarisation had transformed that debate into an electoral struggle over the anti-immigrant vote in the 1980s and early 1990s. It was only in the second half of the 1990s that the Flemish-Francophone cleavage gained importance in the matter (Jacobs, 1998). Constrained by a European directive on the matter and urged by a judgment of the European Court of Justice, Belgium did in the end grant local voting rights to EU citizens in 1999. The constitution had been changed in 1998 allowing to equally enfranchise third country nationals from 2001 onwards, but attempts to change the electoral law and effectively grant local voting rights to all foreign residents failed in 2002, only to succeed in 2004. In both cases, the Francophones increasingly supported enfranchisement of foreign residents, while the Flemish delayed any policy changes. Proposals for enfranchisement of all non-nationals were taboo for the main (Flemish) actors in the political field, fearing a white back-lash and further success of the racist party Vlaams Blok. This was for instance the main argument of the leading government party of the Flemish right-liberals to veto enfranchisement of non-EU foreign residents early 2002 (and once again in 2004 – the latter time unsuccessfully). The Flemish resistance to enfranchisement of (even European) foreign residents was at an earlier stage, however, equally linked to a twofold set of external issues: the political representation of Francophones in the Flemish periphery of Brussels on the one hand, and the political representation of Flemish within the regional and municipal institutions of Brussels on the other hand.

In both cases, the entire Flemish argument relies on the implicit hypothesis that the foreign (European) vote would benefit straight away to French speaking political actors and that Flemish politicians would weaken their electoral positions in Brussels and its periphery. It is a public secret that Francophone politicians shared these views and regarded maximal extension of the local electorate, although presented as a sacred universal principle, as a weapon in the conflict between the two communities. The debate over local enfranchisement of EU- and non-EU-citizens has thus become an issue in the power struggle between the two linguistic communities.

One can wonder how founded the Flemish fears about imminent electoral success of the Francophones, in case of enfranchisement of foreign residents, are. Predictions by Bousetta & Swyngedouw (1999: 120-127) have been confirmed that the effect of EU-enfranchisement is very diverse and local. Moreover, participation of EU-citizens was so low (Jacobs, Martiniello & Rea, 2002), it hardly had any effects in Brussels and its periphery. Undoubtedly the overall majority of foreigners in Brussels will vote for Francophone parties. French is, after all, the lingua franca and the most likely language foreigners would (decide to) pick up. Since the overall majority of the Belgian electorate votes Francophone as well, it is, however, hardly certain if the political presence of the Flemish in Brussels would automatically be effected in a negative way in case all foreigners went to vote. In municipalities where 85 per cent of the Belgian inhabitants now vote for Francophone lists, a situation in which only 75 per cent of the foreign residents would vote Francophone, could even improve the situation of the Flemish. Positive campaigning of the Flemish within foreign communities – for instance stressing the Flemish multicultural model - could help them strengthen their positions. It could well be, however, that the negative position some Flemish political actors have taken in the debate in the past will turn their fear into a self fulfilling prophecy; foreign voters will not vote for political parties which have tried to keep them disenfranchised. In any event, whatever the electoral scores of the Flemish on the municipal level may be, there will be no direct consequences for the rights of the Dutch speaking in Brussels since these are protected in the constitution. The Flemish, however, fear the Francophones will increasingly question these special minority rights if the political presence of the Flemish decreases. A comparable logic applies to the problematic of the Flemish periphery of Brussels, although the power relations Flemish-Francophones are vice versa there. The Flemish will not accept that the Flemish status of these municipalities will be further put into question if Francophone parties win even more local political importance due to foreign votes.

In both cases, the situation in Brussels and the situation in the periphery of Brussels, the resistance of the Flemish to enfranchisement of the foreigners boils down to defending the power and positions of the Dutch speaking. Enfranchisement is said to disrupt the existing system of checks and balances between Flemish and Francophones which ultimately is the basis for the federal structure of the country.

Bousetta & Swyngedouw (1999: 115) have correctly pointed out that it is striking that the same arguments have not been put forward explicitly in debates over acquisition of state citizenship. It is nevertheless clear that, especially in Brussels, there will be an increasing importance of the so-called new Belgians (people of foreign origin who acquired citizenship through *ius soli*, option or naturalisation) among the electorate. Martiniello (1998: 138) has estimated that already in 1996 there were about 35,500 Belgian voters of foreign non-EU origin in Brussels, thus constituting 6,6 per cent of the electorate. It is clear that a large majority of these new Belgians are likely to be Francophone voters. To explain why the

debates over acquisition of state citizenship in the 1980s and early 1990s did nevertheless not become an issue in the power struggle between the two linguistic communities, Bousetta & Swyngedouw (1999) have put forward some plausible reasons. They have suggested an interesting institutional explanation, referring to the fact that only once Belgium had become a true federal state, it made sense to see the idea of group differentiated rights as a stake (Ibid.: 118). In addition, they have pointed out the importance of the difference in salience and social impact of enfranchisement on the one hand and acquisition of nationality on the other hand. The former is a measure immediately affecting a large group, the latter is a more gradual measure which apparently is judged to be less threatening (Ibid.: 118).

In any event, in the wake of the ardent debates between Flemish and Francophones over enfranchisement in the late 1990s, both groups increasingly became aware of the increasing electoral importance, especially in Brussels, of the new Belgians in the upcoming 1999 national and regional elections. At the end of 1998 and 1999, the Flemish Community (Commission) in Brussels openly wooed immigrant organisations by inviting all interested spokespersons to extraordinary sessions in parliament. On Francophone side, the right-liberal party PRL, which had before been a party with moderate anti-immigrant positions, in March 1998 attracted Mostafa Ouezekhti, a well known former Ecologist politician of Moroccan descent, to its party. In addition, the PRL radically transformed its positions on enfranchisement of non-EU-residents and on acquisition of nationality, which they would now ardently defend.

Since ethnic minority groups will increasingly play a very important role in the (demographic) development of the city, they clearly constitute an important new factor in the Flemish-Francophone divide and a potential electoral pool for individual political parties. The Francophone parties had already modestly taken this into consideration in the 1994 municipal elections and the 1995 regional elections. In the local elections of 1994, on a total of 651 elected councillors, 14 were of non-EU origin and these were all elected on Francophone lists (Martiniello, 1998: 135). In the regional elections of 1995, four candidates of foreign origin (three Moroccan and one Tunisian) were elected into Parliament (on a total of 75 MPs), once again all four on Francophone lists. The Flemish parties had done no efforts to enlist candidates of foreign origin³.

