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Master Thesis

THE POLITICAL REPRESENTATION OF CITIZENS OF IMMIGRANT ORIGIN AT THE LOCAL LEVEL IN WALLONIA

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List of Abbreviations and acronyms

EU	European Union
cdH	The Christian-democrats (Centre démocrate humaniste)
CIO	Citizens of immigrant origin
CSP	Social-christian party with is linked to the cdH (Christlich soziale partei)
DéFi	Independent federalist democrat (Démocrate fédéraliste indépendant)
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ECOLO	Confederate ecologists for the organisation of original struggles (Écologiste confédérés pour l'organisation de luttes originales)
MR	The right-liberals (Mouvement réformateur)
MR-PFF	A component of MR in the German-speaking community (Partei für Freiheit und Fortschritt)
PS	The socialists (Parti socialiste)
PTB	Labour party of Belgium (Parti du travail de Belgique)
RCGH	Grâce-Hollogne citizen's rally (Rassemblement Citoyen Grâce-Hollogne)
SPplus	The Socialist Party of the German-speaking community (Socialistische Partei)
TCN	Third-country nationals
VEGA	VEGA Movement (Mouvement VEGA)

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Grace Andrews
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1. **INTRODUCTION**

While most Western countries have become increasingly diverse, Citizens of Immigrant Origin[1] (CIO) have often remained underrepresented in elected bodies in many countries, at all levels of governance (Bird, Saalfeld & Wüst, 2010; Bloemraad, 2013; Ruedin, 2013; Alba & Foner, 2015; Pamies, Pérez-Nievas, Vintila & Paradés, 2021). This small number of minority elected officials often contrasts greatly with the significant proportion of CIOs in many European countries (Bloemraad & Schönwälder, 2013). This is the case even in countries that have had large immigration inflows since the 1950s such as Belgium, meaning that this underrepresentation is not a reflection of recent arrivals or slow acquisition of citizenship (Bloemraad & Schönwälder, 2013; Geese & Saalfeld, 2018). The underrepresentation of a part of the population poses a real problem for democratic legitimacy, justice, responsiveness and effectiveness of political systems (Phillips, 1995; Mansbridge, 1999). Further, the fact that CIOs' face barriers to enter elected office is especially problematic because of the possibility of their interests not being represented.

Over the last few decades research on the political representation of CIOs and minorities has greatly developed and differences in the dynamics of minority representation have been shown across European countries and between immigrant and minority groups (Bird, 2005; Bloemraad, 2013; Dancygier, 2013; Michon & Vermeulen, 2013; Alba & Foner, 2015). A multitude of factors have been found to influence CIOs' access to elected office, such as the electoral rules and systems, the citizenship regime, political parties, CIOs' resources, characteristics and mobilization capacity (Kittilson & Tate, 2004; Koopmans, 2004; Bird, 2005; Donovan, 2007; Togeby, 2008; Wauters & Eelbode, 2011; Dancygier, 2013; Celis, Eelbode & Wauters 2013; Michon & Vermeulen, 2013; Ruedin, 2013; Celis, Erzeel & Mügge, 2015).

The majority of studies have focused on the descriptive (standing for) and substantive representation (acting for) of immigrant and minority groups. Multiple research has been conducted in the UK (Saalfeld and Bischof, 2013; Sobolewska, McKee & Campbell, 2018), Germany (Donovan, 2012; Wüst, 2014; Geese & Schacht, 2019), the Netherlands (Michon & Vermeulen, 2013), Denmark (Togeby, 2008), Sweden (Dancygier, Lindgren, Oskarsson & Vernby, 2015), and Spain (Pamies, Pérez-Nievas, Vintila, & Paradés, 2021). However, a much smaller amount of research has been

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[1] In this study I use the terminology and abbreviation proposed by the project Pathways to Power:
https://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/politics/research/pathways/pathways-to-power-workshop

conducted in Belgium on the representation of minorities (Celis, Eelbode & Wauters, 2013; Celis, Erzeel, Mügge & Damstra, 2014; Eelbode, Wauters, Celis & Devos, 2013; Wauters, Eelbode & Celis, 2016). Moreover, this research has mostly focused on the representation of ethnic minorities rather than the broader group of CIOs.

One of the main arguments for increasing descriptive representation is that it will lead to better substantive representation, a number of studies had found empirical support for this (Bird, 2010; Donovan, 2012; Saalfeld & Bischof, 2013; Wüst, 2014). Yet the underlying mechanisms of this link are not entirely clear. Immigrant-origin representatives can be more motivated to represent CIOs' interests because of intrinsic motivations, a sense of shared experiences and identity, but the electoral incentive can also play an important role (Broockman, 2013; Soboleswska et al., 2018; McAndrews, et al., 2020).

While CIOs underrepresentation has been observed at all political levels, their representation has been found to be slightly better at the local level compared to the national level (Togeby, 2008; Alba & Foner, 2015). It is often the first and most accessible political level for CIOs to engage with (Schönwälder, 2013). Their underrepresentation at the local level is particularly problematic because CIOs often make up a large part of the population in many communes, and it is at this level that immigrants enjoy greater voting rights (Bloemraad, 2013). In Belgium, both third-country nationals and EU citizens have the right to vote in local elections but only EU citizens can run as candidates (Vintila, Lafleur & Nikolic, 2021).

Belgium provides an interesting case study to examine CIOs political representation. Belgium has had a long history of immigration since the 1950s, with the country having signed bilateral labour agreements with Southern European and non-European countries (Phalet & Swyngedouw, 2003). Later on, immigration flows further diversified with the EU nationals gaining the right to free movement in the EU, asylum seekers, refugees, family reunification etc. (Martiniello & Rea, 2013). This has led to Belgium having today a diverse society, immigrants together with citizens with an immigrant background represent 32,7 per cent of the Belgian population (Statbel, 2021c). The majority of immigrants are from other EU countries, the top nationalities immigrating after Belgians were Romanians, French, Dutch and Italians (Statbel, 2021c). The Belgian population with an immigrant background are in majority from non-EU origins (Statbel, 2021c).

The country is also relevant for the study of CIOs representation because it has a proportional representation system, flexible lists combined with the possibility of preference voting which provides

a favourable electoral system for the representation of minority groups (Togeby, 2008; Wauters & Eelbode, 2011). Yet, previous research has found an underrepresentation of CIOs in the federal elections in the 2010-2014 mandate (Geese & Saalfeld, 2018).

This thesis will seek to contribute to the existing literature, by exploring CIOs representation at the local level in Belgium. I will analyse CIOs presence in local councils and explore the link between descriptive and substantive representation by looking at immigrant-origin councillors motivations to represent CIOs' interests. Therefore, this thesis will help fill in the gap in the literature on CIOs representation in Belgium, and contribute to the wider body of research on the political representation of minorities. The focus will be on the local level in the province of Liège (Wallonia). This is because the local level is the most accessible for CIOs to enter into politics, CIOs are often the most active and visible at this level, and local politics have strong implications for peoples daily life (Wauters & Eelbode, 2011; Schönwälder, 2013; Alba & Foner, 2015). Further, the province of Liège has a high proportion of CIO, a long history of immigration and initiatives for the integration of immigrants (Martiniello & Rea, 2013).

In order to address this objective, this thesis focuses on two interconnected research questions: what is the level of descriptive representation CIOs achieve and how do immigrant-origin councillors represent the interest of CIOs? To answer the research question, I use a mixed-methods approach incorporating both qualitative and quantitative approaches, I analyse the current composition of local councils in the province of Liège and create an original dataset of the profiles of all local councillors. In addition, I conduct semi-structured interviews with immigrant-origin local councillors, this allows for a more in-depth understanding of their motivations and their perception of their role in the substantive representation of CIOs' interests.

The thesis is structured as follows, first I will review the literature, I discuss what representation is, why it is important, the factors that influence CIOs access to elected office and the link between descriptive and substantive representation. In the second section, I explain the Belgium context, the country's history of immigration, the electoral system and the electoral rights of immigrants. In the third section, I explain the data and methodology I used. Then I discuss the findings of this thesis and finally the conclusion.

2. **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

2.1 What is political representation?

Representation is an important notion in political science and contemporary liberal democracies. Though the concept of political representation can seem simple, it is a highly complex concept and its meaning has been debated throughout the literature (Pitkin, 1967). In Pitkin's (1967) magisterial study, she proposes one of the simplest definitions, the essence of representation is "making present in some sense of something which is nevertheless not present literally or in fact" (Piktin, 1967, p. 8). Political representation is the activity of making citizens' voices, opinions, and perspectives present in public policy-making processes, "acting in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them" (Pitkin, 1967, p. 209). Political representation occurs when political actors speak, advocate, symbolize, and act on the behalf of others in the political arena.

A major discussion in the theoretical literature on political representation has been whether representatives should act as delegates or as trustees. In the delegate model, representatives are not autonomous actors but rather considered as the 'voice of the people' and bound by the preferences of their constituents (Pitkin, 1967; Andrew, Biles, Siemiatycki & Tolley, 2009). In the trustee model, representatives are considered to have some autonomy to make decisions for the 'common good', they follow their own understanding of the best action to pursue, even if it is in opposition with the interest of their constituents because they are entrusted to weigh the different perspectives beyond their constituency (Pitkin, 1967; Andrew et al., 2009). Hanna Pitkin (1967) brings forth a more nuanced framework with different types of representation. She argues that we should preserve this paradoxical nature, that the distinction between 'trustee' and 'delegate' is somewhat irrelevant since a representative should be both, and that the representative and the represented should both keep some autonomy.

Pitkin (1967) identifies four aspects of representation that are interconnected: formalistic representation, descriptive representation, symbolic representation, and substantive representation. Formalistic representation is the institutional arrangements that precede and initiate representation, with two dimensions of authorization and accountability. Authorization refers to the means by which a representative obtains their standing, status, position or office, whereas accountability is the ability of constituents to sanction their representative for failing to act in accordance with their wishes. Pitkin (1967) defines symbolic representation as the "power to evoke feelings or attitudes" the ways in which a representative "stands for" the represented. In other words, it does not matter who the

representative is or what they do, but the meaning the representative has for those being represented (Dovi, 2006).

Given the limited scope of this study, it is not feasible to cover all dimensions of political representation. I therefore, chose to only concentrate on the other two aspects, descriptive representation and substantive representation which are also the most studied in the specialised literature (Morales, 2016). Pitkin (1967) defines descriptive representation as "standing for" a group of citizens as a member of that group, it is the resemblance between the representative and the represented that is important, what representatives "look like" rather than what they do. These similarities can be class, occupation, visible characteristics such as race, gender, ethnicity, but also shared experiences such as an immigrant background (Mansbridge, 1999). Mansbridge (1999) concentrates on the importance of shared experiences, she describes descriptive representatives as " individuals who in their own backgrounds mirror some of the more frequent experiences and outward manifestations of belonging to the group" (p. 628). This form of representation is simply concerned with the numerical presence and not the action of the representatives. Descriptive representation is also referred to as mirror representation, because in order to be 'representative', the characteristics of elected officials must be similar and mirror those of the population (Andrew et al., 2009).

While descriptive representation is useful, many theorists have argued that it is important not to focus only on this aspect of representation. On its own, it does not ensure adequate democratic representation of underrepresented groups, as descriptive representatives are not required to represent their descriptive constituents' interests (Pitkin, 1967; Phillips, 1995). On the other hand, substantive representation is understood as "acting in the interest" and "acting for" such citizens in as much as they have distinctive interests or preferences. Substantive representation, therefore, looks beyond the question of 'how many', is interested in the relationship between the representative and the represented, what representatives do, and not just what they look like (Pitkin, 1967). In this body of literature there is an interest in the results and impact elected officials have on policies or programs. For instance, do representatives advance the policy preferences that serve the interests of the represented? (Dovi, 2006; Andrew et al., 2009).

2.2. The politics of presence and the importance of descriptive political representation for immigrant-origin populations

There are several reasons why it is important to focus on the political representation of CIOs. First, identifying the presence of minorities in elected office reveals important patterns regarding their

access to positions of power and their broader integration process in the countries of residence. It can also give us an idea of the difference in opportunities between the majority and the minority populations. When an underrepresentation is observed or very few minorities are in elected office this points to an unequal life chance for minorities in attaining positions of power such as local councillors, mayor or parliamentarian (Alba & Foner, 2015).

The numerical representation is an important element in political representation. However, Andrews et al., (2009) suggest that it is not the exact number of minority elected officials which is important but rather the idea that some are elected to symbolically represent minorities. This is not suggesting that one elected official is enough but rather that an exact replication of the general population is not needed, as long as there is a mixture of officials from different groups of the general population (Andrews et al., 2009).

Representation has an important symbolic value as it allows minority groups to feel less a sense of marginalization, and to display to dominant and marginalized groups that their perspectives matter and belong in public debate (Donovan, 2007; Bird et al., 2010). Descriptive representation can have mobilizing effects by encouraging CIOs to vote by signalling that the political system is inclusive of minority voices (Phillips, 1995; Mansbridge, 1999; Bird et al., 2010; Bloemraad, 2013). Many under-represented groups in the electoral arena today are those who were historically excluded from voting, the political presence of immigrant origin elected officeholders can demonstrate minorities "ability to rule" when their ability have been historically questioned (Mansbridge, 1999).

Even though the interests of CIOs can be represented by representatives who do not have an immigrant background, the lack of diversity in elected institutions sends a message of exclusion which signals a democratic deficit (Phillips 1995; Bloemraad & Schönwälder, 2013; Bloemraad, 2013). This underrepresentation undermines the democratic legitimacy of political systems that ultimately depend on their ability to represent different groups in the population (Mansbridge 1999; Bird et al., 2010; Alba & Foner, 2015). If a segment of the population is unable to achieve significant electoral representation, there is a risk of their needs, opinions and interests not being represented and the legitimacy of the public policy is in doubt (Bird et al., 2010).

In addition, the lack of descriptive representation among minorities could lead to the questioning of the dominant institutions and an increase in political alienation (Pantoja & Segura, 2003). Inversely, an increase in the descriptive representation of minorities can facilitate participation, strengthen a sense of identification with the society and its institutions, reinforce political integration, and allow

minorities to see the larger political community as open to them (Donovan, 2007; Bleomraad, 2013; Alba & Foner, 2015). Further, it can help broaden the circle of deliberative decision-making and thus help diversify the interests which are articulated and lead to substantive changes in policies affecting minorities (Mansbridge, 1999; Bloemraad & Schönwälder, 2013).

Representation works toward greater inclusion if minority elected officials reflect the characteristics and the perspectives of their constituents (Andrew et al., 2009). As argued by Groenendijk (2008) if we consider integration as "the level of participation of immigrants in the central institutions of the host society (e.g., the labour market; schools, religious, military, or political institutions)", then extending voting rights and rights to run as candidates in elections enhances their integration. The political integration of CIOs can even be considered as the paramount indicator to measure their overall inclusion (Alba & Foner, 2015).

Moreover, as Mansbridge (1999) argues, descriptive representatives are critical when minority groups are marginalised and characterized by distrust of the majority population. Descriptive representation can improve the quality of deliberation by enabling "adequate communication in contexts of mistrust" (p. 628) and "innovative thinking in contexts of uncrystallized, not fully articulated, interests" (p. 628). In addition, "Shared experience captured by descriptive representation facilitates vertical communication between representatives and constituents" (Mansbridge, 1999, p. 641). Minority representatives can provide marginalized groups with a less intimidating channel through which to engage with elected representatives which facilitates social inclusion and political integration (Donovan, 2007; Bird et al., 2010). This in turn can foster more positive attitudes and trust towards the government (Donovan, 2007).