This would change in the Regional elections of 13 June 1999, coinciding with no less than three other elections in Brussels (European Parliament, the Chamber and the Senate). The Flemish socialist party SP and the Flemish ecologist party Agalev joined forces with a group of independent intellectuals and formed the alliance SP!Aga for the elections of the Brussels Parliament. On the SP!Aga-list a young woman, a lawyer of Moroccan descent, Yamila Idrissi, was given a prominent (but not a very likely one to be elected in) 4th position. Moreover, several people of foreign origin, some of them clearly Francophones, took part in the alliance. The Flemish-right liberals VLD and the moderate nationalists Volksunie also joined forces in an alliance and gave a young man, a social worker of Moroccan descent, Fouad Ahidar, the 4th position on its electoral list. The Flemish christian-democratic party CVP also incorporated candidates of foreign origin, but these were given less prominent positions. For the first time these Flemish parties also systematically campaigned in French in order to address possible Francophone (immigrant) supporters. On Francophone side, all

³ Let alone journalistic accounts, there is no systematic information available on ethnic minority candidates and elected. This research gap will be partly closed by an ongoing research led by Dirk Jacobs, Hassan Bousetta, Marco Martiniello, Andrea Rea and Marc Swyngedouw which surveyed the profiles of the candidates at the Brussels regional election of June 2004.

parties (except the racist FN and FNB) included candidates of foreign origin on their lists. Ecolo, PS and PRL-FDF gave several candidates of foreign origin positions on their lists in which they would almost certainly be elected. In the neighbourhoods with high concentrations of immigrants, there was a very lively and intense campaign of all parties. Indeed, it was really only in the immigrant neighbourhoods of Brussels that one could not help noticing there would be elections held. It is worth noting that a lot of shops in the immigrant neighbourhoods 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 antiracist identities (see Cadat & Fennema, 1998).

After the 1999 elections, no less than eight members of the Brussels' parliament were of foreign origin. All were actually Belgian-Maghrebians (7 of Moroccan and one of Tunisian origin) origin. That is only three less than the Flemish representation in the parliament. The success of Belgians of non-EU origin is quite remarkable and constitutes a better political result than the Flemish politicians have achieved. The Flemish were, however, definitely not crowded out in the 2000 elections – contrary to what might have been expected. With 84 elected Flemish councillors, representation is better in 2000 than in the previous 1988 (78) and 1994 (71) municipal elections (Mares, 1999: 340). It did occur on a number of bilingual lists, that Flemish candidates (with a favorable position on the list) did not get elected due to better preferential voting scores of Francophone Belgians of non-EU origin (holding a lower position on the list). Francophone candidates, however, were equally toppled by Francophone candidates of non-EU origin due to preferential votes – which in a number of cases led to internal party problems (see Jacobs, Martiniello & Rea, 2002). As is illustrated by the progress of Flemish councillors, it is clear that the increased presence of Belgians of non-EU origin has not been detrimental for the Flemish minority group. It is, however, obvious that there is a tricky relationship between minority representation of immigrant groups on the one hand and representation of the Flemish minority on the other hand.

In the 2004 regional elections a number of patterns observed in earlier elections repeated themselves. Once again, Belgians of non-EU immigrant background played a prominent role in electoral campaigns and had quite some electoral success. Of the 72 Francophone member of parliament 17 are of non-EU origin. Among them 12 are of Moroccan origin, 2 of Turkish origin, 1 of Tunisian origin, 1 of Congolese origin and 1 of Guinean origin. Of the 17 Flemish members of parliament, one is of Moroccan origin. In addition, the growing success of politicians of immigrant origin was translated into executive power. A Francophone politician of Turkish origin (Mr Emir Kir) was appointed 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).

It remains an open question how the de facto political incorporation of segments of the immigrant community - those who have been granted or have acquired Belgian citizenship - on the one hand and the unavoidable debate over modes of (indirect?) representation of the nearly 30 per cent disenfranchised inhabitants will further affect the position of the Flemish in Brussels in the future. In any event, it seems to be unavoidable that the issue of political incorporation of ethnic minority groups, and possibly in its wake the issue of polyethnic

rights, will further encounter the Flemish-Francophone divide and the issue of group differentiated rights for the Flemish in Brussels as a companion de route. Given the newly guaranteed representation on the regional level from 2004 onwards, the scenario of the Flemish being crowded out is no longer a threat. The Flemish do, however, still run a risk of losing political ground on the municipal level. In addition, appealing to the immigrant origin electorate remains important for both the Flemish and the Francophone political parties in elections of the federal level. At the local level, the Flemish do run the risk of being crowded out by (Francophone) Belgians of foreign origin – although this has not been the case up till now - and will run this risk all the more once all non-nationals will be enfranchised. As a result, most probably demands for guaranteed representation of the Flemish on the municipal level will hence keep popping up in the future. In any event, for the foreseeable future, creating alliances with immigrant groups will remain an important political element in the power struggle between the two national language groups in Brussels.

2.E. Participatory frameworks for immigrants in Brussels

In the seventies several municipalities in Brussels have installed advisory committees of immigrants. Their mission was above all informative. The advisory committees should provide information on the situation of immigrant communities to local councils and local administrations on the one hand and should provide information to the immigrants on local and regional administrative services. Often they were explicitly forbidden to be involved in (party) political activities. Constantly confronted with their limits to gaining political power and influence, and de facto functioning as a surrogate for genuine political rights for foreign residents on the local level, the advisory committees were doomed to question their own reasons of existence and most of them disappeared in the 1980s (either officially or de facto). In 2001 the Flemish green alderman Bruno De Lille has reinstalled the local advisory committee in the municipality of Brussels-city.

There have not only been advisory committees of immigrants on the local level, but also on the regional level. Shortly after its creation in 1989, the four regional assemblies of the Region of Brussels Capital, jointly took an interest in integration policy issues and participation of immigrant communities therein. The Regional parliament, the Flemish Community commission (VGC), the Francophone Community commission (COCOF) and the common Community commission (GGC) on 27th March 1990 decided to create a so-called 'explorative' commission on immigrant issues. The commission on the one hand had to study possible steps which could be taken to improve relations between the regional political institutions and different immigrant groups in the Region and on the other hand had to look into what issues would have to be tackled. The commission, installed in May 1990, was given one year to accomplish this mission. It consisted out of 36 members of which half were regional politicians and the other half were representatives of immigrant or Belgian-immigrant associations. The explorative commission finalised its report on 21st June 1991. Its conclusions led to a resolution adopted by the Regional parliament on 9th July 1991, in which the wish was stated to create a permanent mixed commission - mixed because consisting out of elected politicians and representatives of immigrant groups - on immigrant issues. In the resolution, the powers, structure and overall organisation of this future commission were laid down, as well as the procedures for designating the representatives of immigrant groups. In addition, a special Charter, the *Charte des devoirs et des droits pour une cohabitation harmonieuse des populations bruxelloises*, stipulating the ground rules for coexistence of the different groups in Brussels was put forward.

The mixed commission would essentially dispose of a consultative power. It would examine projects or proposals relevant to the immigrant communities and would equally be able to propose new initiatives. The issues the mixed commission can address and the policy fields it can get involved into, were explicitly stipulated in the resolution: education, employment, housing, living conditions, relations with the police, problems associated to non-implementation of laws, teaching of Islam religion, local political participation, the rights and the position of women in society and refugees.

Just like the 'explorative' commission, the mixed commission would consist out of 36 members, half of them being elected politicians, the other half being immigrant representatives. All of them would have to adhere to the Charter before their installation in the commission. The immigrant representatives were to be designated through a special procedure. First, immigrant associations would be invited in the press to present their candidates. Then, the executives of the four regional assemblies would make a selection among the candidates after having consulted the 'explorative' commission. Finally, the four regional assemblies would approve of the list of candidates through a secret ballot.

The mixed commission would consist out of an executive office and three working groups. The executive would consist out of twelve members; eight members of parliament (five Francophones and three Flemish) and four immigrant representatives. In addition to these twelve ordinary members, the executive would comprise two rapporteurs and two secretaries - all four members of parliament. The presidency and the three first vice-presidencies would be reserved to members of parliament, while the fourth vice-presidency would be given to an immigrant representative. Three working groups would look into specific issues the mixed commission wants to study and address. Each of these groups would consist of 12 members; 6 members of parliament (four Francophones and two Flemish) and 6 immigrant representatives (four Francophones and two Flemish). One member of parliament and one immigrant representative have the task to prepare the policy advice of the working groups.

The first mixed commission was installed on 6 February 1992. It has addressed issues as the new housing code, the granting of a frequency to an Arab radio for Brussels and the report on poverty. In response to the urban violence in Forest and St-Gilles in May 1991, the mixed commission decided to give special attention to the youth of foreign origin. A program was launched in April 1992 aiming at a 'dialogue with the youth'. Between June 1992 and April 1993 over 60 hearings were organised with youngsters, parents, social workers, teachers, the police, shop-owners and representatives of immigrant associations. The activities finally led to a report describing the situation of youngsters of immigrant descent in Brussels.

It is worth noting that, following the 1995 regional elections, it took a while before the decision was taken to install a new mixed commission (29th November 1996), due to the reluctance of the new governmental partner PRL-FDF and linguistic difficulties. In fact, it was even decided that Flemish and Francophones would also create their own mixed commission. The Flemish mixed commission did substantial effort to woo immigrant associations by inviting all interested spokespersons to extraordinary sessions in parliament in November and December 1998. In addition, they organised a highly advertised 'day of dialogue' in March 1999 – with concerts, free food and drinks – to promote the Flemish community among immigrant associations.

2.F. Social capital, associational membership and political participation.

In 1995-1996, a large quantitative survey was launched in Brussels studying immigrant incorporation on various dimensions including social, economic, political and linguistic aspects (Swyngedouw, Phalet, Deschouwer 1999). This research, based on representative samples of the two largest minority groups in Brussels (Moroccans and Turks⁴) and a matching sample of low-educated Belgian, helped gaining new insights into the involvement of minority groups in public life⁵. In a subsequent publication based on the same dataset, Jacobs, Phalet and Swyngedouw (2004) have looked more specifically into the relationship between associational membership and political involvement⁶. Their aim was to evaluate the validity of the thesis advanced by Fennema and Tillie in the international literature which holds that differences in political participation between groups can be explained by different levels of 'ethnic civic community', and more specifically by differences in social capital (including participation in associational life).

In this article, Jacobs, Phalet, Swyngedouw offered a nicely elaborated quantitative analysis of the link between associational involvement and political participation. Indeed, the survey included items asking the respondents to report on their active membership of a list of voluntary organisations. Active membership was defined in the study as 'having participated in one or more activities of an organisation over the last year'. In both ethnic minority samples, a distinction was made between perceived ethnic (Turkish or Moroccan) and cross-ethnic (Belgian or mixed) types of organisation.

The comparison of the overall participation rates revealed striking differences along ethnic lines between a very active Turkish community, a somewhat less active working-class Belgians, and a much less active Moroccan community in Brussels. Table 1 is reproduced from this study and indicates the total proportion of respondents who participated in organisations. The percentage figures in brackets indicate the proportion of participants in more than one organisation. Over two-thirds of the Turks (68 per cent) are found to participate in one or more organisations⁷, compared to half of the Belgians (52 per cent) and one-fifth of the Moroccans (19 per cent).

Table 5 Participation of Turks, Moroccans and Belgian nationals in ethnic and cross-ethnic organisations in Brussels (per cent)

	Belgians	Turks	Moroccans
Cross-ethnic participation (Belgian or mixed organisations)		60 (10)	17 (6)
Ethnic participation (Turkish or Moroccan organisations)		35 (10)	10 (6)
Total participation	52 (22)	68 (23)	19 (9)

Source: Jacobs, Phalet & Swyngedouw 2004

⁴ Aleatory samples among all adults of Moroccan and Turkish nationality who do not hold Belgian citizenship

⁵ The sample of low-educated ethnic Belgians was chosen to have a 'fair' comparison in which education is kept constant.

⁶ Participation in churches, sports clubs, leisure associations, etc, is indiscriminately included in the data.

⁷ Those who are active in more than one organisation are mentioned between brackets

Jacobs, Phalet and Swyngedouw found that not only are both Turks and Moroccans more often active in Belgian or ethnically mixed organisations than in ethnic forms of organisation, but those Turks and Moroccans who are more active in ethnic organisations are also more likely to participate in the activities of cross-ethnic organisations. They also looked at the types of organisation in which ethnic minorities and working-class Belgians are mostly active (Table 6). Percentages in the table indicate the total proportion of respondents who participated in given types of organisations. The percentages in brackets indicate the proportion of respondents participating in more than one organisation.

Table 6 Participation of Turks, Moroccans and Belgian nationals in various types of organisation in Brussels (per cent)

	Belgians	Turks	Moroccans
Political or interest representation (trade unions, parties)	29 (2)	59 (3)	11 (2)
Service organisations (educational and recreational)	30 (1)	25 (9)	11 (5)
Voluntary associations (religious, neighbourhood)	12 (1)	20 (3)	7 (3)
Social movement organisations (anti- racism, women)	9 (1)	2 (1)	4 (1)

Source: Jacobs, Phalet & Swyngedouw 2004

There can be little doubt that ethnic minorities and Belgians alike invest mostly in conventional political representation: 59 per cent of Turks, 29 per cent of Belgians and 11 per cent of Moroccans participate in political parties or trade unions, especially in the major Christian-Democrat and Social-Democrat Unions. The latter finding suggests that entrenched consociational politics in Belgium are still the most significant representational channel of the working class, including Turkish migrants and, to a lesser extent, the Moroccan minority (cf. Boussetta 2000).

In the infrapolitical sphere, service organisations also play an important role: 30 per cent of Belgians, 25 per cent of Turks and 11 per cent of Moroccans are actively involved in educational or recreational organisations such as sports or youth clubs. In contrast to participation in representational and service organisations, direct participation in voluntary associations is rather limited, except for the relatively high Turkish participation in mosque associations: 20 per cent of Turks, 12 per cent of Belgians and 7 per cent of Moroccans are active in religious or local neighbourhood associations. Participation in social movement organisations is marginal: only 9 per cent of Belgians, 4 per cent of Moroccans and 2 per cent of Turks mention participation in the activities of anti-racism or women's movements. To sum up the arguments of Jacobs, Phalet and Swyngedouw: overall the picture is quite clear in the sense that Turks are more active than Moroccans in associational life. This pattern consistently holds after controlling for gender and education. (See more elaborate discussion in Jacobs, Phalet & Swyngedouw, 2004)

The authors go on to test the argument of their Dutch colleague Fennema and Tillie. The latter suggest an link between 'civic ethnic community' and political involvement at the aggregate level. In line with their claims, and given the fact there is in Brussels higher levels of (ethnic) membership among Turks than among Moroccans, we should expect to find more political involvement among Turks than Moroccans. In reality, however, there is no significant

differences between the two groups in Brussels and, when they exit, they point to the converse result.