Scholars have found empirical support that demonstrates the underrepresentation of CIOs and minorities in a considerable number of countries that count with a long history of immigration. Examples include Canada, the United States, France, Germany, Great Britain and the Netherlands where migrants are under-represented in both city councils and regional legislatures (Alba & Foner, 2015). In Australia, Denmark, France, Germany, Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States (for Asian Americans) minorities only hold a quarter or less of seats that are expected based on their demographic weight at the national level, only in the Netherlands there was there found more (Bloemraad, 2013). Similarly, an underrepresentation of migrants was also found in countries that have more recently experienced accelerated immigration, such as Spain at the local level (Pamies et al., 2021). However, there are still significant variations across countries in the levels of descriptive political representation of migrants. In some cases, immigrant-origin citizens do achieve a strong

presence in elected institutions, as it happens in Denmark where minorities were found to be well represented at the local level (Togeby, 2008).

Typically, migrants are more likely to obtain political representation at the local level, which is partially due to some cities and regions with a large concentration of immigrants that guarantee some degree of representation (Alba & Foner, 2015). Key interactions with the host society often occur at the local level, in cities. It is often the first and most accessible arena for immigrants to engage in politics (Schönwälder, 2013). At the local level, individuals can feel that they have a stake in the city even if they do not want to join the wider political community. Since politicians typically start their careers at the local level and it takes time to build up the influence and resources to achieve national electoral success, there is usually a difference between immigrant representation at subnational and national offices (Alba & Foner, 2015). However, representation at the national level is also important given the added barriers, greater concentration of power, and representation at all levels is relevant for CIOs voices to be heard.

2.3 Explaining migrants' access to elected office: the interplay between resources for and context of political representation

Which factors can explain the near systematic underrepresentation of CIOs? And what determines CIOs access to elected office? In the following, I seek to answer these questions based on previous research. Past studies have pointed out that the representation of a group is "always the result of a complex configuration of causal elements" (Bird, 2005, p. 42). I discuss some of the main factors that have the possibility to influence CIOs access to elected office by grouping them into two types of explanations: context-based explanations and resource-based explanations.

2.3.1 Context-based explanations: political opportunity structure, institutional setting and the role of parties

The theory on political opportunity structure can serve as an important explanatory tool to help understand CIOs access to elected office. This theory was initially developed to look at social movements but has since been used for visible minority representation (Bird, 2005; Bird et al., 2010). The focus is on the political and institutional environment with formal and informal conditions which can facilitate or hinder a particular group. In order words, the opportunities or constraints of a political environment for a group (Bird, 2005; Donovan, 2007).

One important element of the political opportunity structure has to do with the institutional setting in the residence country and how such setting can explain levels of descriptive representation of migrants. For instance, when immigrants have easy access to citizenship and voting rights, and when minority groups are recognized as having a distinct culture and interests there is more chance for them to mobilize and achieve political representation (Bird et al., 2010).

Citizenship regimes are crucial to consider because they directly condition immigrants' access to elected office. When a country has easier naturalisation rules (e.g. Sweden) then immigrants have easier access to the country's citizenship which gives them automatic access to active and passive suffrage in all the elections of the country (Koopmans, 2004). However, there are differences between immigrant groups. If we take the example of Belgium, EU citizens do not need to acquire citizenship to have the right to vote and stand as candidates but non-EU immigrants have to acquire the Belgian citizenship for them to be able to stand as candidates. Some countries have extended their voting rights to all foreigners at the local level (e.g Sweden, Netherlands, Belgium), therefore increasing their inclusion, political mobilisation and the share of immigrants within the electorate (Seidle, 2015). These differences can therefore lead to differences in the levels of representation of different groups due to them having different opportunities to be represented. The history of immigration of a country is also important, in countries which have a long history of immigration, there are more chances that a large proportion of immigrants have naturalised, that they represent a high share of the population and accordingly it is expected to find higher levels of representation.

The electoral rules and system can also play a critical role (Togeby, 2008; Bloemraad & Schönwälder, 2013). It is often considered that proportional representation is favourable for minority candidates (Donovan, 2007; Ruedin, 2013; Wauters & Eelbode, 2011). One form of proportional representation is list proportional representation which is used in Belgium and the Netherlands. Conversely, plurality-majority systems, such as in France and the United Kingdom are considered to be beneficial when there is a sufficient geographical concentration of minorities in certain districts (Reynolds, 2006)[2].

Whether party lists are open or closed is also relevant for minority representation (Reynolds, 2006). In open-list systems, voters are able to choose their favoured candidates (preference votes), whereas in closed list systems voters have to vote for the list as a whole and thus also the ranking order in place. When voters are allowed to cast preference votes in local elections, such as in Belgium, the

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[2] See Reynolds (2006) for an indepth explanation of the influence of different electoral systems on minority representation.

Netherlands and Denmark this gives the electorate more power and diminishes that of the elites. Even though party elites still have a crucial role in determining candidates entry and position on party lists, if minority candidates gain sufficient personal votes they can improve their chances of being elected (Dancygier, 2013). Moreover, studies show in Belgium and Denmark that immigrants are more likely than native voters to use preference votes which work to improve the descriptive representation of CIOs (Bird, 2005; Teney, Jacobs, Rea & Delwit, 2010). In this type of system, there is a tendency for ethnically based campaigning and voting. Candidates depend on their capacity to mobilize voters to cast their personal vote for them, often minority candidates focus their mobilization on voters in immigrant communities (Bird, 2005 Dancygier, 2013). This being said, candidates most often do not only pitch to ethnic minorities but to a wide range of voters, sometimes even with contradictory demands of their political party, ethnic community and majority voters (Bird, 2005).

As highlighted in previous studies, political parties remain the gatekeepers of the electoral process and play a major role in shaping immigrants' opportunities to access elected office by directly controlling who enters the electoral competition (Donovan, 2007; Dancygier, 2013; Celis, Eelbode & Wauters 2013). This is especially true in Belgium where parties are the main actors in local politics (Celis et al, 2013). Parties are considered as gatekeepers because they control the nomination procedures, selection of candidates, list positioning of candidates and have almost exclusive control over who runs for political office (Donovan, 2007; Dancygier, 2013).

List positions are considered as important for CIOs representation given that candidates placed at the top of lists have a higher chance of being elected. Bird (2005) finds that visible minorities are included on lists but are rarely given key positions. Not placing immigrants in winnable list positions has also been found in other countries, and is possibly due to prejudice or fear of adverse voter reactions (Ruedin, 2013; Dancygier et al., 2015; Tolley, 2019). Dancygier, Lindgren, Nyman and Vernby (2021) further demonstrate how political parties are gatekeepers who undermine CIOs chances to enter into elected office. They show this by demonstrating that the stage at which immigrants have trouble in getting into elected office is at the nomination stage and in transitioning from being nominated to being placed in a favourable list position.

Ideological positions of parties and their broader positions on immigration have been found to greatly influence CIOs representation. Left-wing parties with their egalitarian and social justice ideologies have historically taken the lead in minority representation (Kittilson & Tate, 2004; Wauters et al., 2016). Sobolewska, McKee and Campbell (2018) find that candidates from left-wing parties tended to support more the notion that ethnic minorities share an experience of being held back by prejudice and

discrimination, while the opposite was true for candidates from right-wing parties. Further, left-wing parties typically have policies that often overlap with that of minority interests (Kittilson & Tate, 2004). They tend to be more welcome to immigrant-origin candidates, have higher shares of immigrant-origin representatives, tend to represent more CIOs' interests and attract more support from CIOs (Togeby, 2008; Bird et al., 2010; Teney et al., 2010; Donovan, 2012; Bloemraad & Schönwälder, 2013; Sobolewska et al., 2018*)*. When left-wing parties do well in elections, typically the proportion of minority representatives tends to also increase (Sobolewska et al., 2018). However, in Belgium, it was found that while left-wing parties perform better in the descriptive representation of ethnic minorities, in all political parties there are low levels of inclusion of ethnic minorities in leadership positions within parties (Celis et al., 2013).

CIOs now represent a significant proportion of most Western European countries, political parties are increasingly becoming aware of the need to appeal to migrant communities, and to represent this group in their membership and leadership (Donovan, 2007). Yet motivations to include more diversity within party lists can be driven by different reasons. They can be driven by ideological reasons as discussed above, but also they can be driven by the anticipated electoral reward which can incentivize parties to recruit more immigrant-origin candidates. By increasing the party's proportion of minority candidates, they can increase their attractiveness for immigrant-origin communities (Wauters & Eelbode, 2011; Bloemraad & Schönwälder, 2013; Wauters, Eelbode & Celis, 2016). However, if parties only set out to include minorities symbolically as a tool to shape the party's image in order to convey their support for diversity and integration, parties run the risk that minority populations will reject these symbolic candidates as mere tokens that cannot relate to minority constituents and that do not benefit minority interests (Dancygier, 2018). When parties nominate symbolic candidates often these representatives will not be seen as representing immigrant origin voters or their preferences. It is when parties do not seek to send a symbolic message but are interested in winning minority votes that minority constituents will be more likely to consider these descriptive representatives as 'one of their own' (Dancygier, 2018).

2.3.2 Resource-based explanations

In the following, I will discuss factors that can explain CIOs' underrepresentation and access to elected office which are linked to resources. Standard socio-demographic factors such as age, gender, educational qualifications, income and occupation are often used in the study of political representation. The distribution of these resources is usually linked to ethnicity, immigrant origins and gender in systemic ways. Migrants oftentimes have more obstacles to access higher education or

stable income and a lower socio-economic status is expected to reduce individuals' likelihood to engage in politics (Dancygier et al., 2015). Meaning that inequalities in political participation and representation can be understood as the result of socio-economic inequalities (Bloemraad & Schönwälder, 2013).

Being an immigrant often means having certain difficulties to enter into the political arena due to a lack of resources. Migration backgrounds can shape resources and motivations for political inclusion and representation (Bloemraad & Schönwälder, 2013). The political institutions and norms are often new, as is the language, which takes time to learn (Bird, 2005). In addition, contacts and networks are often very important in order to be elected which also takes time to construct, sometimes over generations. Having parents in politics can highly help individuals to enter into politics by passing on resources, networks and name recognition (Bloemraad & Schönwälder, 2013). All of these barriers in addition to conditions of poverty and social exclusion contribute to CIOs and minorities not participating in politics and in turn their political unrepresentation (Bird, 2005). Other characteristics that can enhance and render minority candidates more attractive are, for instance, having a university degree and having resources (Bloemraad, 2013). Female minority candidates can also be more attractive for parties who want to appeal to a larger electorate because they 'kill two birds with one stone' (Celis, Erzeel & Mügge, 2015). This tendency has been shown in several countries such as Belgium, the Netherlands, France and Denmark where ethnic minority women tend to be more present in politics compared to their male counterparts (Bird, 2005; Celis, Erzeel, Mügge & Damstra, 2014).

Even with the same formal rules and rights of citizenship minority groups can have different levels of representation and mobilization (Bird, 2005; Michon & Vermeulen, 2013). For instance in the case of the Netherlands, even though Turkish and Moroccan immigrants have the same institutional opportunities, the same socio-economic status, the same predominant religion and similar immigration histories, their mobilization and representation differ because of differences in the structure of the groups. Immigrant groups can vary in their mobilizational capacity, ability and willingness to rally the co-ethnic vote, meaning that groups can diverge in their political incorporation (Dancygier, 2013). While group mobilization is not the only way to achieve representation it has been shown to nevertheless help, but its effects will be muted if the political system is not responsive (Bird, 2005; Dancygier, 2013).

Another important resource that can influence CIOs representation is the residential concentration of CIOs. When there is a high concentration of CIOs there is more chance of there being dense organisational networks that foster political participation (Michon & Vermeulen, 2013). High

residential concentration increases the supply of CIOs to run as candidates and also the demand for the presence of immigrant-origin representatives and for their interests to be represented. Immigrant-origin candidates as more likely to be elected because of minority votes and because parties will have more incentive to include minority candidates (Wauters et al., 2016; Pamies et al., 2021).

As all these examples illustrate, context-based and resource-based explanations should be taken together in order to better understand the descriptive representation of minorities and CIOs. A wide range of factors play a crucial role in explaining CIOs political representation and these various explanations should always be conceived as closely intertwined. However, these factors cannot completely explain the representation gap between CIOs and the majority population. Dancygier et al., (2015), demonstrate that variation in resources and opportunity structures only explain a small portion of immigrants underrepresentation. It is the return of these characteristics which is much lower for immigrants, meaning that these factors have a smaller effect on winning seats for immigrants than they do for natives (Dancygier et al., 2015). Their findings point towards discrimination being a significant explanation for immigrants' underrepresentation. Party gatekeepers discriminate against individuals aspiring to go into politics with an immigrant background. Prior work has also argued the significant impact of party gatekeepers and discrimination in explaining immigrants' underrepresentation (Michon & Vermeulen, 2013; Dancygier et al., 2015).

Through my empirical study, I will look at the profiles and backgrounds of immigrant origin councillors in comparison to their non-immigrant origin counterparts in order to explore the possible differences. I will look at their age, gender, educational qualifications and occupation.
I expect to find that immigrant-origin women will be more present than their male counterparts in local councils. I expect to find a high presence of immigrant origin councillors who are highly educated, have parents in politics and who have lived in Belgium for a long period of time. Also, I expect to find a better representation of immigrant origin groups that have a long history of immigration to Belgium and who have easier institutional rules for political representation.

In addition, I expect to find that that left-wing parties will present more councillors of immigrant origin compared to other parties. However, I expect to find to some extent immigrant origin representatives in all the political parties, since I will only study communes with a sizable population of CIOs. Further, I expect councillors from left-wing parties to represent more CIOs' interests given that their interests often aline with the ideology of left-wing parties. Thus, I hypothesise that:

H1. Migrant groups counting a longer history of immigration in a particular country and those who benefit from easier institutional rules for political representation are expected to return higher levels of political representation.

H2. Immigrant-origin officeholders who are women, highly educated, who have family members in politics and count a longer period of stay in the country of residence are expected to be more present in elected institutions.

H3: In a country that counts a long history of immigration and whose electoral system is rather favourable to minority inclusion, all parties are expected to return immigrant origin elected officeholders. Yet, left-wing parties are expected to perform better in the representation of CIOs when compared to right-wing parties.

2.4 Does the descriptive representation of minority groups foster their substantive representation?

It is often assumed that adequate substantive representation requires more proportional descriptive representation, because of shared characteristics (e.g. immigrant background) representatives are more sensitive towards and have a better understanding of issues immigrants face (Phillips, 1995; Mansbridge, 1999). Therefore, representatives from minority backgrounds will be better equipped to substantively represent minority interests, but is this the case? Is descriptive representation a prerequisite to substantive representation?

It is debatable whether there is always a link between descriptive and substantive representation (Saalfeld & Bischof, 2013). Several studies have looked at the link between descriptive and substantive representation with different results emerging. Research supporting the notion that descriptive representation leads to substantive representation argue that minority representatives have intrinsic motivations. Their actions are driven by internal desires such as a sense of shared experience with members of a group and a sense of responsibility to represent. The similar characteristics and experiences between descriptive representatives and CIOs can lead to representatives having a greater understanding of the concerns and interests of CIOs. This shared experience means that immigrant-origin representatives will be more disposed to advocate for CIOs' interests (Mansbridge, 1999). As Mansbridge (1999) explains the sense of shared experience is a core mechanism that binds members of disadvantaged groups "across other divides such as economic or social inequality". This

shared experience can foster a sense of responsibility and act as a motivation for representatives to defend CIOs' interests.