To monitor political involvement of ethnic minority groups in Amsterdam, Fennema and Tillie (1999) used a so-called ‘political participation scale’. The Brussels survey (Swyngedouw et al. 1999) did not contain the same scale for political participation, but there were a number of items which served as alternatives. As an index of democratic participation, in the absence of formal voting rights for (non-EU) foreign nationals, 2000), the Brussels survey asked Turkish, Moroccan and working-class Belgians about their informal political activities. Table 7 reproduces the results of Jacobs, Phalet and Swyngedouw by presenting the average score on three relevant items.

In their Amsterdam research Fennema and Tillie (1999) also make use of a number of questions related to political interest. In the BMS, a more or less comparable three-item scale of interest in Belgian politics was constructed. Table 8 shows the average score of political interest for the three groups. It can be noted that for all three groups political interest is fairly highly correlated with (informal) political participation.

Table 7 Mean score on informal political participation scale for Turkish, Moroccan and lower-class Belgian men and women

Ethnic group	Men	Women	Total
Belgians	2.40	2.47	2.43
Turks	2.76	2.07	2.42
Moroccans	2.74	2.12	2.49

Source: Jacobs, Phalet & Swyngedouw 2004

Table 8 Mean score with regard to political interest for Turkish, Moroccan and lower-class Belgian men and women

Ethnic group	Men	Women	Total
Belgians	3.42	3.16	3.30
Turks	3.27	2.43	2.86
Moroccans	3.43	2.61	3.10

Source: Jacobs, Phalet & Swyngedouw 2004

All in all, Jacobs, Phalet and Swyngedouw concluded that there were no significant differences between Moroccans and Turks with regard to informal political participation. With regard to political interest, Turks were less interested than Moroccans. This is contrary to what was anticipated if the Brussels’ situation had been in line with Fennema and Tillie’s hypotheses. The study did not reveal anything about formal political participation, since non-EU nationals at the time of the survey did not have any voting rights. However, it is worth noting that Belgians of Moroccan origin have been very successful in local and regional elections while this has not been the case for Belgians of Turkish origin (see previous sections). This adds to the general picture that in Brussels it is definitely not the Turks who are most politically involved. The link Fennema and Tillie (1999, 2001) suggest between ‘civic ethnic community’ and political involvement is not reflected in the Brussels data at the aggregate level.

The Brussels survey also allowed to study the link between participation in associational life and political involvement at the individual level. The idea was to test whether it is correct that (ethnic) associational membership is an incentive to political involvement. However, the

authors equally wanted to take into account important potential explanatory factors such as gender, education, language proficiency and employment status in order to manage to rule out spurious effects. For doing so, the authors used multiple linear regression of which we will only give the final results (Jacobs, Phalet & Swyngedouw 2004).

Gender has an important role in explaining political participation among Turks. Women have significantly less chance to show informal political participation. Education seems to play no role, but knowledge of the French language does constitute a factor in stimulating political participation among Turks. For Turks, unemployment does not hinder informal political participation; on the contrary. Ethnic membership has some positive effect on informal political participation, while cross-ethnic membership has no effect whatsoever. Trade-union membership has a positive effect on informal political participation.(See Jacobs, Phalet & Swyngedouw 2004)

As was the case for Turks, Moroccan women have less chance of informal political participation than Moroccan men. While education shows no influence, knowledge of French has a very important predictive value for Moroccans. In contrast to the Turks, unemployment is detrimental for informal political participation of Moroccans. Ethnic membership has a positive effect, but this effect almost totally disappears when we control for trade union membership. Ethnic membership thus only has a positive effect in combination with trade union membership, while trade union membership appears to be in itself a strong incentive of informal political participation of Moroccans. Cross-ethnic membership (outside trade unions) has no significant effect.

For Turks, knowledge of French appears to be important in explaining political interest. Moreover, women have significantly less chance to show political interest than men. There is a minor positive effect of unemployment and a small effect of education for Turks in showing more political interest. Membership has no significant role whatsoever. Among Moroccans, women again are shown to have less opportunity to show political interest than men. Knowledge of French is extremely important, while education has a smaller effect. Employment status is of no importance. There is no direct influence of ethnic membership nor of cross-ethnic membership. There is, nevertheless, a positive stimulus from union membership and an indirect effect of ethnic membership through union membership to be seen among Moroccans.

In sum, irrespective of the social capital issue, language proficiency is unmistakably a very important element to be taken into account in explaining political involvement in Brussels. The ability to speak French seems to be a crucial factor for political involvement of both Turks and Moroccans. It is consistently (one of) the most important independent variable(s) in the models developed by Jacobs, Phalet and Swyngedouw. This being said and without going into a detailed interpretation of all the findings, there is a positive link between ethnic membership as such and political involvement for both Turks and Moroccans. For Moroccans ethnic social capital seems to be a stimulus for political involvement through cross-cultural social capital. Different effects are found among Turks. Apparently, ethnic social capital does not have the same effects on political involvement in both minority groups. As a consequence, different levels of ethnic membership within the two ethnic minority groups cannot explain different levels of political involvement of the ethnic minority groups under study. The '(ethnic) civic community' argument of Fennema and Tillie on its own can therefore not help to explain differential levels of political involvement of Moroccans and Turks in Brussels. However, this does not mean that social capital has no importance at all in explaining patterns

of political involvement. Cross-ethnic membership, as a particular form of social capital, does help to explain differences in political involvement within the Moroccan and Turkish groups in Brussels. Ethnic membership is not totally without a positive effect for political involvement of Moroccans, but it operates indirectly through the positive effect of cross-ethnic membership. For Moroccans, cross-ethnic membership has a positive influence in itself on political involvement, as does ethnic membership combined with cross-ethnic membership. These findings do not seem, however, to help in explaining differences in political involvement between the Moroccan and Turkish groups in Brussels. The results add strength to the theoretical argument that a distinction should be made between 'ethnic' social capital (embedding in ethnic associations) and cross-cultural social capital (embedding in mixed and more mainstream organisations). Furthermore, one needs to look into the way these are interrelated.

Jacobs, Phalet and Swyngedouw concluded that the Fennema and Tillie hypotheses do not work in a straightforward way for Brussels. Although there is a high score of Turks on a number of indicators of 'ethnic civic community' – including a strikingly high association membership level among the Turks – in comparison it is the Moroccans who have a higher level of political involvement. Moreover, at the individual level, there is no proof of a strong positive link between membership participation in ethnic associations as such, on the one hand, and political involvement on the other. Furthermore, links that can be found do not really help us to explain differences in political involvement of Moroccans and Turks at the aggregate level. Indeed, ethnic social capital has different effects on political involvement for Moroccans and for Turks.

This does not, however, mean that looking at social capital has no explanatory value for political involvement of ethnic minority groups. There was, for instance, a positive link between cross-cultural membership participation and political involvement in both groups under study. In addition, for Moroccans, there is a positive influence of ethnic membership on political involvement through cross-cultural membership. One should thus make a distinction between 'ethnic' social capital (embedding in ethnic associations) and cross-cultural social capital (embedding in mixed and more mainstream organisations) and take into account to what extent any influence of 'ethnic' social capital is related to cross-ethnic social capital. Moreover, the effect of 'ethnic' social capital can play out differently for different groups.

On the basis of these observations, the authors also concluded that differences in political involvement between Moroccans and Turks are to be seen in the light of differential ties of Moroccans and Turks with Belgian mainstream society and related differential political opportunity structures. Language was identified as an important factor in this process. First of all, one can remark that language proficiency of French, the most important political language in Brussels, is higher among Moroccans than among Turks (French was one of the colonial languages of Morocco). Secondly, we see that language proficiency in French is an important element in enhancing political involvement. Moroccans thus are more likely to get politically involved than Turks. For both groups not only French language proficiency but equally cross-cultural associational ties to mainstream society seem to be an important incentive for political involvement. Nevertheless, ethnic associational life does not seem to be an obstacle for Moroccans for political involvement. Indeed, membership of ethnic associations, through parallel membership of cross-ethnic associations, stimulate their political involvement.

2.G. Confrontational politics and the rise of Islamic political parties

Belgium has faced several outbreaks of political violence by young people of immigrant origin. This happened essentially in Brussels in 1991, 1993 and 1997, as well as in Antwerp in 2001. In all these occurrences, the central actors were young people of North African (essentially Moroccan) origin. These events have been studied by several authors who emphasised the role of discrimination, the logic of criminalisation by police and justice authorities, the alarmist media construction of the events, as well as the role of political opportunity structures (See Rea, 2001). However, even though immigrants of North African origin and their offspring have steadily increased their political representation within Belgian assemblies since the first outbreak of violence in 1991, confrontational politics has not faded away and has taken on an increasingly Islamic identity-profile.

The move from the North African, or simply immigrant, identity-repertoire to the Islamic one is an important transformation favoured by post the 09/11 context. For a long time, Muslims qua Muslims have been relatively invisible as public and political actors, even though they had intense infra-political activities inside their ethnic boundaries. Since a few years, Islamic religious parties using confrontational politics have appeared on the Belgian political scene. To date, these parties have not been able to gain a seat in any election.

The party Noor is one of the first attempts in this direction. The party, based in Brussels, has not been able to push forward candidates in all the elections and has not been very successful, but it has managed to maintain some organisational internal dynamic. Noor competed in the general election of 1999 and 2003 at the First Chamber but were absent from the local election of 2000. In 1999, the party obtained 1.240 votes (0,15%) in Brussels and less in the general election of 2003 (1.141 votes).

The Party for Citizenship and Prosperity, stemming from the Movement of Young Muslims, succeeded in its first electoral participation in May 2003 to gain 8.258 votes (0,98%). The party is essentially composed of converts and is based in Brussels. It obtained its best results in the municipalities with high concentration of immigrant people from the Islamic world. Would the party reiterate this result in the next local election of 2006, it would be in a position to achieve one or more seats in some municipalities in Brussels.

The case of the party Resist, stemming from the Arab European League of the charismatic protest leader Abou Jahjah, is somewhat different than the two others. The party is a merger of the Arab European League, initially a civil right/antidiscrimination voluntary association, and the extreme left party PVDA (Partij van de Arbeid: Labour Party). At its first participation to the general election of May 2003, Resist obtained 17.000 votes in the Senate (0,27% in Flanders and 0,84% in the province of Antwerp). At the Chamber, it obtained 10.000 votes (0,6%) in Antwerp. Considering the media coverage of its leader, Abou Jahjah, the result of Resist was not convincing according to most observers (Jacobs 2004, Bousetta and Swyngedouw 2004). This is what led Abou Jahjah to reorient its political profile and to create a Muslim Democratic Party in 2003. The objective of the Party is to gain one or more seats in the local election of Antwerp in 2006.

2.H. Political racism and inter-minority group antagonism

Beyond prejudice and discrimination facing minorities of immigrant origin, racism manifest itself also at the political level in the form of ideology. During the seventies and eighties, immigrants in Brussels were a particular target of extreme-right propaganda. A study by de Biolley (1994) analyses the extent of ideological racism during the political campaigns in Brussels before the local elections during the period 1970-1988. She observed that racist rhetorics was far from being solely produced by extreme-right parties. Politicians belonging nearly to all parties have succumbed to the temptation of wooing the racist vote. With the emergence of ethnic minority people in local and regional politics after the mid nineties, the extent of racist political discourses among traditional democratic parties has diminished. But the extreme-right and a number of marginal lists has gone on playing the racist card at every elections since then. As shown by Swyngedouw (1992, 2003), anti-immigration attitude was and remains a key component of the extreme-right vote in both Brussels and Flanders.

It is worth noting that due to the fragile institutional architecture of the Brussels region, the extreme-right do not only pose a threat to immigrant and ethnic minorities, but to the whole institutions of Brussels. Considering that the Region of Brussels is dependent on dual majorities within both the Francophone and Flemish part of the assembly, there has been a serious risk for Brussels institutions to be blocked if the Vlaams Blok was in a position to take control of a majority of seats in the Flemish group of the regional assembly. Had the Vlaams Blok been able to secure 9 seats in the regional election of 2004⁸ (6 in the 1999 election), it would have been able through the double majority system to make impossible the formation of a new government.

In light of the electoral results of the Vlaams Blok in both Brussels and Flanders, ideological racism, and the racial violence it has led to, is likely to remain high on the academic agenda.⁹ In addition to this enduring issue, Brussels is faced with an emerging question of racism, which is not anymore played out in the context of majority-minority domination. Since the beginning of the second Intifada at the Autumn of 2000, there are indications that intergroup antagonism between minorities has taken on new dimensions. This is what the media and other academic observers have labelled the 'importing of the Israëli-Palestian conflict'. Antisemitic attacks have been reported in several parts of the country but mainly in Brussels and Antwerp. Young Moroccans have been taken in public debates, among others in several statements by Jewish leaders, to be the main perpetrators of this outbreak of anti-semitic violence. While it is clear from an even cursory field exploration that anti-Jewish feelings and prejudice have dramatically increased within the Muslim community at large, the police has hitherto failed to bring the perpetrators before the courts. This has, on the one hand, created a climate of downright suspicion against the Muslim community in the increase of anti-semitic violence and, on the other hand, an amalgamation of the Belgian Jewish community with Israeli State violence in the Middle East. This new configuration of mutual prejudice and stereotype between minority groups themselves does not leave the majority unaffected. The current context is marked by collective attempts to provoke moral indignation of the public opinion whereby both Jewish and Muslim communities are readily portraying themselves as the victims of the antisemitism/Islamophobia produced by the other community. The whole

⁸ The total number of seats for Flemish parties in 1999 was 11 and was brought to 17 through the system of guaranteed representation in 2004. The Vlaams Blok won 6 seats in 2004 and 4 in 1999.