Moreover, because descriptive representatives have shared experience with a particular group they can speak with a higher level of authority than non-descriptive representatives (Mansbridge, 1999). As Phillips (1995) argues, descriptive representatives are not merely symbols but also enable to make present "those values and goals and perspectives that most women develop out of the experiences that differentiate them from most men" (Phillips, 1995, p. 158). Minority representatives typically bring forward their experiences and perspectives that otherwise would not be heard, they can give minorities a voice in decisions that directly affects them (Bird, Saalfeld & Wüst, 2010). However, measuring shared experience is a particularly difficult task, it is inherently difficult to operationalise any notion of shared experience. Experience is not homogenous among under-represented groups, it can even be argued that there are no obvious commonalities (Sobolewska et al., 2018). Because of this, I will follow Sobolewska's et al. (2018) lead by looking at the perception of commonality of experience of immigrant origin representatives.

On the other hand, some of the arguments as to why descriptive representatives might not necessarily be more likely to substantively represent minority interests are as follows. While immigrant-origin representatives have the ability to represent the interest of CIOs, they do not automatically qualify to do so (Pitkin, 1967). A representative should not be viewed as suitable on the basis of their physical characteristics but rather on their values and actions. A representative does not need to have similar characteristics, a shared experience with the represented in order to act in their interests (Celis, 2008). Immigrant-origin representatives' attachment can also vary among individuals, therefore influencing their motivations to represent CIOs' interests (Chambers, 2020). In Nixon's (1998) study of role perceptions among ethnic minority Members of Parliament (MP) in the United Kingdom, she finds that some minority MPs do not seek to represent minorities. As Saalfeld and Kyriakopoulou (2010) further develop, "many minority ethnic MPs simply do not see themselves as representatives of a particular ethnic group." (Saalfeld & Kyriakopoulou, 2010, p. 232-233). Moreover, as was found for female politicians, they rarely only represent women or present themselves as 'women politicians', they instead tend to present themselves as representing the broader electorate (Mügge et al., 2019).

In addition, rather than a representative's characteristics, other factors can be more salient for the substantive representation of minorities and can be better to determine who will represent minority interests. These arguments are mostly focused on extrinsic motivations, the electoral incentive. This refers to the tendency of representatives to act in the interests of a group based on the anticipated

reward, representatives evaluate the expected utility of actions in relation to their goal of re-election (Saalfeld & Bischof, 2013).

For instance, partisanship as already discussed has a significant effect on substantive representation because it influences which issues and interests representatives defend (Bird et al., 2010; Donovan, 2012; Bloemraad & Schönwälder, 2013; Sobolewska et al., 2018). Left-wing parties perform the best in the descriptive representation of CIOs but also in their substantive representation. Representatives from left-wing parties have been found to ask more questions concerning immigrants interests and advocate more for CIOs' interests than centre-right parties (Donovan, 2012 Wüst, 2014). This better representation among left-wing parties is linked to party ideology but can also be linked to the electoral incentive. For instance, in Belgium, ethnic minorities were found to be more likely to vote for left-wing parties, even when controlling for other variables (Teney et al., 2010). Meaning that expectations towards left-wing parties are higher hence, there is a greater incentive for left-wing parties to take into account minority interests and increase descriptive representation (Wauters et al., 2016). Another example is the importance of the demographic concentration of CIOs. When constituencies have a high share of immigrant-origin citizens within the population, all representatives and political parties are more likely to represent CIOs' interests because there is more incentive due to the competition to gain CIO votes (Bird, 2010; Saalfeld & Bischof, 2013; Wauters et al., 2016; Sobolewska et al, 2018; Pamies et al., 2021).

Multiple empirical studies have looked at the link between descriptive and substantive representation. In order to measure substantive representation, a considerable number of studies have looked at immigrant origin legislators contributions through their activities and speeches and the connection with migrants' preferences (Bird, 2010; Saalfeld, 2011; Donovan, 2012; Saalfeld & Bischof, 2013; Wüst, 2014; Mügge, van der Pas & van de Wardt, 2019). In Canada, Bird (2010) finds in the House of Commons that visible minority members of parliament touch more on ethnic-related issues than nonvisible minority MPs. While in Germany, Donovan (2012) and Wüst (2014) both find that migrant representatives ask more parliamentary questions than non-migrant counterparts relating to migrant interests. This being said, Donovan (2012) also shows that there is a gap between descriptive and substantive representation, not all migrant representatives substantively represent migrant interests and there are variations in the degree of substantive representation. In the UK, Saalfeld and Bischof (2013) and Saalfeld (2011) find that visible minority members of parliament ask more questions relating to minority interests. However, they also find that all MPs are responsive to the interests of minority constituents if they represent a constituency with a high share of minorities. Research underlines the importance of shared experience for representing minority interest, yet when

constituencies have high levels of diversity, all politicians (with and without a minority background) are more likely to represent minority interest (Bird, 2010; Saalfeld & Bischof, 2013; Sobolewska et al, 2018).

As can be seen with the above arguments, descriptive representation does not necessarily lead to substantive representation. The influence of descriptive representation is 'probabilistic, rather than deterministic' (Phillips, 1995), therefore the higher proportion of immigrant origin representatives increases the possibility of CIOs interest being represented but does not guarantee it. Immigrant origin councillors can be influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations to represent CIOs' interests. To understand if it is descriptive representation that leads to substantive representation and not other factors such as extrinsic motivations, research has tried to distinguish between electoral and nonelectoral motives. However, it is difficult to measure these motivations and be able to distinguish them.

Previous research has used more indirect measurements than direct ones, for instance, the distribution of representative outcomes to measure the influence of electoral incentives (Saafeld & Bischof, 2013). On the other hand, Sobolewska et al. (2018) use a more direct attitudinal measure to look at the perception of shared experience and motivation to represent by using an anonymous survey with British parliamentary candidates. They find that a sense of shared experience and feelings of responsibility to represent increase councillors' motivation to represent minority interests, although it is moderated by the political party. Left-wing representatives were more intrinsically motivated to represent minorities. The significance of intrinsic motivations is further demonstrated in Canada and the United States (McAndrews, Goldberg, Loewen & Rubenson & Stevens, 2020; Broockman, 2013).

In order to distinguish between electoral and intrinsic motivations, Broockman (2013) used a field experiment sending emails using an alias strongly signalling to be black to legislators either stating being in the legislator district or a city far away. In this way, he was able to control the electoral incentives to reply or not to the email. He found that black legislators were significantly more likely to reply to the email from someone outside their districts than their non-black peers. Broockman's (2013) findings suggest strong support for the hypothesis that minority legislators are significantly more intrinsically motivated to advance minority interests.

Another crucial point to consider is how to measure substantive representation? While measuring descriptive representation is a relatively straightforward procedure focusing on the numerical presence of representatives of immigrant origin, substantive representation poses much more difficulty. McKee

(2018) points out the very diverse nature of minority and immigrant-origin groups which brings difficulties in conceptualizing their interests and thus measuring their substantive representation. Minority groups are not monolithic entities, they are a diverse set of voters differing on elements such as class, religion, gender, different levels of mobilization and opportunities (Dancygier, 2018). Nevertheless, a number of areas can be identified as reflecting immigrant interests such as integration, education, jobs, discrimination, multiculturalism, right-wing extremism (Donovan, 2012). While CIOs can share common perspectives on some issues because of similarities in their life experience, this does not always translate into the same political interests for all group members (Phillips 1995; Mansbridge, 1999).

At the moment there is no universally agreed-upon measure to look at group interests that are represented. In the literature, two main levels of analysis have been used, either focusing on the micro-level, by looking at representatives' behaviours, their efforts to promote CIOs' interests. Or, focusing on the macro-level, the output of legislators actions, such as policy changes (Kroeber, 2018). While it is important to examine the tangible outcomes in order to look at substantive representation, this approach does not allow to measure the result of representative motivations to represent, since in reality representatives are limited in their possibility of actions, such as policy changes (Saalfeld & Kyriakopoulou, 2010). For this thesis I chose to use self-reported preferences and activities through interviews because it allows for the evaluation of all types of information provided by representatives about who they aim to represent, focussing on the issues that representatives deem important but also their motivations, sense of responsibility to represent, and their perception of a sense of shared experience.

Through this study, I aim to look at CIO descriptive representation but also to explore the link between descriptive and substantive representation by looking at representatives' motivations and sense of shared experience. I expect to find that all immigrant-origin councillors will represent CIOs' interests due to the high proportions of CIOs in the communes studied which means that there is a strong electoral incentive to represent CIOs' interests. However, councillors from left-wing political parties and those who express a strong attachment to CIOs through a sense of shared experience will have more motivation to represent CIOs' interests. I hypothesis that :

H4: Whereas all migrant-origin representatives are expected to advocate, to some extent, for migrants' interests, their motivation to represent minorities is likely to be stronger among left-wing elected officeholders or those who feel more attached to minority groups via shared experiences.

3. THE BELGIUM CONTEXT: IMMIGRATION AND POLITICAL INCLUSION

To study empirically the political representation of CIOs, I propose to study the case of local elections in Belgium, focusing on the province of Liège and local councillors in the current mandate. To situate our study, I now provide a brief description of Belgium's context of immigration and then the electoral system and the electoral rights of immigrants.

### 3.1 Immigration trajectories: the context of immigration in Belgium

Similarly to several European countries in the postwar decades' immigration to Belgium was in big part due to the signing of bilateral labour agreements with Southern European countries (e.g. Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece) and non-European countries (e.g. Morocco and Turkey) (Phalet & Swyngedouw, 2003). The first bilateral agreements were signed in 1946 with Italy to import an influx of Italian workers to work in the coal mines due to considerable shortages and the need to reconstruct the country, these workers arrived in the main mining areas including Liège (Martiniello & Rea, 2013). Today, Italians are still the largest ethnic minority in the country (Hooghe, 2005). Initially, these workers were male but already in the 1950s women and children arrived by means of family reunification (Hooghe, 2005). Women worked in cleaning, the care sector, and also the arms industry particularly in the Liège region (Martiniello & Rea, 2013). However, due to several accidents in the mines including the disaster of Marcinelle where 262 miners died, Italy chose to suspend emigration to Belgium. Following this Belgium concluded new bilateral agreements with Spain in 1956, Greece in 1957 Turkey in 1964, Algeria in 1969, Tunisia in 1970 and Yugoslavia in 1970 for immigrants to work in the mines, metal industry, construction sites and transport (Martiniello & Rea, 2013). Following the independence of Congo, in the 1960s an influx of Congolese migrants also arrived in Belgium mostly as students, diplomats, and businessmen (Wauters & Eelbode, 2011).

From the mid-1970s due to the oil crises and high unemployment, migration policy became harsher, labour migration was officially stopped in 1974, there were increased sanctions for employers who brought new immigrant workers, and new entries were limited to migrants with qualifications not available in Belgium (Martiniello & Rea, 2013). The main source of immigration thus changed and became dominated by family reunification and family formation. These immigrant communities thus kept on growing for the next few decades and still constitute a significant portion of the Belgian population today. In 2019, Morocco, Italy, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Turkey were in the top ten previous nationalities of people having acquired Belgian nationality (Statbel, 2020).

Compared to immigration before 1974 which was limited to people from a smaller number of countries, immigration is now increasingly diversified with people coming from all over the world. With the EU nationals having the right to free movement within the EU, asylum seekers and refugees from Eastern Europe, Former Yugoslavia, various crises in African countries and increasing migration from Asia. Similarly to other Western countries, Belgium is now a country with a diverse population (Martiniello & Rea, 2013).

Family reunification profoundly changed the foreign population in Belgium, the immigrant population went from temporary guest workers to permanent settlement. This mass migration means that there is now a large established population of citizens of immigrant origin (mostly South-European, Moroccan and Turkish) in Belgium (Phalet & Swyngedouw, 2003; Bloemraad & Schönwälder, 2013). As we can see in Figure 1, the immigration flow to Belgium, despite some fluctuations has an overall upward trend.

Figure 1. *Number of foreigners immigrating to Belgium*
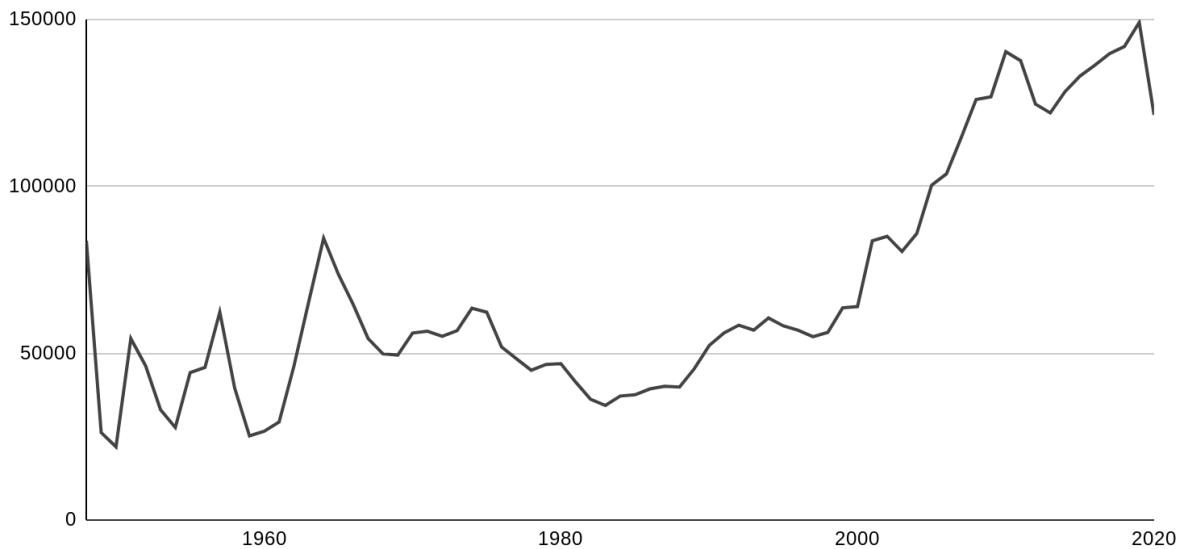
S*ource:* Own elaboration created based on Statbel (2021a) data. https://statbel.fgov.be/fr/themes/population/migrations#figures

The Belgian population today is diverse, as can be seen in Figure 2, 32,7 per cent of its population has an immigrant origin. The foreign population are in majority from other EU countries (7,9 per cent), whereas the Belgian population of immigrant origin are in majority of non-EU origin (12,2 per cent)

(Statbel, 2021b). The top four nationalities immigrating to Belgium, after Belgians are Romanians, French, Dutch and Italians (Statbel, 2021b).