⁹ In 2001, a Moroccan family was killed by a Vlaams Blok supporter and a young professor of Islamic studies was assassinated in Antwerp by a racist neighbour.

point in the debate is actually to maximise symbolic profits through what Chaumont has aptly called a competition of the victims (Chaumont 1997).

2.I. Participation and rights associated to the institutional recognition of worship

Although religion is not directly related to the legal status of foreign residents, it is worth addressing the issue in the context of immigration. Indeed, immigration of foreign residents led to a further diversification of the religious field in Belgium, particularly with the advent of Orthodox Churches and Islam. Thus the issue of rights and participation in the religious field is indirectly linked to the legal status and the citizenship rights of foreign residents.

The Belgian policy approach to religious diversity is quite original. It hinges on a small number of constitutional rules which provide the institutional armature of the whole system. The first rule consist in establishing the basic principle of the freedom of worship (article 19). The second rule provides that individual citizens must not be restricted in their religious choices, and, therefore, are free to change their affiliation (article 20). The third article in the Constitution dealing with worship is about the neutrality of the State in its relations with religions (article 21). This latter article provides that the State is impartial and must not interfere with the internal organisation of religious groups. This framework is complemented by the article 181 of the Belgian Constitution which provides that the salaries and pensions of clergymen, as well as those of recognised secularist delegates, are paid by the State.

In Belgium, the principle of secularism is not tantamount to a radical breach between State and religions. What has been historically at work is a form of secularism grounded on the concept of the neutrality of the State vis à vis the internal organisation of religions. Although the Belgian system reflects the very liberal conceptions of the 19th century, the place of religions in the public domain has never gone undisputed. The argument goes that a form of ambiguity exists inasmuch as the legislation, and in particular the Law of 4 March 1870 on the management of the temporal aspects of religions, refers to the concept of 'recognised religions'. Indeed, the State commits itself to provide a financial contribution to a number of worships, which have received beforehand an official agreement of both the Parliament and the government. Whereas the Parliament has jurisdiction over the granting of the label of 'officially recognised religion', the government is competent alone for the crucial aspect of organising the procedure in practice. This latter stage involves the recognition of a chief interlocutor (meaning that decentralised churches have to unite or federate) and the subsidiation as foreseen by article 181 of the Constitution. Six religious groups have hitherto received the official agreement from both the Parliament and government. These are the Roman Catholic, the Protestant, the Anglican, the Israelite, the Orthodox and the Islamic religions.

The sociological transformation brought about by the post-war labour migration and the new migration (post-1974) contributed to reopen the debate about the place of worship in the public space. The public debates about the recognition of the orthodox and Islamic religions are two examples of this reality. It is in 1985 that the Orthodox Church received the official recognition from the Parliament, after the two dominant branches of the Orthodox religion, the Greek and the Russian Orthodox Churches, had federated administratively. The debates in Parliament shows that the recognition of the Orthodox Church did not raise any political opposition. The story of the Islamic religion is more complex and involves a great deal more political contention. In 1974, Islam received unexpectedly the official recognition from the

Parliament. The law of 19 July 1974 was indeed voted in the context of the oil crisis and in parallel to bilateral negotiations between Belgium and Saudi Arabia on oil contracts. This sudden progress on the parliamentary level has not been put into concrete form until 1999. This very long delay was due to the extreme difficulty encountered by both Muslim communities and the Belgian government to let emerge and recognise a representative head of the Islamic religion. The decision taken by the Belgian federal government on 3 May 1999 is bringing the issue of the recognition of the Islamic religion close to an end. However, it is worth summarising the stages this issue has gone through as it indicates the difficulty of making a place for Islam within the public domain.

After a long indecisive period, the issue of Islam has surfaced anew on the headlines in 1989 in the aftermath of a series of events including the Rushdie Affair, the headscarf affair and more dramatically the killing in the heart of Brussels of the Director of the Islamic and Cultural Centre of Belgium. In this context, the Royal Commissioner for Immigrant Policy, once again, endeavoured at unlocking the public debate by proposing the establishment of a High Council for Muslims. This proposal did not receive much support and was eventually rejected. However, the debate proceeded and, in July 1990, the government established a preparatory wisemen committee in charge of proposing a final solution for the organisation of the temporal aspects of Islam. In October 1991, the wisemen committee ceased its activities without any results.

From 1993 till 1996, representatives of the Muslim community entered into unobtrusive negotiations with the Centre for Equal Opportunities and the Ministry of Justice with the plan of cutting the Gordian knot of the recognition of Islam. The 3rd of July 1996, the government gave the mission and the material means to a group of representatives of the Muslim community, known as the Muslims Executive of Belgium, to prepare the setting up of a Chief Organ for Islam. This preparatory work led to the decision of going through a democratic procedure and to organise elections among the Muslim community all over the Belgian territory. The election took actually place on the 13th of December 1998. The outcome is that an assembly of 51 persons has been elected and 17 persons were selected through co-optation. The assembly agreed on the selection of 16 members who are composing the Executive Office. Through the governmental decision of 3rd May 1999, the Executive Office has been recognised as Chief Organ and official interlocutor of the State for the management of temporal issues linked to the Islam faith (Islamic education, subsidisation of mosques, salaries of imams, etc).

In 2003, internal conflicts within the assembly led to the appointment of a new executive board which received an institutional recognition from the State for a year. It eventually proved impossible to find a consensus between this board and the government for the renewal of the assembly from which the Executive is selected. Faced with this new difficulty, the Parliament voted on the 20th July 2004 a law establishing an electoral commission in charge of renewing the assembly and the Executive. The process is under way and a new election is expected on March 20th 2005.

2.J. Prominent figures of immigrant origin

Before concluding this overview of the Belgian landscape concerning the active civic participation of immigrant and their offspring, we wish to present a selection of prominent figures in public life (Box 2). Such a selection is not easy and involves some subjectivity.

Among the five persons selected here, we have included 3 mainstream politicians. This should come as no surprise. As we have emphasised throughout the report, Belgium has made a tremendous breakthrough in terms of including immigrants in the political process. And as it is made clear, immigrant origin politicians now occupy very significant political positions at the governmental level. Anissa Tamsamani was the first to enter the federal government in July 2003 before she resigned a few months later. Both Fadila Laanan and Emir Kir have been seconded at their turn in sub-State governments and they are currently the most visible immigrant origin politicians. Dyab Abou Jahjah is also a politician of immigrant origin. As Laanan, Tamsamani and Kir, he has been actively involved in politics, but one of a more confrontational nature than the former. He set up in Antwerp a radical civil right movement in the city of Antwerp which made him appear on the headlines of no less than the *New York Times*. Our final selection is Hadja Lahbib, the first Maghrebien women to present the evening news on the French speaking national television. As a final point, it is worth noting that 3 of our 5 examples are women and this is probably not the result of a biased perception. Indeed, a large number of public figures, especially in politics and among Maghrebians, are females.