Figure 2. *Composition of the Belgian population 2021*

S*ource:* Own elaboration created based on Statbel (2021c) data. https://statbel.fgov.be/fr/themes/population/origine#figures
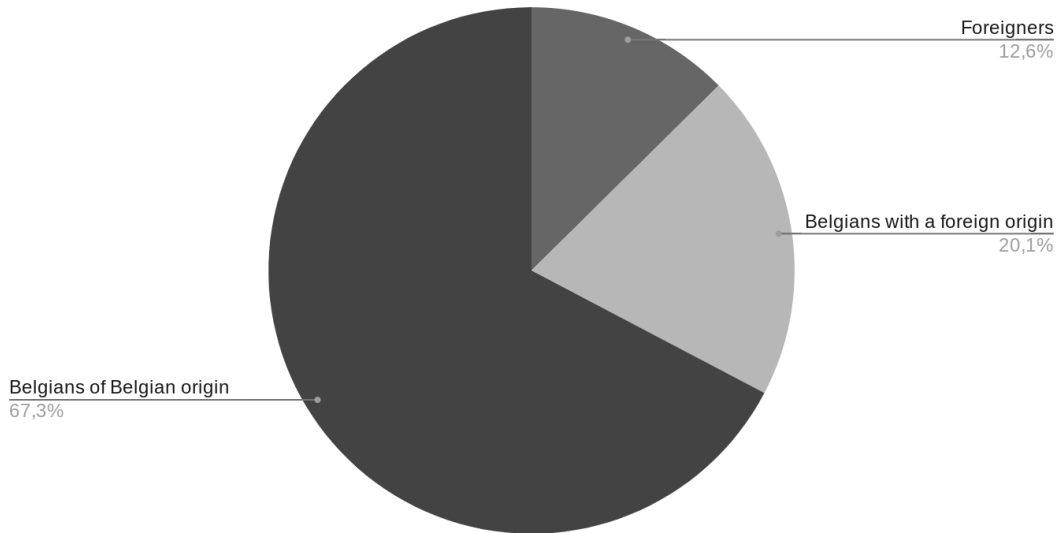
Concerning integration, each region has developed its own integration policy depending on its own objectives. Wallonia was the first to put in place integration priorities in 1996, followed by Flanders in 2004, the Brussels region in 2017 and the German-speaking community in 2018 (European Commission, n.d.). This being said, already in the 1960s in Wallonia politicians were calling upon the urgency of defining an integration policy and various initiatives were taken in the province of Liège in 1964 (Martiniello & Rea, 2013).

Over the past decade, there have been both improvements and restrictive changes in Belgium integration policies. We can see this notably thanks to the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX) which measures policies to integrate migrants. Belgium ranks at the bottom of the top 10 countries that have the most comprehensive approach to integration, the main failings are in labour market mobility and family reunification (Solano & Huddleston, 2020). The country has strong anti-discrimination policies and has recently increased commitments to equal opportunities but there are more obstacles to family reunification for Third Country Nationals (TCN) and permanent residence (Solano & Huddleston, 2020). The European Migration Network (2020) find that TCNs have much lower employment rates, 65.8 per cent for nationals compared to 38.5 per cent for TCNs.

They further find a strong difference between nationals and TCNs in education and social inclusion. TCNs have higher risks of poverty and social exclusion, and have high chances of leaving schools early (European Migration Network, 2020).

3.2 Belgium's electoral system and the electoral rights of immigrants

Belgium can be said to be notorious for its complex political system. The political system went from a unitary to a federal system with two levels of devolution, three territorial regions (Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels-Capital region) and three language-based communities (French, Dutch and German) each with their own government and parliament. The country enjoys a proportional representation system, which means that parties present a list of candidates, the voters vote for a party and receive seats in proportion to their overall share of the votes (Reynolds, 2006). This system is considered to be favourable to multipartyism and is often considered to be beneficial for the representation of minority groups (Wauters & Eelbode, 2011; Ruedin, 2013). Belgium also has the particularity of political parties generally competing only in one of the language communities and the country uses the Hondt system for the repartition of seats between the different parties.

Belgium has a compulsory voting system and is generally characterised as a flexible-list system, meaning that electors have the choice to vote for several individuals (on the same list) called preference votes or party list as a whole, called list votes. The seats are then distributed to the candidates in the order of the list, "adding to each candidate's preferential votes the amount of list votes needed to match the eligibility figure" (Meier, 2003, p.1). The possibility of preference votes is considered to be favourable for the representation of minorities because they often receive more preferential votes compared to other candidates (Togeby, 2008; Wauters & Eelbode, 2011). When minority candidates are positioned in non-electable slots on lists there is a chance that they will be elected anyway due to large numbers of preferential votes. These votes can be ethnic voting (ethnic voters voting for ethnic candidates) which is very common in Brussels and symbolic voting (non-minority Belgian voter who wishes to send a message of support for the presence of ethnic minorities in politics) (Wauters & Eelbode, 2011). Even though electors have this choice, the ranking of candidates on party list is of importance because when electors vote for a list in its entirety, they support in particular the first candidates on the list (Bouhon, 2017). As a majority of electors choose to vote for lists as a whole rather than individual candidates, this is a large advantage for candidates at the top of lists. Political parties thus play leading roles in the recruitment and nomination of candidates. Parties enjoy large freedom in the construction of their list but they do have to comply with a gender quota which is favourable to the representation of women (Bouhon, 2017). On each list

there must be as many women and men, only a difference of one is accepted when the number of candidates is uneven. Also, the two candidates at the top of the lists must be of a different gender. Even with this quota in place and having as many women and men as candidates, women become rarer the higher the position, especially Mayor (Meier, 2003).

At the local level, the legislative assembly is the communal council which is composed of the local councillors, the mayor and the aldermen. The councillors are directly elected by the citizens during the elections which are held every six years and their number can vary between 7 and 55 (including the aldermen and the mayor) depending on the number of inhabitants in the commune. In Wallonia since 2006, the mayor is also directly elected by the population and is the candidate who received the most preference votes on the most important list of the majority. The mayor together with the aldermen (from 2 to 10 appointed by and within the communal council) forms the executive body of the commune called the communal College in Wallonia. In Wallonia and Flanders, the president of the social action council is also part of the College (Meier, 2003).

Historically, foreign residents were excluded from electoral rights, the Belgium electoral system was based for a long time on the connection between the right to vote and nationality, legislators have had to significantly alter the procedures to allow for the participation of non-nationals (Wauters & Eelbode, 2011; Lafleur, 2013). Electoral rights for foreign residents has been a major topic in political debates in Belgium since the 1970s, one of the anticipated fears being the impact that EU citizens would have on electoral results (Lafleur, 2013; Seidle, 2015). With the 1992 Treaty of Maastricht, EU nationals gained the right to vote and stand as a candidate in local elections in another member state and European parliament elections (Vintila, Lafleur & Nikolic, 2021). It is the Council Directive 93/109/EC that regulates EU nationals electoral rights for European parliament elections and was implemented in Belgium by Law of 23rd of March 1989.

Even before 1992, some countries had already allowed voting rights to non-nationals to facilitate their integration, such as Sweden (1976) and the Netherlands (1985) (Seidle, 2015). Belgium on the other hand, only amended its constitution which disconnected nationality and the right to vote in 1998 (Wauters & Eelbode, 2011). The Council Directive 94/80/EC on local elections was transposed in the Belgian legislation by Law of 27th of January 1999 (Vintila et al., 2021). This change was made because the court of justice of the European Community found that Belgium had violated the 1994 Council Directive 94/80/EC by reason of it not having yet introduced communal voting rights for resident EU nationals (Groenendijk, 2008). Consequently, EU citizens were allowed to participate in the 2000 local elections and they are still the only foreign group allowed to stand as candidates in

Belgium elections, therefore having more favourable conditions of access to electoral rights than TCNs (Vintila et al., 2021).

For TCNs, politicians were more reluctant but with increased pressure from civil society and left-wing parties, the franchise was extended to TCNs in 2004 and was first exercised in the 2006 local elections (Wauters & Eelbode, 2011, Seidle, 2015; Vintila, et al., 2021). Even though TCNs have been able to vote (under specific conditions explained below) in local elections, they cannot vote in regional or national elections and are excluded from the passive suffrage for any elections (Vintila, et al., 2021). EU nationals, on the other hand, can run as candidates at local elections but likewise to TCNs are excluded from taking part in regional and national elections (Lafleur, 2013; Vintila et al., 2021). Moreover, the position of mayor is out of grasp for all immigrants who do not hold the Belgian nationality, but non-national EU citizens can be alderman or alderwomen (Vintila, et al., 2021).

TCNs have three specific conditions to access their electoral rights, which are regulated by Law of 19th of March 2004. First, only TCNs who have established their main residence in Belgium for five years without interruption preceding the local elections can register as voters. Second, contrary to resident citizens, both non-national EU citizens and TCNs must request their registration as voters. Upon registration, foreign resident voters are also subject to the principle of mandatory voting just like resident citizens. Third, the voter registration form must be accompanied by a formal declaration, by which TCNs swear to respect the country's laws, its Constitution and the European Convention on Human Rights (Vintial et al., 2021). Further, like non-national EU citizens, TCNs have to register voluntarily to be able to vote and after they must comply with the compulsory voting regulation (Vintila et al., 2021).

Non-national EU citizens have a set of restrictions if they wish to register as a candidate. First, they have to be registered as a voter. According to Article 13 of the Law of 27th of January 1999, non-national EU citizens must submit with the act of acceptance of their candidacy for local elections a personal declaration which states that 1) they do not occupy any elected office in another EU Member State; 2) they do not have any position that could be considered as incompatible with holding an elected position in another EU Member State; and 3) they are not deprived of their electoral rights in their country of nationality (Lafleur, 2013; Vintila et al., 2021).

Citizenship as a legal status has long been seen as giving certain rights and benefits that non-national residents do not have, but this boundary is becoming more blurred particularly in the European Union (Seidle, 2015). With the reforms that allow EU citizens to vote and run as candidates, and TCNs to

vote in local elections, there has been a significant expansion to the electorate. Likewise, Belgium's relatively liberal citizenship policies have allowed many first-generation immigrants and their descendants to become Belgium citizens. Up until 2012, Belgium had a three-year naturalization timeline which was changed to five years. This reform of 2012 also introduced integration requirements for TCNs (Wautelet, 2020). In order to gain Belgium citizenship, TCNs must have lived legally for at least 5 years, demonstrate knowledge of at least one national language and show social integration and participation in economic life. They must also pay a registration fee of 150 euros with no waiver possible even for applicants without any financial means (Wautelet, 2020). In the case of TCNs who have lived in Belgium for ten years, they are exempted from the requirements to demonstrate their social and economic integration but must still demonstrate their knowledge of one of the national languages (Wautelet, 2020).

Similarly to most European countries, there has been an improvement in political participation over time. Between 1980 and 2008 the estimated share of immigrant-origin voters has greatly increased both at the national and local level, the average in 1980 was 0,7 per cent compared to 11,2 per cent in 2008 (Koopmans, Michalowski & Waibel, 2012). Due to the increased demographic weight of CIOs and many gaining the Belgium nationality (thus voting rights at all levels and the possibility to run as candidates), there has been a steady increase in their descriptive representation since the mid-1990s (Teney et al., 2010).

We can see this at the local level in Brussels for ethnic minorities, in 1994 there were 14 councillors out of 651 who had an ethnic background, in 2000 this number increased to 90 out of 652, then 136 out of 653 in 2006 (Wauters & Eelbode, 2011). This amounts to a representation rate of 20 per cent and the majority of these councillors were of Moroccan, Turkish and Congolese origin (Teney et al., 2010). Further, in 2004, a politician of Turkish origin was appointed as Secretary of State in the Brussels government, a lady of Moroccan origin was Minister of French Culture Youth and Public Broadcasting in the government of the French Community of Belgium, and a politician of Congolese origin was Secretary of State for Family Affairs at the federal level (Teney et al., 2010).

In the Walloon parliaments in 2009, there was 9 per cent of ethnic minority representatives which almost matched their presence in the population (Wauters & Eelbode, 2011). However, in the federal parliament in the 2010-2014 term, there was an underrepresentation of immigrant origin legislators, only 7,7 per cent of legislators were of immigrant origin when 13,8 per cent of the population was foreign-born (Geese & Saalfeld, 2018).

To summarise, the Belgium case provided an interesting study for the representation of CIOs for several reasons. First, Belgium has a long history of immigration which has led to a diverse society today with a mix of first, second and third-generation immigrants from a wide range of countries. Secondly, its proportional representation electoral system with flexible lists and the possibility of preference voting makes for an interesting system to study as it is considered to be favourable for minority representation. These conditions drive me to expect to find high levels of representation for CIOs.

Further, the study of the local level in Belgium seems particularly relevant for multiple reasons. First, it is at this political level that immigrants (TCNs and EU nationals) can vote, however, only EU nationals can run as candidates. Secondly, local elections are decisive for migrant integration, it stands out as the first and most accessible entry point for CIOs to engage in politics, CIOs are often active and visible in the local community and entering into local politics is only a small step (Wauters & Eelbode, 2011; Schönwälder, 2013; Alba & Foner, 2015). It is at this level that immigrants and the host society concretely interact and local policies can respond specifically to migrant groups issues. Even if individuals do not feel close to the host society as a whole, they are much more chance that they will feel connected to the local level, the city and region (Koopmans, 2004). Further, if individuals strive for a political career the local level is the self-evident starting point (Meier, 2003).

4. DATA CASES AND METHODOLOGY

The aim of this thesis is to study the political representation of CIOs at the local level in the province of Liège. As discussed in the previous section, Belgium is an interesting country for the study of CIOs political representation for multiple reasons. Belgium has a long-standing history of immigration, an increasingly diverse society combined with a favourable electoral system for minorities (i.e. proportional representation, flexible lists, preference voting), and immigrant groups (i.e. EU citizens and non-EU migrants) do not have the same electoral rights. The province of Liège is particularly interesting because of its long history of immigration and initiatives for immigrant integration, already in 1964 (Martiniello & Rea, 2013). Further, compared to other Western Democracies a much smaller number of studies have concentrated on the Belgium case (Celis et al., 2013; Celis et al., 2014; Eelbode et al., 2013; Wauters et al., 2016).

The objective of this study is to better understand the descriptive and substantive representation of CIOs. For this I used mixed methods incorporating both qualitative and quantitative approaches, this has the advantage of yielding additional insight rather than data provided only by one method

(Creswell & Creswell, 2017). For the quantitative analysis, I created an original dataset on all local elected councillors. For the qualitative analysis, semi-structured interviews with local councillors of immigrant origin were conducted. In the following section, I provide a more detailed account of the research design, the data used, and justification for these choices.

4.1 Quantitative data

Studies exploring the descriptive representation of minority groups have typically used the same methods to do so - analysis of the numerical presence of minorities (Togeby, 2008; Andrew et al., 2009; Saalfeld and Kyriakopoulou, 2011; Bloemraad, 2013; Alba & Foner, 2015; Geese & Saalfeld, 2018; Pamies et al., 2021). I chose to follow this approach by looking at the numerical presence of immigrant-origin local councillors in a selection of communes in the province of Liège. Local elections often provide the first stepping stone for representatives to access other levels of political office and key interactions with the host society occur at the local level (Alba & Foner, 2015). Because of the high number of communes in the province of Liège (84 in all), the resource and time limitations of this study, it was not feasible to collect data on all of these communes. In turn, I decided to focus the analysis on selected communes with high proportions of CIOs so that there would be the potential supply and demand for representatives of immigrant origin.