Box 2. Some prominent figures of immigrant origin in Belgian public life

Fadila Laanan	Minister Culture, Youth and public broadcasting of the French Speaking Community and first person of non EU origin seconded as ‘Minister’ in July 2004 (Moroccan origin)
Anissa Tamsamani	Member of Parliament, former Secretary of State and first person of non EU origin seconded in the federal government (Moroccan origin)
Emir Kir	Secretary of State in the Brussels Regional Government, since July 2004 (Turkish Origin)
Dyab Abou Jahjah	Civil right/anti-discrimination activist involved in confrontational political action in Antwerp, leader of the Arab European League (Lebanese origin)
Hadja Lahbib	First journalist of immigrant origin to present the evening news on the French Speaking public television channel (Algerian origin)

Part III: Conclusion

Immigrants and foreigners are active in all fields of society, ranging from politics, science, arts, journalism, etc. Over the last fifteen years, they have become increasingly visible in public life by actively engaging in public debates around issues of direct concern to them. According to quantitative survey research in Brussels, one has to conclude that the degree of active civic participation of immigrants differs according to the ethnic group considered. Turks are generally more active than low-skilled Belgians and low-skilled Belgians are more active than Moroccans (Jacobs, Phalet and Swyngedouw 2004). Turkish origin citizens are the most active within both self-organisation and cross-ethnic organisations. However, as far as electoral politics is concerned, Moroccan origin citizens have been more succesful than any other immigrant group including Europeans.

As shown throughout this report, Belgian academic research have well documented these issues. However, there remains a number of research gaps to be filled in. The first concerns the study of voter preferences. To date, no reliable exit-poll has ever been conducted in order to assess how immigrants and ethnic minorities vote. There are many indirect indicators, but no firm knowledge. The second concern recently arrived communities. Although significant knowledge has been produced about minority communities whose members had immigrated during the sixties and seventies as workers, like Moroccans and Turks, there remains a significant gap concerning the civic attitudes and behaviours of smaller and/or more recently arrived communities such Central and Eastern Europeans, South Asians, Chinese, etc. There is at this level a research gap that will need to be addressed by future research.

In many respects, the Catholic Roman Church remains in a very advantageous situation both symbolically and materially. The long and troublesome process which eventually lead to the recognition of Islam is also illustrative of the ambiguity of the relations between the Belgian State and religions. For 25 years, Islam has been maintained in an unfair position in comparison to other religions. Beyond that, it is actually the whole philosophy of the legislation which is under increasing pressure. Shouldn't we consider indeed that the legal recognition of a given religion maybe discriminatory vis à vis others unrecognised religions? What are the criteria for distinguishing between a religion, a philosophical movement, and a sect? Should State funding take into consideration the size of each religious group or should it allow individual citizens to dedicate a share of their tax-income to the philosophies and religions of their choice? These are certainly among the issue which will need to be addressed in the future and which will gain momentum with the increasing religious diversity associated with migration.

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ANNEX - RESEARCH COMPETENCES

1. Civic participation of immigrants:

Centre d'Etudes de l'Ethnicité et des Migrations (CEDEM)

Centre of Ethnic and Migration Studies

Université de Liège (ULg) - Faculté de Droit - Science Politique
7 Boulevard du Rectorat, Bât. 31, Boîte 38 - 4000 Liège (Sart-Tilman), Belgium
Tel : +32 (0)43 66 30 40
Fax : +32 (0)43 66 45 57
<http://www.ulg.ac.be/cedem>

Director: Marco Martiniello – M.Martiniello@ulg.ac.be
Researcher: Hassan Bousetta - Hassan.Bousetta@ulg.ac.be

The CEDEM, created in 1995, is an interfaculty centre which aim is to carry out theoretical and empirical research in the fields of human migrations, ethnic relations and racism. Among others, the Centre is interested in the relations between migration processes and uneven development. These researches are led in a pluri-disciplinary perspective: political science, sociology, anthropology, international relations, law, etc.

Groupe d'études sur l'Ethnicité, le Racisme, les Migrations et l'Exclusion (GERME)

Institut de Sociologie – Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB)
44 avenue Jeanne, 1050 Brussels, Belgium
Tel : +32 (0)2 650 31 82
Fax : +32 (0)2 650 46 59
germe@ulb.ac.be
<http://www.ulb.ac.be/socio/germe>

Director: Andrea Rea – area@ulb.ac.be
Researcher: Dirk Jacobs - dirk.jacobs@ulb.ac.be

The Group of studies on ethnicity, racism, migration and exclusion has been created in 1995. It carries out research in various fields such european dimension of migration policies, public and social policies for migrants or population of foreign origin, citizenship, social integration (education and employment) and political participation of migrants.

Instituut voor Sociaal en Politiek Opinieonderzoek (ISPO)

Institute of Social and Political Opinion Research

Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KULeuven) – Departement Sociologie
2B E. Van Evenstraat – 3000 Leuven, Belgium
Tel: + 32 (0)16 32 30 50
Fax: + 32 (0)16 32 33 65
ispo@soc.kuleuven.ac.be
<http://www.kuleuven.ac.be/ispo>

Director: Jaak Billiet – Jaak.Billiet@soc.kuleuven.ac.be

Researcher Director: Marc Swyngedouw –
Marc.Swyngedouw@soc.keuleuven.ac.be

The Institute of Social and Political Opinion Research (ISPO) was founded in 2002 and it is the successor and extension of the 'Interuniversitair Steunpunt voor Politieke-Opinieonderzoek' (created in 1990). The research areas of the ISPO now are fourfold: election studies, research on minorities, value and value change studies, and methodology of quantitative and qualitative research. The ISPO has both a quantitative and qualitative focus. In every of the ISPO research projects scientific social theories are considered by using the most up to date research methodology

2. Civic participation:

Departement Politieke Wetenschappen – Department of Political Science

Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KULeuven) - Faculteit Sociale Wetenschappen
2B E. Van Evenstraat - 3000 Leuven, Belgium
Tel: +32 (0)16 32 32 50
Fax: +32 (0)16 32 30 88
<http://www.soc.kuleuven.ac.be/pol>

Researcher: Marc Hooghe - marc.hooghe@soc.kuleuven.ac.be

The research of Political Sociology focuses on the central institutions and processes of decision-making, inherent in contemporary democracies. Therefore, four major domains are central in the research-strategy of the Section: elections, political parties and social organizations, parliaments and governments. In the analyses and publications both structural and cultural determinants of the functioning of democracies and its patterns of decision-making are taken into consideration, as well as recent dynamic developments along with the analysis of their historic roots. In this respect the Belgian political system is a privileged domain of research, especially from the perspective of comparative research.

Onderzoeksgroep TOR Group of Research

Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB)
2 Pleinlaan– 1050 Brussel, Belgium
Fax: + 32 (0)2 629 30 52
torinfo@vub.ac.be
<http://www.vub.ac.be/TOR>

Director: Mark Elchardus - mark.elchardus@vub.ac.be

3. Immigration:

CEDEM (see point 1)

Centre interdisciplinaire d'études de l'islam dans le monde contemporain (CISMOC) - Centre for Interdisciplinary Research on Islam in Contemporary World (CISCOW)

Université Catholique de Louvain (UCL)

cismoc@anso.ucl.ac.be
<http://www.cismoc.ucl.ac.be>

Director : Felice Dassetto – dassetto@anso.ucl.ac.be
Researcher: Brigitte Maréchal – marechal@anso.ucl.ac.be

The Centre for Interdisciplinary Research on Islam in Contemporary World aims to promote research at the UCL on contemporary Islam in increasing the value of existing research, in starting from these resources and in making these convergences, since they are scattered to various departments and domains.