I selected communes with more than 15.000 inhabitants to avoid very small communes in which the patterns of demographic concentration and political inclusion of migrants may be different when compared to larger communes. Moreover, the communes selected had a minimum of 10 per cent of citizens with an immigrant background within the population which is considered a sufficiently high threshold to ensure high demographic visibility of migrant groups within the local community. After classifying the communes in this way, I selected the top eight communes to analyse which were, Liège, Seraing, Grâce-Hollogne, Verviers, Herstal, Saint-Nicolas, Ans and Eupen. Each commune has a different number of councillors and members of the communal College as can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. *Number of local councillors and members of the communal College by communes*
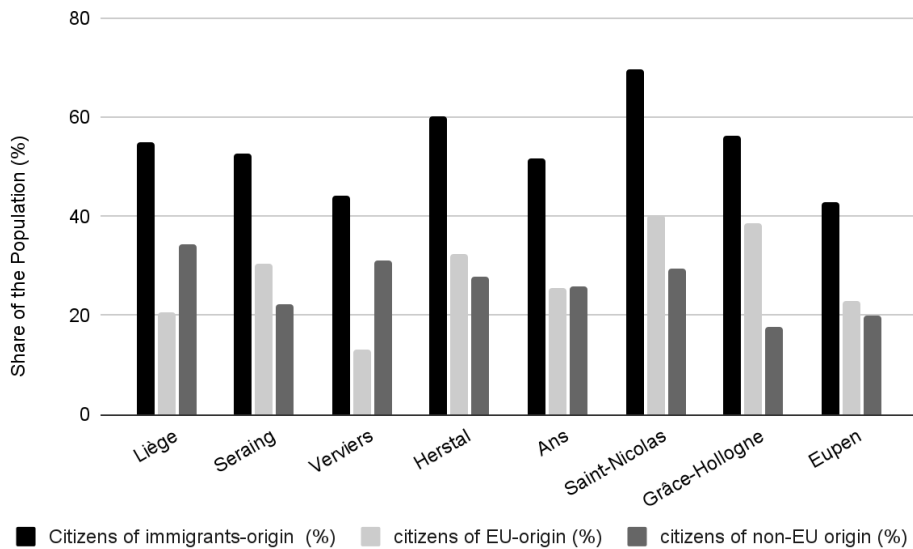
Communes	Number of local councillors	Number of members of the Communal College
Liège	50	10
Seraing	39	9
Verviers	37	8
Herstal	33	8
Ans	29	7
Saint-Nicolas	28	7
Grâce-Hollogne	27	7
Eupen	26	7

S*ource:* Own elaboration created based on PRMB data.

In order to select the communes to study, I used the data from Statbel (2021c). In Statbel's (2021c) calculation of the number of citizens with an immigrant background is included, individuals with a foreign nationality, those who first registered a foreign nationality, as well as those who have one or both parents with a first foreign-registered nationality. Therefore, this explains why the percentages of citizens with an immigrant background are high, ranging from 42,9 per cent to 64,3 per cent in the eight communes studied. Furthermore, an advantage of this data from Statbel (2021c) is that it allows us to distinguish between citizens of EU and non-EU origin. This will be particularly interesting for this thesis since I wish to examine the possible differences in representation between immigrant groups.

As can be seen in Figure 3, all the communes have at least 10 per cent of citizens of EU origin and of non-EU origin. We can already observe that there are differences in the composition of the population between the communes. For example, Verviers has 13,2 per cent of its population which are of EU origin compared to 40,1 per cent in Saint-Nicolas. Liège has 34,2 per cent of its population which are of non-EU origin compared to 17,7 per cent in Grâce-Hollogne.

Figure 3. *Distribution of CIOs by origin and commune*

Source: Own elaboration created based on Statbel (2021c) data. https://statbel.fgov.be/fr/themes/population/origine#figures

In order to study the descriptive representation of CIOs, an original dataset was created of all the local councillors (i.e CIOs and non-CIOs) that are currently in office in each one of the selected eight communes. This dataset was entitled "Political Representation of Migrants in Belgium" (PRMB). Given the long history of immigration to Belgium and to all the communes studied, and that a large number of immigrants have been able to gain Belgian citizenship, CIOs are expected to now be present in the electoral institutions. CIOs underrepresentation cannot be explained therefore by recent arrivals or slow acquisition of citizenship (Bloemraad & Schönwälder, 2013). For this reason, I chose to look at the current mandate (2018-2024) to examine CIOs political representation.

The data collection took place between June-July 2021 and was based on all publicly available information on the local councillors. This information was collected online through communal websites, parliamentary websites, party websites, personal websites or blogs, media coverage or interviews, social media profiles and Wikipedia entries. This allowed for the creation of the profiles of all the current local councillors, and it follows a research strategy already used in previous projects on migrants' descriptive political representation such as the Pathways project. For the coding procedure, I followed the codebook from Pathways and adapted the variable to this study (Morales, Vintila, Geese, Mügge, van der Pas, van de Wardt, 2017). A wide range of variables were collected including, socio-demographic variables (age, gender, education, occupation, religion), electoral and communal tenure aspects (number of times elected, position in local council, year of first election, political

party, year of affiliation to political party, other political positions), and variables concerning councillors immigrant origin (country of birth, year of arrival in Belgium, nationality at birth, acquisition of Belgium nationality, parents nationality, native language, identification with immigrants and minorities). Information on the backgrounds of all 269 local councillors was collected, including 79 who were identified as of immigrant origin, which amounts to 29,4 per cent of all the councillors in the dataset.

Following the categorizations provided by the Pathways project[3], I define immigrant-origin elected officeholders as those local councillors who were either: (a) born in a foreign country with a non-Belgian nationality at birth (first-generation immigrants) or; (b) immediate descendants of at least one parent of foreign nationality at birth (second-generation immigrants) (Geese & Saalfeld, 2018). However, multiple information was found to be missing during the data collection, which led to the expansion of who was considered of immigrant origin. Added to the Pathways definition above, I considered a councillor to be of immigrant origin if they specifically identified themselves or are identified by others as having a foreign origin (Morales, 2016). By default, all local councillors were classified as Belgian. Only when data was found pointing towards them having immigrant origins were they classified as such. When conducting this type of research using publically available data it must be noted the potential errors that can occur. If no information is found on a councillors' origins then they are classified as Belgian even if this might not be the case. Therefore, there is a chance that some councillors are miscategorised as Belgian, but all councillors classified as immigrant-origin have strong data pointing towards this (such as data stating they are of immigrant origin, their parent or that they or others identify them as being of immigrant origin). Thus, the data collected on representatives of immigrant origin is considered reliable.

4.2 Qualitative data

As previously explained while there are many studies exploring the link between descriptive and substantive representation (Bird et al, 2010*;* Saalfeld, 2011; Donovan, 2012; Saalfeld & Bischof, 2013; Wüst, 2014*;* Mügge et al., 2019), there is a much smaller amount of empirical studies looking to move past documenting this link to actually trying to explain it (Broockman, 2013; Saalfeld & Bischof, 2013; Sobolewska et al., 2018; McAndrews et al, 2020; Scott & Medeiros, 2021). In order to explore and try to contribute to explaining this link between descriptive and substantive representation, I will look at representatives intrinsic motivations, such as a sense of shared experience and identity to represent CIOs' interests. The most appropriate method was thus

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[3] http://pathways.eu/

semi-structured interviews with local councillors of immigrant origin. This allowed for an in-depth understanding of their motivations, their perception of their role in the substantive representation of CIOs and who they think they represent. To measure the substantive representation of CIOs I will analyse the local councillors self-reported preferences, opinions, and activities.

Semi-structured interviews are widely used in social research and in comparison to structured interviews, they allow for more potential for knowledge-producing dialogues to take place through the possibility of follow up questions (Hopf, 2004; Brinkmann, 2017). This approach also allows the respondents to elaborate on topics that they deem important, questions can be reorganised, certain angles can be more or less focused on and new questions asked depending on the flow of the dialogue and what is deemed important by the interviewee (Morse, 2012; Brinkmann, 2017).

During the interviews, councillors were asked a range of questions. Both closed-end questions were asked to collect specific information such as the number of years elected, and open-ended questions to elicit councillors responses on their political background, their identification with immigrant-origin citizens, motivations, and their thoughts on their role in the substantive representation of CIOs in their communes. The interviews were recorded and later on transcribed in the following days, the transcripts constituted the data analysed.

In all 12 interviews were conducted. The councillors were quite diverse by gender (8 women and 4 men), political party (Socialist Party, the labour party of Belgium, right-wing liberal party), immigrant origins (eight different origins), and commune (Liège, Seraing, Verviers, Ans, and Herstal). After sending emails to all the councillors, and several reminders, only 12 interviews were able to be conducted, equating to approximately 15,2 per cent of interview requests being granted.

The interviews were conducted between September and November 2021, lasted between 27 minutes and 1 hour and 25 minutes, and were conducted online or by telephone because of the covid-19 restrictions at the moment of this study. An advantage of conducting synchronous online interviews is that they can make it easier for individuals who have busy schedules such as politicians to take part in studies. They are comparable to face to face interviews for the presence of nonverbal and social cues, real-time responses, and high levels of participant involvement (James & Busher, 2012). For the online interviews, I used video conferencing programs such as Lifesize and Teams. In the results and discussion section of this thesis references to the interviews are indicated with an 'N' followed by the number of the interview.

After identifying all the local councillors of immigrant origin (in the eight communes) using the dataset created, the contact information for all immigrant origin councillors was collected. In case of the unlikely event of all 79 councillors responding positively to the invitation for an interview, groups of councillors were created ensuring diversity of gender, communes, immigrant origin and political party in each group. In order to not be submerged by responses and interviews to schedule, in a period of three months (between September and November), emails were sent to a group every other week depending on the number of interviews already scheduled. The goal was to conduct as many interviews as possible and have a diverse sample of interviewees.

After receiving a positive response to the invitation of an interview, councillors were sent a consent form which included an explanation of the purposes of the study, the expected duration of the interview, a description of the procedures and information collected, contact information, a statement on confidentiality, the protection of the data and the possibility of withdrawal of consent, and a request of written consent. At the beginning of the interviews, councillors were explained again the consent form orally and asked for verbal consent and permission for the recording of the interviews.

For this research, complete anonymity was not ensured because of the nature of the interests of this study, confidentiality breaches via deductive disclosures are a possibility (Kaiser, 2012). Since the communes, gender, political party and immigrant origins are of interest, someone with knowledge of the local councillors could identify them. Anonymity was satisfied in a weak form by anonymising names during the transcription of the interviews and care will be given with the quotations to divulge as little as possible information which could easily identify them (Wengraf, 2001). In the consent form, the councillors were made aware of this and were explained that I could not fully guarantee that readers of publications will not be able to identify interview participants.

After all the interviews were conducted and transcribed I use a content analysis, which is typically used in semi-structured interviews (Morse, 2012). I follow the analytical strategy described by Schmidt (2004). After the transcription of all the interviews, I proceeded to read extensively all the interviews to unearth analytical categories of responses, for this I used my prior theoretical knowledge and research questions. When these categories were discernable the interviews were coded accordingly. After participant overviews were produced which allow for a more clear view of the information collected (Schmidt, 2004).

While interviews were chosen for this study we must also consider the possible issues which come with this approach. First, there is the issue of participant and researcher bias, such as leading questions

that prompt participants to answer in a certain way, to avoid this care was given to the formulation of the questions. There is a possibility of selection bias, where the councillors are replying favourably to conduct an interview because they have strong opinions concerning the representation of CIOs therefore not giving us a full picture of immigrant-origin councillors opinions. Social desirability bias is also a possibility particularly with questions concerning CIOs representation which can be sensitive. For participants to feel accepted care was given to the formulation of the questions and to my demeanour to assure that I was neutral and did not appear judgmental.

Secondly, there is the fact that the interviewer has the monopoly of interpretation over the interviewee's statements and 'what they really meant' (Brinkmann, 2017). To try to counter this I will use quotes from the interviews which will be included and commented on. Thirdly, researcher positionality must also be considered, the interviewer themselves becomes part of the interviewing picture. The relationship between researcher and participants is a complex one, much research has been conducted over the decades on the importance of identity and researchers positionality (Ryan, 2015; Fedyuk & Zentai, 2018; Holmes, 2020). The interview is a 'power dance' with the researcher trying to place the interviewee and the interviewee also trying to place the researcher (Ryan, 2015).

Ryan (2015), proposes the concept of multiple positionalities, where all dimensions of one's identity such as gender, ethnicity, age, class, religion should be considered together. Positionality has the power to influence how the research is conducted, its outcomes and results because of the manner in which the researcher understands and interprets information (Holmes, 2020). For this reason, I reflected on my positionality during all phases of the research project. I am a 23-year-old middle-class Caucasian woman born in the UK, who lived most of her life in France and is studying in Belgium. While certain elements of my identity have probably facilitated discussions, allowed more trust, honest answers and a more natural discussion during the interviews there is no way to know for sure. It is not possible to know for sure how my positionality impacted participants views of me or the responses they gave. I can only make assumptions about how they perceived me.

5. FINDINGS

In this next section of this thesis, I report the findings. First, I conduct a quantitative analysis of CIOs descriptive representation using the original dataset. I discuss the number of councillors of immigrant origin in the eight local councils and the communal colleges, the differences in representation depending on the immigrant-origin group, the importance of political parties, and the differences between immigrant-origin councillors and their non-immigrant origin counterpart. Secondly, using the

interviews with local councillors of immigrant origin, I conduct a qualitative analysis in order to better understand councillors profiles and motivations to represent CIOs' interests.

5.1 Quantitative data findings

<u>5.1.1 Are CIOs underrepresented in local councils in the province of Liège?</u>

I begin with a comparison of the percentages of representatives of immigrant origin in the eight communes and a comparison of the representation indexes. Representation indexes as Bloemraad (2013) explains are calculated by dividing the share of local councillors of immigrant origin by the demographic share of CIO within the population. This allows us to see to what extent a group is over or underrepresented. A result of 0 indicates an absolute lack of representation while 1 indicates perfect mirror representation and a result over 1 means an overrepresentation. This allows for simple and straightforward comparisons to be made (Bloemraad, 2013).

The demographic share of immigrants within the population was based on the data from Statbel (2021c). They consider the immigrant-origin population to include individuals who have a foreign nationality, those who first registered a foreign nationality, as well as those who have one or both parents with a first foreign-registered nationality. Consequently, this is a rather comprehensive method of calculation that includes both first (foreigners and those who have acquired the Belgian citizenship) and second-generation migrants (Belgians whose parents had a foreign nationality). This approach to measuring the immigrant-origin population explains why the percentages within the commune are high, often exceeding 50 per cent as shown in Table 2 below.

I identified in the eight communes studied a total of 79 councillors of immigrant origin out of 269 councillors, that is 29,4 per cent of the councillors who have an immigrant background. Table 1 provides information on the levels of descriptive representation in the communes. The table includes the percentage of local councillors of immigrant origin, members of the communal College of immigrant origin and the share of the immigrant-origin population. Two representation indexes were also calculated, that of immigrant-origin councillors and that of immigrant-origin members of the communal College.

Table 2. *Levels of descriptive representation in eight Belgium local councils*

Communes	Local councillors of immigrant origin % (N)	Members of the Collège communal of immigrant origin % (N)	Share of the immigrant-origin population (2021) %	Representation index (immigrant origin local councillors)	Representation index (Immigrant origin collège communal)
Liège	30 (15)	10 (1)	54,8	0,6	0,2
Seraing	23,1 (9)	11,1 (1)	52,7	0,4	0,2
Verviers	29,7 (11)	22,2 (2)	44,2	0,7	0,5
Herstal	39,4 (13)	37,5 (3)	60,2	0,7	0,6
Ans	13,8 (4)	0 (0)	64,3	0,2	0
Saint-Nicolas	53,6 (15)	28,6 (2)	63,1	0,85	0,45
Grâce-Hollogne	40,7 (11)	28,6 (2)	51,6	0,79	0,55
Eupen	3,8 (1)	14,3 (1)	42,9	0,09	0,33

Source: Own elaboration created based on PRMB data and Statbel (2021c) data. https://statbel.fgov.be/fr/themes/population/origine#fgures

I expected to find a high percentage of CIOs in local councils because of Belgium's long history of immigration, favourable electoral system, and its sizable population of CIOs in each commune, all exceeding 40 per cent of the population. However, I find that in all of the communes, there is an underrepresentation of immigrant-origin councillors compared to the demographic weight of CIOs. The commune which performs the best in the representation of CIOs is Saint-Nicolas with a representation index of 0,9 which is close to a perfect mirror representation, 53,6 per cent of the councillors are of immigrant origin. The following communes which perform relatively well are Grâce-Hollogne (0,8) with 40,7 per cent, Verviers (0,7) with 29,7 per cent and Herstal (0,7) with 39,4 per cent. Two communes score particularly low, Ans (0,2) and Eupen (0,1). These results suggest that albeit all communes have an underrepresentation of immigrant-origin councillors, sharp differences in

their representation are found between communes. Even though previous research had found that CIOs are underrepresented in the Belgian parliament (Geese & Saalfeld, 2018), I nevertheless expected to find different results given that this study is conducted at the local level. It is the level at which immigrants have the right to vote, that EU citizens can run as candidates and where immigrants interact the most with the host society.