**Centrum voor Islam in Europa (CIE)
Centre for Islam in Europe**

Universiteit Gent (Ugent) - Dpt. Wijsbegeerte & Moraalwetenschap,
2 Blandijnberg - 9000 Gent, Belgium
<http://www.flwi.ugent.be/cie/CIE>

President: Sami Zemni – sami.zeni@Ugent.be
Director: Herman De Ley – herman.deley@Ugent.be
Research Project Director: Jan Blommaert – jan.blommaert@Ugent.be

Inaugurated in 1998, the CIE works at giving Islam in our secular society a respected academic status, while developing scientific and educational tools for combating present-day islamophobia and racism. It stands for an interdisciplinary and scientific approach and is acting independently of all partisan interests.

The CIE intends to: a) co-ordinate and disseminate already available knowledge, skills and information; b) mobilize financial resources to conduct policy-oriented research in support of a more harmonious and fair institutionalization of Islam in our secularized society; c) build an academic forum for Muslims and non-Muslims; d) stimulate Muslim youngsters to enter academic studies, while demanding respect for their Islamic identity and e) develop proposals for renovating the scientific study of Islam; support the creation of academic curricula in Islamic sciences and theology, which enjoy the approval of the Muslim communities.

COSMOPOLIS City Culture & Society

Centre for Urban Research - Vrij Universiteit Brussel (VUB)

VUB-room 6F332
2 Pleinlaan – 1050 Brussels – Belgium
Tel: + 32 (0)2 629 33 79
Fax: + 32 (0)2 629 33 78
cosmopolis@vub.ac.be
<http://www.cosmopolis.be>
Eric Corijn - eacorijn@vub.ac.be
Walter De Lannoy - wdlannoy@vub.ac.be

GERME – ULB (see point 1)

**Hoger Instituut voor de Arbeid (HIVA)
Higher Intitute of Labour Studies**

Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KULeuven)
Research sector Sustainable Development
47 Parkstraat - 3000 Leuven, Belgium
Tel: +32 (0)16 33 20 75
Fax: +32 (0)16 33 20 76
hiva@kuleuven.ac.be
<http://www.hiva.be>

Head of the Research sector Sustainable Development: Patrick Develtere –
patrick.develtere@hiva.kuleuven.ac.be
Research manager of Migration research: Johan Wets –
johan.wets@hiva.kuleuven.ac.be

The Higher Institute for Labour Studies (HIVA) is a research institute founded in 1974. One of its sectors of research activities is Sustainable Development which focuses on 4 research areas: environmental policy, sustainable development and social participation, international cooperation, and migration research.

The migration research concentrates on the sub-themes of international migration and migrants, with attention being given both to the causes and consequences of international migratory movements. This places the subject in an explicit North-South context. The theme is approached from the perspective of various policy domains: international cooperation, the labour market, social welfare, security, etc. In addition to the process, the people involved in the process are also studied, independent of their legal category. This research group seeks to achieve three objectives with these studies: improving knowledge of the dynamics of migration, the trends and migration patterns at national, European and global level; gaining a better insight into the relationship between policy and migration patterns at the various levels; and devising a better conceptual approach to international migration. The focus lies mainly, though not exclusively, on policy.

Institute for Social and Economic Geography (ISEG)

Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KULeuven) – Faculty of Science
42 W. de Croylaan - 3001 Heverlee, Belgium
Tel: +32 (0)16 32 24 43
Fax: +32 (0) 16 32 29 80
<http://www.kuleuven.ac.be/geography/iseg>

Head of the Research Unit: Etienne Van Hecke -
etienne.vanhecke@geo.kuleuven.ac.be
Researchers: Chris Kesteloot – Chris.Kesteloot@geo.kuleuven.ac.be
Herman Van der Haegen – Herman.VanderHaegen@geo.kuleuven.ac.be

The research undertaken at the Institute for Social and economic geography covers the whole of social and economic spatial patterns and processes in Belgium. These topics are the subject of historical, present-day and prospective analysis. The Institute developed a very strong expertise in handling statistical data, mainly on the level of the municipalities and the statistical sectors. The construction and analysis of databases, the use of different classification and analysis methods (ex multivariate analysis, cluster analysis, spatial analysis,

auto-correlation ...) and cartography (by GIS or DTM) make part of this know-how.

ISPO – KULeuven (see point 1)

Institute of Political Sociology & Methodology (IPSoM)

Katholieke Universiteit Brussel (KUB)

17 Vrijheidslaan – 1081 Koekelberg, Belgium

Tel: +32 (0)2 412 42 11

Fax: +32 (0)2 412 42 00

<http://www.kubrusssel.ac.be/onderwijs/psw/onderzoek/ipsom.htm>

Director: Marc Swyngedouw – marc.swyngedouw@kubrusssel.ac.be

Researcher: Dirk Jacobs – dirk.jacobs@kubrusssel.ac.be

The Institute of Political Sociology & Methodology was founded in 1994 and aims to do quantitative as well as qualitative multivariate research on socially relevant topics, relying on a combination of a strong methodological and theoretical basis. In each of IPSoM's research projects; substantial social scientific theories will be investigated by using the most up to date research methodology. To achieve this, IPSoM set out two social theoretical research lines (minority studies and election studies) and one methodological research line.

Onderzoeksgroep Armoede, Sociale Uitsluiting en de Stad (OASeS)

Research Group on Poverty, Social Exclusion and the City

Universiteit Antwerpen (UA) - Faculty of Political and Social Sciences

13 Prinsstraat - 2000 Antwerpen, Belgium

Tel: +32 (0)3 220 41 11, +32 (0)3 220 41 12, +32 (0)3 220 41 13

Fax: +32 (0)3 220 44 20

oases@ua.ac.be

<http://www.ua.ac.be/oases>

Directors: Jan Vranken – Jan.Vranken@ua.ac.be

Luc Goossens – Luc.Goossens@ua.ac.be

Project manager on Migration and Ethnic Minorities: Christiane Timmerman – Christiane.Timmermann@ua.ac.be

The more prominent research topics of the centre include: poverty and other forms of social exclusion (poverty indicators, the daily life of the poor, life events and social mobility), migrations and ethnic minorities, urban policy, social housing, social economics and supported employment, social networks. The research is carried out from two perspectives: it studies the mechanisms of social exclusion and it focuses on the relationships between the social and the spatial dimensions of society.

The group's interest in migration and ethnic minorities dates back to the 1980s. This research line was consolidated within OASeS at the end of 1997 through the integration of the research group on 'Migration and Health' of the Prince Leopold Institute of Tropical Medicine in Antwerp. The available research expertise is a kaleidoscope of various topics and approaches: fundamental or applied, policy-oriented; qualitative or quantitative; sociological or multidisciplinary research.