Table 1 in addition to providing data on local councillors also shows the representation of CIOs in the communal College. I aim to analyse the potential difference in the representation of CIOs in higher positions in local councils (members of the communal College and the position of mayor). Previous research found that the higher we look the less diversity we will find (Phillips, 2021). We can see that the representation index is lower for all communes (except Eupen) compared to local councils. These findings suggest that CIOs have even more barriers to enter high positions of power. Eupen is the only exception which can be explained by the only councillors of immigrant origin also being part of the communal College. The communes with the highest representation indexes are Herstal (0,6), Grâce-Hollogne (0,6), Verviers (0,5) and Saint-Nicolas (0,5). The lowest is Ans which has no councillors of immigrant origin in the College, this being said it should be noted that the president of the council is of immigrant origin. Concerning the position of mayor which is the highest position of power at the local level, only in Eupen is the mayor of immigrant-origin.

These findings demonstrate that CIOs are not present sufficiently in local electoral bodies, even though they represent a significant share of the population. I contend that this absence of CIOs in local councils poses an issue for the quality of the democratic process and for the inclusion of CIOs voices. Moreover, this shows that CIOs probably still face important barriers to enter politics. This is even more concerning given that this study is conducted at the local level which is the most accessible level for CIOs to enter into politics. Most probably CIOs face even more barriers to enter into national-level politics since the vast majority of members of parliament start their career at the local level (Alba & Foner, 2015). In addition, I find that CIOs are underrepresented in positions of power in local politics. All this considered, it should nevertheless be noted that though there is an underrepresentation of CIOs in all local councils there are fairly high percentages (four over 29 per cent) of immigrant-origin councillors in several communes. This means that even if not represented enough, there is still a certain representation of CIOs in local councils.

<u>5.1.2 Difference between immigrant-origin groups</u>

Having shown the underrepresentation of CIOs in local councils and the communal Colleges, I will in what follows, analyse the difference between immigrant-origin groups, citizens of EU-origin and citizens of non-EU origin. I expect to find that citizens of EU origin will be better represented due to them having better electoral rights (right to run as candidates at the local level without the Belgian nationality) than non-EU citizens. Also because citizens of EU-origin compared to non-EU citizens face less discrimination, social excluion and less difficulties in accessing employment and education all of which contribute to their access to elected office (European Migration Network, 2020).

Figure 4 presents the representation index of citizens of EU and non-EU origin in the communes. The data reveals that both citizens of EU and non-EU origin are underrepresented in all local councillors, with the exception of Grâce-Hollogne where there is a high portion of councillors of EU origin compared to their presence in the population. Therefore, citizens of EU origin are slightly over-represented (representation index of 1,06) within the communal council of Grâce-Hollogne. In all the communes we can see important differences between the specific origins, except for Liège where EU and non-EU origins citizens seem to have achieved very similar levels of representation.

We can see a clear distinction between the communes, in Ans, Verviers and Eupen there is a severe lack of representation of citizens of EU origin, while Grâce-Hollogne, Saint-Nicolas and Herstal perform rather well. Concerning citizens of non-EU origin, in Grâce-Hollogne and Eupen there are no councillors of non-EU origin meaning a severe lack of representation even though both communes have a sizable proportion of their population that is of non-EU origin (17,7 per cent and 20,1 per cent). On the other hand, Verviers, Liège and Saint-Nicolas perform the best in the representation of non-EU origin citizens. Verviers has a close to perfect representation with a representation index of 0,9. In six out of the eight communes, there is a better representation of EU-origin citizens compared to non-EU citizens with the exception of Verviers ad Ans. Therefore, I find in accordance with my expectations that migrant groups who benefit from easier institutional rules, EU citizens are better represented than non-EU citizens. These differences between communes suggest that some communes are more inclusive than others in terms of ensuring CIOs political integration.

Figure 4. *Representation index of citizens of EU and non-EU origin by commune*
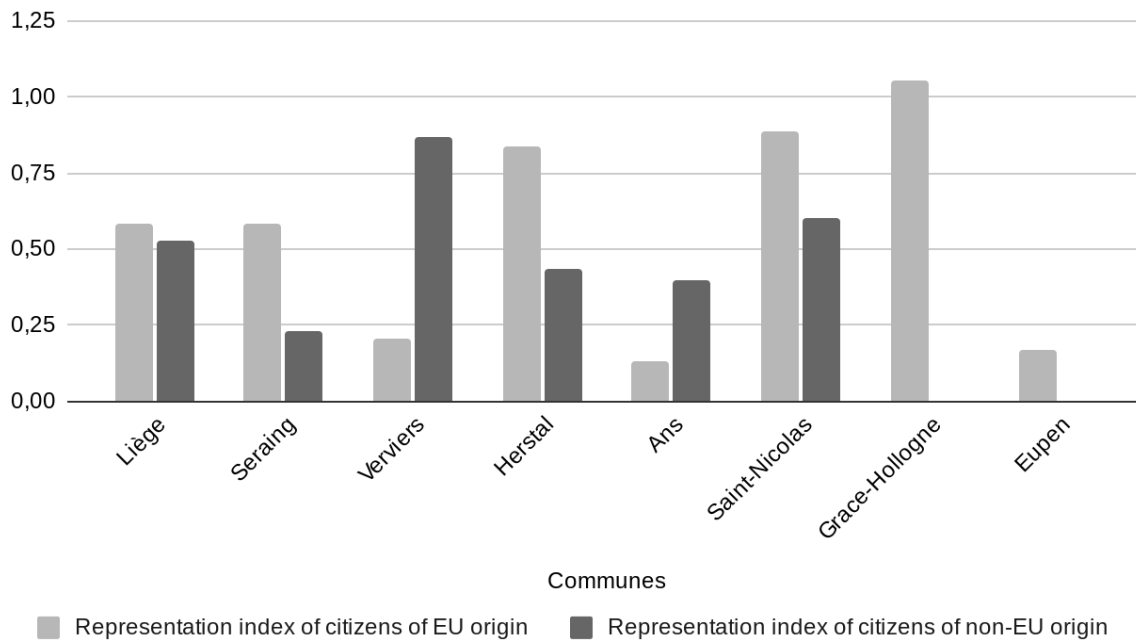
Table 3 presents the percentage of councillors by origin (EU and non-EU) and the percentage of CIOs in the population of each commune by the origin. This table demonstrates the importance of the presence of EU and non-EU origin citizens in the population for their representation in local councils. For both groups when they represent a high share of the population, they also have the highest presence in elected office. This is apparent in the case in Liège, Verviers and Saint-Nicolas for non-EU origin citizens. On the contrary, when a group represents a lower percentage of the population they are also less present in the councils, we can see this for instance for non-EU citizens in Eupen and Grâce-Hollogne. This seems to confirm the results of previous studies that suggest a relatively strong correlation between the demographic presence of specific migrant communities within a commune and their chances of entering the local councils.

Table 3. *Descriptive representation of councillors of EU and non-EU origin*

Communes	% of councillors of EU origin of all councillors % (N)	% of councillors of non-EU origin of all councillors % (N)	Share of citizens of EU origin in the population (%)	Share of citizens of non-EU origin in population (%)
Liège	*12 (6)*	*18 (9)*	*20,6*	*34,2*
Seraing	*17,95 (7)*	*5,1 (2)*	*30,6*	*22,1*
Verviers	*2,70 (1)*	*27 (10)*	*13,2*	*31,1*
Herstal	*27,27 (9)*	*12,1 (4)*	*32,5*	*27,7*
Ans	*3,45 (1)*	*10,3 (3)*	*25,6*	*26*
Saint-Nicolas	*35,71 (10)*	*17,9 (5)*	*40,1*	*29,5*
Grâce-Hollogne	*40,74 (11)*	*0*	*38,5*	*17,7*
Eupen	*3,85 (1)*	*0*	*22,8*	*20,1*

Source: Own elaboration created based on PRMB data and Statbel (2021c) data. https://statbel.fgov.be/fr/themes/population/origine#figures

The previous results (see 5.1.1) show that there is an underrepresentation of CIOs in all the communes though they are present in high portions in the communes. Yet, if we look at specific groups, citizens of EU and non-EU origins, the importance of the presence of groups within the population is clearer. For both groups, their demographic visibility is crucial for their political representation.

In the communal College, the difference between the representation of EU and non-EU citizens is even more noticeable. While 41,8 per cent (n=33) of all immigrant-origin councillors are of non-EU origin, in the College, only 16,7 per cent (n=2) are of non-EU origin. Both of these councillors are of non-EU origin and members of the College of Verviers. Meaning that Verviers in addition to being the commune that represents the best citizens of non-EU origin out of the eight communes it is also the only one that has members of the College who are of non-EU origin. These results further support the theory that minorities, CIOs and particularly citizens of non-EU origin are less present in high

positions of power. Thus, non-EU origin citizens seem to face greater challenges than their EU origin citizen counterparts.

Concerning the specific immigrant origins of councillors, I expected to find that CIOs groups who have a long history of immigration to Belgium will be better represented than more recent immigrant-origin groups. I find that the largest proportion of councillors are of Italian origin, (13,4 per cent, n=36) followed by councillors of Turkish origin (3,7 per cent, n=10), Moroccan origins (3 per cent, n=8), Congolese (Democratic Republic of Congo, RDC) origin (1,1 per cent, n=3) and Spanish origin (1,1 per cent, n=3). In the communal College, it is also councillors of Italian origin (11,1 per cent, n=7) who are the most present throughout the communes. Figure 5 presents the distribution of councillors of these five origins across the communes. We can see that Italian origin councillors are present in all communes (except Eupen) but are mostly present in four communes (Seraing, Herstal, Saint-Nicolas and Grace-Hollogne). Several communes have a mix of these five origins but we can see that Seraing and Ans each only have two of these origins represented in their council, while Grace-Hollogne only has Italian origin councillors and Eupen has none of these five origins in its council.

In line with my expectations, the five immigrant-origin groups which are the most represented in local councils are also the communities that have had long histories of immigration to Belgium, which has led to them being large immigrant-origin communities today.

Figure 5. _Distribution of councillors of the top 5 immigrant-origin communities by commune_
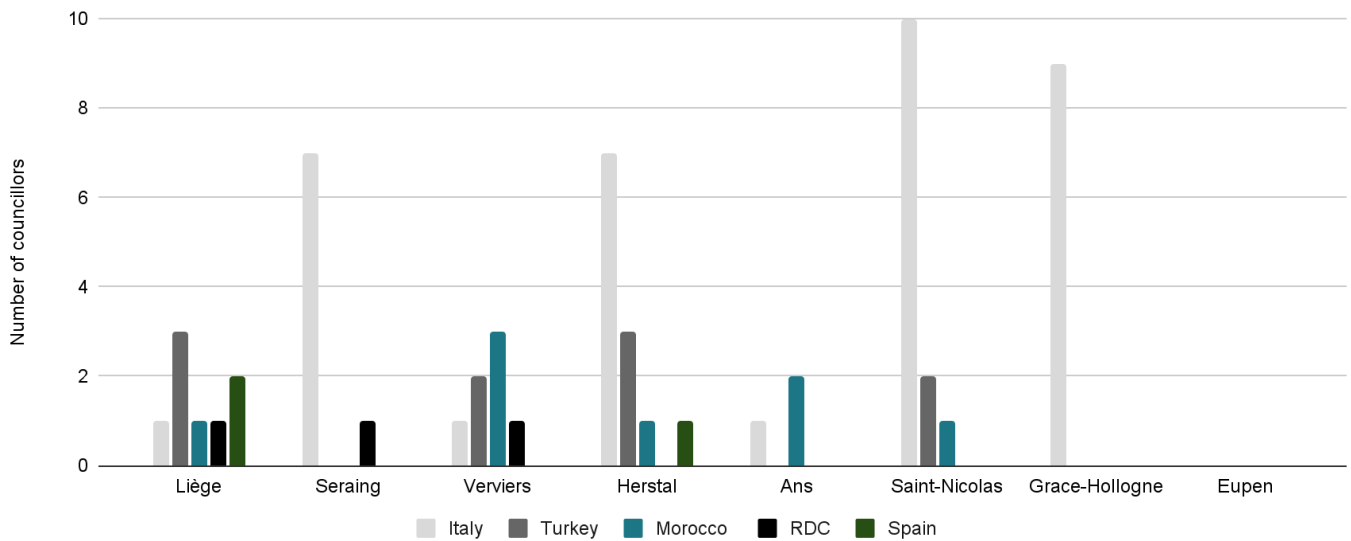
S_ource:_ Own elaboration created based on PRMB data.

5.1.3 Political parties: Which political parties perform the best in the descriptive representation of CIOs?

Table 5 presents the distribution of councillors among political parties depending on whether they are of immigrant origin or not. I expect to find that left-wing political parties perform the best in the descriptive representation of CIOs due to their egalitarian ideologies and their history of supporting underrepresented groups. Further, they tend to have more support from minority groups meaning that they have a high incentive to include CIOs (Eelbode, Wauters, Celis, Devos, 2013). I also expect to find that because of the high concentration of CIOs within all the communes that all political parties will represent CIOs to a certain extent.

Figure 6 shows the percentage of immigrant councillors within each political party. The results demonstrate in accordance with my expectation, that left-wing parties perform the best in the descriptive representation of CIOs. The three biggest left-wing parties, the socialist party (PS), the labour party of Belgium (PTB) and the environmentalists (Ecolo) have all over 30 per cent of their councillors that are of immigrant-origin and the party performing the best being the PTB with 43,24 per cent. The right-wing liberal party (MR) which is the second largest party has 15 per cent of its councillors that are of immigrant origin. On the other hand, the Christian democrat political party (cdH) only has 5,6 per cent of councillors of immigrant origin. The other parties, Nouveau Verviers,

Défi, PP, RCGH Saint-Nicolas + and VEGA are not particularly relevant to analyse given the small number of councillors in each party, only Nouveau Verviers has one councillor of immigrant origin while the others have none.

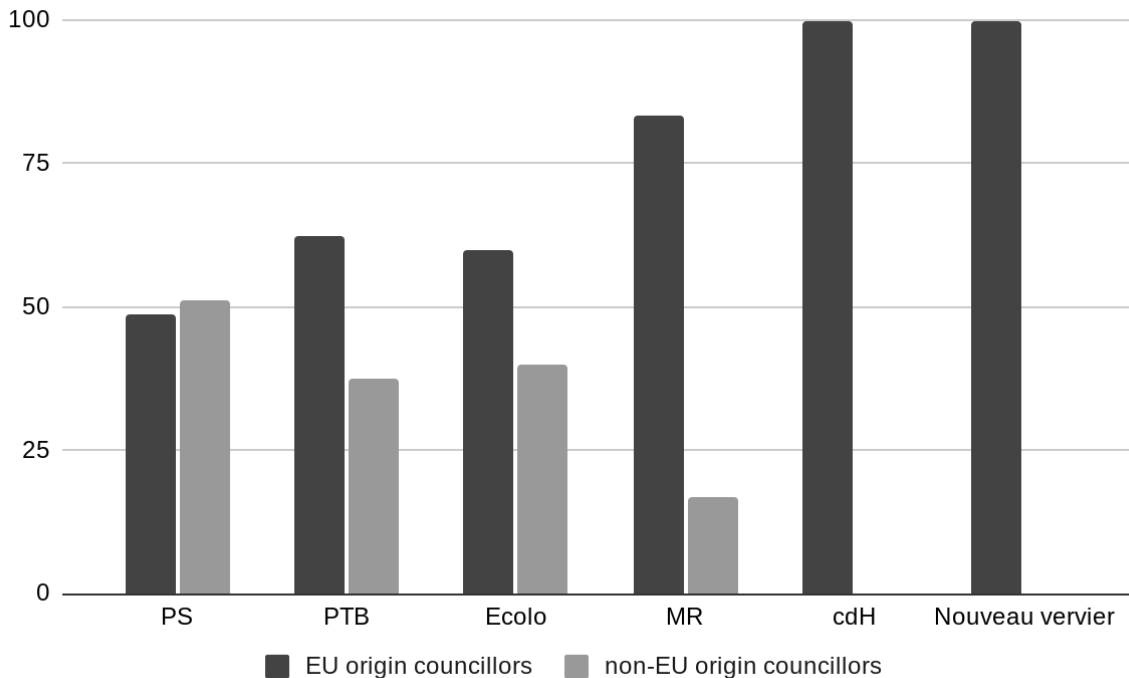***Figure 6.*** *Distribution of immigrant-origin councillors by political party*
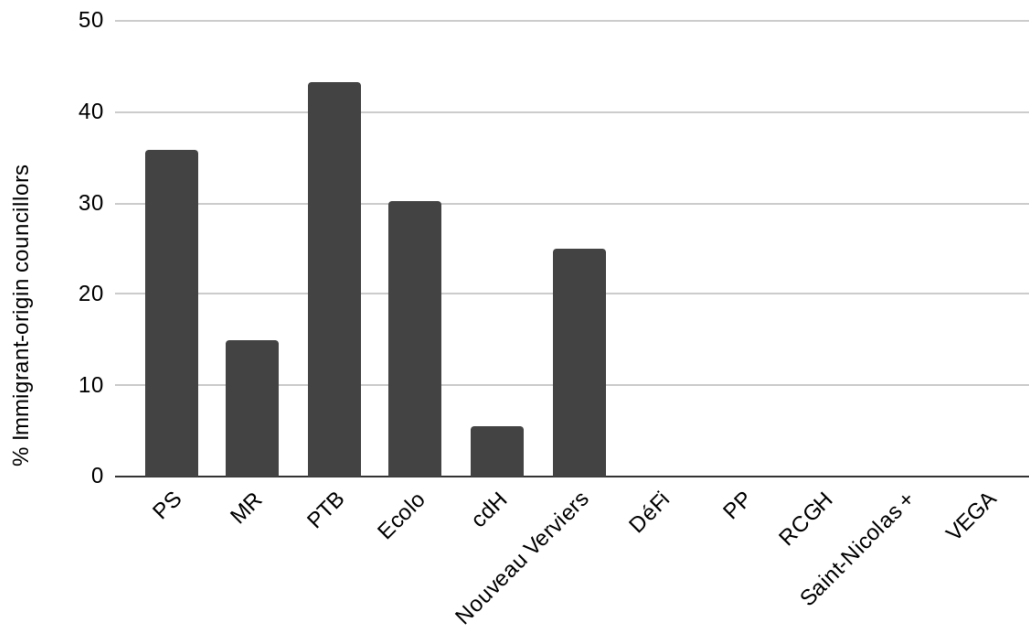
S*ource:* Own elaboration created based on PRMB data.

Note. Independent councillors are not included. In PS is included SPplus, in MR is included PFF-MR, in Ecolo is included Vert Ardent (eco-citizen movement of Liege) and Vert Herstal (eco-citizen movement of Herstal), in cdH is included CSP. Across all the communes studied the PS had 120 seats, the MR 40, Ecolo 33, cdH 19, Nouveau Verviers 4, DéFi 3, PP 3, RCGH 2, Saint-Nicolas + 2, and VEGA 1.

Figure 7 presents the distribution of councillors depending on their origin either EU or non-EU by political party. I have shown that there are differences in the representation of CIOs depending on the political party but are there differences when we look at specific immigrant-origin groups or are parties equally inclusive towards all CIOs regardless of their origin? With the exception of the PS who seems equally inclusive of both EU and non-EU origin citizens, the other parties perform better in the inclusion of EU origin citizens. This is an interesting finding considering that both EU and non-EU origin citizens are well distributed demographically within the communes studied (see Table 3). We can see that left-wing parties PS, PTB and Ecolo perform the best in the representation of citizens of non-EU origin. While, despite the MR having 15 per cent of its councillors who are of immigrant

origin, the majority are of EU-origin (83,3 per cent). Both the cdH and Nouveau Verviers have zero councillors of non-EU origin.

Figure 7. *Distribution of councillors of EU and non-EU origin by political party.*

S*ource:* Own elaboration created based on PRMB data.

Note. independent councillors are not included.

In accordance with my expectation, left-wing political parties perform the best in the representation of CIOs and also perform the best in the representation of citizens of non-EU origin which can be explained by their egalitarian ideologies and electoral incentives. Thus left-wing parties appear to be more conducive to the representation of CIOs and specifically citizens of non-EU origin. Moreover, I expected to find that due to the high proportion of the population which is of immigrant-origin that all parties would represent to a certain extent CIOs. I find that this is the case only when we look at political parties which have a large number of councillors and that they represent in majority citizens of EU origin.

5.1.4 Differences between councillors of immigrant-origin and councillors of non-immigrant origin

In this final section of the analysis of the quantitative data, I looked at the difference in the profiles between immigrant-origin councillors and non-immigrant origin councillors. I first discuss the differences in gender representation within the communal council and the College. Then differences in education, age and experience in political office.

Prior research finds that women are less present in elected office and particularly less present in higher positions of power (Meier, 2003; Togeby, 2008; Kroeber, Marent, Fortin-Rittberger & Eder, 2019). However, I expect to find that women immigrant-origin councillors will be more present than male immigrant-origin councillors (Bird, 2005; Celis et al., 2014; Celis et al., 2015; Phillips, 2021).

In the councils I found that there are more male councillors for both immigrant-origin councillors and councillors without an immigrant background. Out of 269 councillors, there are 170 who are male (63,2 per cent). There is a slight difference between immigrant-origin councillors and councillors of non-immigrant origin, with there being less of a gender difference among immigrant-origin councillors. There is 38 per cent of councillors of immigrant origin who are women compared to 36 per cent of women councillors of non-immigrant origin. The communes which have the highest percentage of women of immigrant origin are Grâce-Hollogne (18,5, n=5) and Herstal (18,2, n=3).

In the communal College, I found that the average percentage of women in the eight communes was 39,6 per cent. The highest percentage was found in Eupen with 57,1 per cent of the member of the College being women and the least in Verviers with 25 per cent. Concerning the immigrant-origin members of the communal Colleges, they are nearly equally distributed by gender, with the average being 9,3 per cent for women (n=6) and 10 per cent for men (n=6) in the eight communes. However, when the immigrant-origin is taken into consideration, we discover that there are no women of non-EU origin within the Colleges. I Further looked at the position of mayor which is the highest position of power in local councils. Out of the eight communes, there are three communes where the mayor is a woman (37,5 per cent) and only one mayor (Eupen) who is of immigrant origin (EU-origin) and a woman.

These findings go in the direction of the literature, while there are near equal numbers of women and men candidates, when we look at the percentages of councillors, members of the College and the position of mayor there is a clear disparity between men and women, with men outnumbering women.

Yet, if we look at immigrant-origin members of the communal colleges we find that there is nearly the same proportion of women and men. This only lightly supports my hypothesis and the theory that minority women are more present in politics than their male counterparts. However, this was only found when looking at the communal Colleges and not local councils where men immigrant-origin councillors outnumber women immigrant-origin councillors. Moreover, when we look at gender and immigrant-origin together, we can see that in positions of power such as members of the College or mayor there are no women of non-EU origin thought the communes studied. These results show that, while there is a representation of women and citizens of immigrant origin within the councils, they are still underrepresented, especially in positions of power and for women of non-EU origin. Therefore, local politics still seem to be in majority controlled by non-immigrant origin men.

Migrants often times have more obstacles to access higher education and previous research has found that immigrant-origin Members of Parliament (MP) in Belgium had lower levels of education than non-immigrant origin MPs, but nevertheless, the vast majority are highly educated (Dancygier et al., 2015; Dodeigne, 2016). In 2010, 83 per cent of MPs of immigrant-origin had a university degree compared to 96 per cent of non-immigrant origin MPs (Dodeigne, 2016). I expected to find similarly that immigrant-origin councillors would have in majority high levels of education. My findings confirm my expectation, I find that the vast majority of councillors of immigrant-origin are highly educated, 81 per cent of immigrant-origin councillors had a university degree. Further, in line with previous research, I find that immigrant-origin councillors have a slightly lower level of education compared to non-immigrant origin councillors (85 per cent have a university degree). This is a relatively small difference of only 4 per cent. For both groups, the vast majority of councillors have a university degree.

Concerning age, I find that councillors of immigrant origin are on average slightly younger (average of 45 years old) than non-immigrant origin councillors (average of 48 years). Once again this is not a large difference between both groups. However, when we look at councillors political experience we do find differences. Figure 8 presents the distribution of councillors of immigrant and non-immigrant origin depending on the number of years as local councillors prior to the 2018 elections. Similarly to Dodeigne (2016) who found that in Belgian, immigrant-origin members of parliament had shorter previous experience, I find that on average immigrant-origin councillors have 7 years of prior political experience compared to 11 years for non-immigrant origin councillors. Even though there is only a little difference in age we can see that there is a significant difference in their experience (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. *Distribution of councillors of immigrant and non-immigrant origin by years as a local councillor*
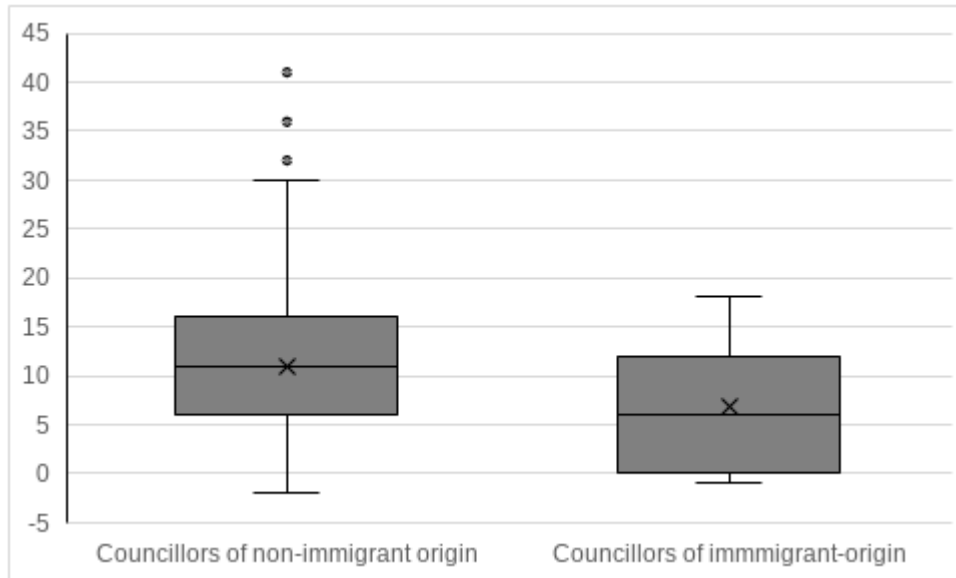
S*ource:* Own elaboration created based on PRMB data.

To summarise, through this section I have discussed the results of the quantitative analysis. First of all, I have found that there is an underrepresentation of CIOs (particularly non-EU citizens) and women compared to their share in the population. The main immigrant-origin groups represented are from countries that have a long history of immigration to Belgium. Furthermore, CIOs and women are less present in the communal College and in the position of mayor, even more so for citizens of non-EU origin. The results further demonstrate the importance of political parties in the representation of CIOs. Left-wing parties perform the best in the representation of CIOs and particularly for citizens of non-EU origin. However, these findings also indicate that all the largest parties represent CIOs to some extent, which can be explained by the high demographic weight of CIOs in the communes.

The overall findings are broadly supportive of the notion that CIOs face greater challenges in accessing elected office, notably for citizens of non-EU origin who faces greater discrimination and difficulties. Local politics appear to be in the majority controlled by middle-aged men of non-immigrant origins with a university degree and who have served several consecutive terms.

5.2 Substantive representation findings

In this second section of the findings, I discuss the results from the interviews conducted with local elected councillors of immigrant origin in the communes studied which allowed me to gain more in-depth knowledge about their views on the substantive political representation of CIOs. First, I briefly discuss the profiles of the councillors interviewed, then I identify councillors views regarding the interests and challenges faced by CIOs. Finally, I discuss who they feel they represent, the importance of shared experience and identity, and their views of representation.

For this thesis, 12 interviews were conducted (8 women and 4 men). As appendix A1 shows the majority of the councillors are from left-wing political parties, the Socialist Party (PS) and Belgian labour party (PTB), only one interview was made with another party, the right-liberals (MR). The sample of respondents is quite diverse when it comes to their place of residence (five different communes) and the migrant origins (eight different countries of origin, half non-EU origins and 1st, 2nd and 3rd generation immigrants). All the councillors interviewed have lived for an extentive period of time in Belgium, the 1st generation immigrant councillors all immigrated to Belgium in their childhood.

Regarding their political careers, seven were elected for the first time in 2018, while three started their political career in 2000. Four are members of communal Colleges, one a president of a council, two are/have been members of parliament. Even though EU citizens can be local councillors without the Belgian nationality, all the councillors had the Belgian nationality either from birth or chose to take in later on. Two councillors spoke of acquiring the Belgian nationality to be able to run in regional and/or federal elections, for it to no longer be an obstacle. Concerning how they entered into politics, half of them spoke of some form of family connection to politics, either having a parent or grand-parent who was in elected office or who were activists.

5.2.1 What are CIOs' interests?

Citizens of immigrant origin are an extremely diverse group, differing on a wide range of elements such as class, gender and religion, in accordance, their interests are also diverse in nature (Dancygier, 2018; McKee, 2018). My results also supported this, councillors were asked to discuss how they understood the interests and challenges that CIOs faced. An array of answers were given, institutional

and everyday racism, discrimination, electoral rights, poverty, unequal access to employment and housing, integration, equal life chances, representation of citizens of non-European origin, and safeguarding the memory. However, some issues became quite salient in almost all interviews, regardless of local councillors' specific background, their commune of residence or their party affiliation. For instance, EU and non-EU origin councillors alike equally highlighted issues such as racism, equal opportunities or the lack of representation of non-EU citizens in councils and in high positions within the administration.

"There is diversity but it is still a minority, I think, there are people of Italian or Spanish origin, but few of Turkish, Moroccan, Congolese or other African or Asian origins, whereas in Liege there is great diversity in reality." (N4).

This being said, some councillors also wanted to draw attention to the fact that some of the challenges that migrant populations face in the commune are, in fact, common challenges also shared by other segments of the population, thus becoming transversal issues that remain to be addressed in future local policy-making. One of such issues is poverty, which was considered as a priority for councillors' political agendas since it affects immigrant and non-immigrant residents alike.

"I think that there are a lot of people, in any case a big part of workers who are confronted with, it does not matter where they come from, I think that the same problems that Moroccan, Algerian, Muslim and immigrant community in general are confronted with, are obviously the problem of racism on top of that, but there are the social problems that everybody is confronted with." (N8).

Although immigrant-origin councillors seem to acknowledge that some CIOs living in their commune face specific challenges when compared to citizens without an immigrant background, when it comes to which interests they represent, councillors prioritize the representation of the entire population, rather than immigrant-origin communities.

5.2.2 Who do councillors of immigrant origin represent?

Perhaps one of the most interesting insights from the interviews is that in all accounts, emphasis was given to the fact that they do not simply represent citizens of immigrant origin or citizens of their specific community. Regardless of their personal characteristics or political background, Immigrant-origin local councillors consider themselves as representatives of the whole population of their commune. Hence, they all seem to share the same common denominator: their sense of political

responsiveness and perceived responsibility seems more clearly oriented towards their constituency as a whole, rather than strictly converging along ethnic lines or being primarily defined based on their personal migrant background. This is in line with previous studies which find that many minority representatives do not see themselves as the representative of a particular group but as representing the broader electorate (Nixon, 1998; Saalfeld & Kyriakopoulou, 2010; Mügge et al., 2019).

All the councillors expressed the importance of diversity within the council in order for the council to reflect the population it represents. Emphasis was put on the common local identity of the commune instead of a national or community-based identity. The councillors expressed that they represent the population of their commune with all of its diversity. Before any other identities that individuals can have, everyone has the same communal identity:

"We are all first and foremost citizens of Liège with different cultures, with different histories, with different expectations, sometimes with different religions and beliefs, but our common base must be this Liège identity, which is an identity where each one has his or her place, but everyone also respects the other in what he or she is and respects the values of the collective." (N10).

The councillors expressed that they did not represent CIOs specifically but rather they are part of the population they seek to represent. In fact, half of the councillors also highlighted their strong personal disagreement with the potential interpretation or perception of their role as legislators through the lens of communitarianism. There seems to be a common element among the councillors to not want to be reduced to their immigrant-origin identity. For example, one councillor expressed aversion to being perceived as a mere symbol and spokesperson by default.

"I never wanted to be an elected representative of the (national community[4]), I do not agree with that." (N7).

"I want to represent all the population, all the people of Verviers so I hope that they see that I represent all the people and not just one community." (N12).

Moreover, although they acknowledged that the diverse composition of local councils may be important for CIOs, some councillors also insisted that immigrant-origin elected officeholders may not necessarily represent the interest of immigrant origin communities. In their view, descriptive

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[4] In order to ensure anonymity I replace the words that refer to the councillors national community with (national community).

minority representation does not automatically lead to substantive representation of minority interest. In line with previous research, councillors explained that just because a representative has an immigrant background, it does not mean that they will automatically represent CIOs' interests (Pitkin, 1967; Celis, 2008). Even though councillors do not define themselves as representatives of CIOs, it seems they are viewed as representatives of CIOs' interests by the immigrant-origin population.

"There is no reason why in the political bodies, the different parliaments, etc. There should not be the same diversity as in the society. But that does not mean that an individual from this diversity who is elected will automatically defend the interests of the diversity from which they come." (N4).

Although the councillors clearly stated that their primary aim and interest is to represent the entire constituency for which they were elected, they also acknowledged that there are specific segments of the population within the commune that they feel closer to and whose representation they prioritize given that they are in a better position to understand their experiences and needs. However, such affinities seem to be defined along ideological lines rather than ethnic background. This is similar to what previous studies have found, partisanship influences which issues and interests representatives choose to defend (Bird et al., Donovan, 2012; Bloemraad & Schönwälder, 2013; Sobolewska et al., 2018). For instance, councillors from the Belgian Labour Party (PTB) Emphasized their common goal to put forward the interests of workers and the working class and highlighted how their personal status (as factory workers) helped them gain a more in-depth knowledge of the reality on the ground, of workers' needs and of the specific interests of the working class that should be represented in the political arena. On the other hand, councillors of the Socialist Party (PS) seem to define their role as legislators based on their responsibility to ensure equality and justice for those they are supposed to represent. They emphasized how everyone should have the same chances in life regardless of their origins or other characteristics. Due to only one interview being conducted with a councillor of another political party, the right-liberals (MR) no remarks can be made.

While councillors affinities with specific groups seem to be linked to their parties ideology, their affinities also seem to be linked to their shared experiences and identity. Several councillors expressed that they represent the sections of the population with who they had commonalities, shared experiences, and shared identity. For instance, they spoke of representing women, citizens they interact with the most and citizens of immigrant origin.

"I think that the closest group is my generation, that is to say, I think it's linked to youth, I'll tell you the children of the second and third generation of immigrants of my age, in general, that's the group that I touch the most." (N8).

I expected to find that councillors who had a sense of shared experience and identity would have a strong motivation to represent CIOs' interests. While several councillors emphasized that representing CIOs was not their main drive to be in politics and that CIOs were not the only group they represented, all councillors replied to varying degrees that their immigrant-origin identity was important for them. Interestingly, councillors closeness to their immigrant origin identity did not seem to vary depending on the generation, even 3rd generation immigrant origin councillors expressed the importance of their origins:

"Of course, it is my community of origin, even if it is not my exclusive community." (N10).

In accordance with my expectations and previous studies, through the interviews, it becomes apparent that councillors identity as CIOs and their shared experiences contributes to their understanding of the issues and interests of CIOs (Phillips, 1995; Mansbridge, 1999; Broockman, 2013; Soboleska et al., 2018; McAndrews et al., 2020). Supporting Mansbridge's (1999) arguments, I find that councillors feel they have more authority and are better equipped to defend some CIOs' interests because of shared experiences. Two councillors felt more comfortable replying to racist and discriminating remarks because it is a subject that is particularly close to them. Even though they themselves are of EU origin and did not speak of being confronted with racist behaviour, because of their immigrant-origin identity and the knowledge that their parents or grandparents were confronted with these issues, they expressed motivation to defend CIOs' interests. Therefore, it is not only their personal experiences that are important but also the experiences of their family and friends which influences their understanding of particular challenges and motivation to defend certain interests.

"I cannot deny the fact that when a population or citizens question me on certain subjects that my parents had to live through in relation to everything that concerns the granting of nationality, etc., Well, I am particularly touched by this because I have experienced this kind of incident, which allows me to understand these people. But to say that my political ambition and my political career is focused on finding solutions for people from neighbourhoods full of different origins, no." (N1).

The sense of shared experience and shared identity does certainly seem to lead to a heightened sensitivity towards CIOs' interests and also towards the representation of these interests. However, in

accordance with previous studies, I find that there are variations in the degree to which councillors wish to represent CIOs' interests (Donovan, 2012). Indeed councillors who expressed to a lesser extent a sense of shared experience and importance of their immigrant-origin identity were also those who seemed less motivated to represent CIOs' interests. A sense of shared experiences appears to greatly influence councillors motivations to represent CIOs' interests. Yet, it is not only their experience but also that of the people close to them which is important. For instance, councillors who had themselves experienced racism, friends or family members who have experienced it, talked extensively about wanted to fight racism and discrimination. Those who have experienced social inequalities also point this out as one of the key issues for CIOs. However, when asked about the feeling of responsibility to represent, the majority of councillors expressed more about the responsibility to represent the whole population of their commune, this goes back to what I have previously discussed.

Local councillors' views on why political representation is important for CIOs seem to match with the points highlighted in the existing literature. Respondents emphasized three main motivations that justify the importance of ensuring migrants' presence in elected institutions. First, they explained that minority representation allows for the diversity of interests in the population to be represented. Second, it has a symbolic value as it allows CIOs to feel included. Third, it enables better communication, for information to circulate between the council and the people.

With the presence of immigrant-origin councillors in political office, there is a higher chance that the interests of CIOs will be represented. Similarly to previous studies, councillors explained how immigrant-origin councillors can help broaden the interests which are heard (Mansbridge, 1999; Bloemraad & Schönwälder, 2013). Because of their personal life experiences which often have similarities with other CIOs, councillors with an immigrant background are more susceptible to be able to understand the specific needs and interests of CIOs.

"The council, as well as the electoral lists, must represent the population and this diversity exists in real life and is therefore indispensable at the level of the communal council, otherwise the voices of everyone would not be heard." (N7).

The second argument put forth by the councillors was concerning the symbolic value. Councillors explained that the presence of immigrant origin councillors allows for the immigrant-origin population to feel included, to recognise themselves, to see someone who resembles them that has similar characteristics and perspectives. Descriptive representation can strengthen a sense of

identification with the society, allow for their interests to be heard, and show that their perspectives matter and belong in the local councils (Donovan, 2007; Bird et al., 2010; Bloemraad, 2013; Alba & Foner, 2015) One councillor explained this well by saying:

"For me, it was a representation of all the cultural diversity of Liège within the council, and the children outside, the people outside say to themselves, 'Oh, we are part of this vibrant city too'. So we have someone who looks like us who is in the council. ... it's always a symbol, it's always an image that we are part of this population" (N5).

The last argument put forth was about communication. Immigrant-origin representatives were viewed as key players to allow for information to circulate from the council to the population and from the population to the council. In line with the literature, immigrant-origin councillors were seen as facilitating vertical communication by providing a less intimidating channel for CIOs to interact with because of shared experiences, language and culture (Mansbridge, 1999; Donovan 2007; Bird et al., 2010). For instance, one councillor spoke of how citizens of the same cultural background often gravitated towards her for information compared to her colleges most probably because there is a feeling that they will be more understood and can relate more to their needs. Moreover, several councillors spoke of how their jobs and activities allowed them to establish large networks within the population which further allowed them to circulate information to and from the council.

"In my function as an elected representative I consider that I am the elected representative of everyone, not only of the (national community), and I have always refused to do so. Now it is also clear that I am close to them because they know me because they are my family, my friends, the people I grew up with. Because I am myself of foreign origin and I function in a certain dynamic, they may contact me more easily than others when they need advice." (N10).

To summarise, all councillors of immigrant origin interviewed considered themselves as representative of the entire population in their communes, including CIOs. They view themselves and want others to view them as representatives of the entire population and to not reduce their role to a representative of CIOs. Although they represent the entire electorate, immigrant-origin representatives also acknowledged that they have more affinities with certain segments of the population, which makes them more likely to forward the interests of their specific group. Some of these affinities are defined along ideological lines, but some others seem to be linked to their shared experiences and identity. Most of the councillors spoke of being proud of their origins and that it was an important element of their identity but that it is only one aspect of their identity. I find strong support for the

sense of shared experiences to be linked to greater motivation to represent CIOs' interests, but I find no particular differences depending on councillors personal characteristics or political background for their motivation to represent CIOs. Rather the element that is important is their life experiences and that of their family and friends. In line with my expectations, a sense of shared identity does lead to more motivation to represent CIOs' interests, but it is not only their experience that is important but also that of the people close to them.

6. **CONCLUSION**

In a large number of countries citizens of immigrant origin have been found to be near systematically underrepresented in politics (Bloemraad, 2013; Alba & Foner, 2015; Pamies et al., 2021). Consequently, this underrepresentation in elected institutions poses a problem for several reasons, it undermines the democratic legitimacy of the political systems, but especially it increases the risk of CIOs' voices not being heard and their interests not being represented (Mansbridge, 1999; Bird et al., 2010; Alba & Foner, 2015). While there is an extensive body of literature exploring the descriptive representation of CIOs, a much smaller number of studies have been conducted in Belgium (Celis et al., 2013; Celis et al., 2014).

A main question in the literature has been whether the presence of CIOs in elected office increases the chance of CIOs' interests being represented. Some of the main arguments for increasing descriptive representation are that it has an important symbolic value, many under-represented groups were historically excluded from voting, their presence in elected office demonstrate that they have the 'ability to rule', can lessen their sense of marginalization, and demonstrate that their interests and perspectives matter (Mansbridge, 1999; Donovan, 2007; Bird et al., 2010). Another argument is that it will also increase the substantive representation of CIOs due to immigrant-origin representatives shared experience and identity with CIOs, they are better equipped to understand and defend their interests. Studies have shown that an increase in descriptive representation increases the probability of CIOs' interests being represented (Bird, 2010; Donovan, 2012; Saalfeld & Bischof, 2013; Wüst, 2014). However, fewer studies have empirically examined the underlying mechanisms of this link which can be due to shared experience but can also be because of electoral incentives (Broockman, 2013; Soboleswska et al., 2018; McAndrews, et al., 2020).

The aim of this thesis was to explore the representation of citizens of immigrant origin focusing on the local level in the province of Liège in Belgium. In order to address this, I focused on two aspects of

representation: descriptive and substantive representation. The two interconnected research questions this thesis sought to answer was, what is the level of descriptive representation that CIOs achieve? and how do immigrant-origin councillors represent the interests of CIOs?

As outlined earlier in this thesis, there are numerous reasons why the representation of CIOs is important and needs to be studied. First, by examining CIOs descriptive representation we can see the patterns of their access to elected office, the difference in opportunities with citizens of non-immigrant origin, and whether they are politically integrated into the country of residence. Second, Belgium's population is becoming increasingly diverse like most other Western societies. Given the high share of CIOs in the Belgium population (32,7 per cent) it is therefore crucial to examine and develop our understanding of their representation (Statbel, 2021c). Third, the study of CIOs political representation remains relatively unexplored in Belgium and has mostly focused on ethnic minorities and not the broader group of CIOs (Celis et al., 2013; Celis et al., 2014). Also, the majority of studies looking at the link between descriptive and substantive representation have rarely used interviews that allow us to have a more in-depth understanding of councillors' motivations to represent CIOs' interests. Therefore, this thesis expands the literature on the descriptive and substantive representation of CIOs in Belgium and contributes to the wider body of research on the political representation of minorities.

To measure the descriptive representation of CIOs, I used a quantitative analysis of councillors profiles in eight communes in the province of Liège, this analysis was based on an original dataset. In order to explore how the descriptive representation of CIOs can lead to their substantive representation, I conducted a qualitative analysis of 12 interviews with immigrant-origin councillors which allowed me to better understand their motivations and how they perceive their role in the representation of CIOs interests.

The two most significant findings of this thesis are that there is an underrepresentation of CIOs in all the local councils studied and that all councillors interviewed considered themselves a representative of the entire electorate and not the representative of CIOs. The configuration of factors such as Belgium's favourable electoral system, long history of immigration, the high demographic concentration of CIOs in each commune studied and the fact that this analysis was conducted at the local level, lead me to expect to find high levels of political representation for CIOs. However, the findings reveal the opposite, CIOs are not present sufficiently compared to their share in the population. This seems to point towards CIOs facing important barriers to enter politics. The second most important finding is that regardless of immigrant-origin councillors' personal characteristics they

consider themselves as representatives of the entire population of their commune. Instead of feeling a responsibility to represent a particular ethnic or migrant group, they seek to represent the broader electorate and they do not want to be perceived or reduced to the role of a 'migrant representative', this is similar to the findings of previous studies (Nixon, 1998; Mügge et al., 2019).

While finding that there is an underrepresentation of CIOs in all communes, I further find that non-EU origin citizens and women are unrepresented compared to their share in the population. I also find that CIOs, especially non-EU origin citizens and women are not sufficiently present in higher positions of power (member of the communal College and mayor). This leads us to believe that non-EU origin citizens and women face greater challenges and important barriers to enter into political office than EU origin citizens and men, meaning that they do not have the same chances. This can be explained by these groups being historically marginalized, facing greater challenges such as discrimination and more difficult access to electoral rights for non-EU citizens.

I find there is a strong correlation between the demographic presence of specific migrant communities (EU and non-EU origin citizens) within a commune and their chances of entering the local councils. Therefore, in line with previous studies, I find that the demographic visibility of migrant groups is crucial for their political representation (Bird, 2010; Saalfeld & Bischof, 2013; Wauters et al., 2016; Sobolewska et al, 2018; Pamies et al., 2021). Further, in line with my expectations, I find that the specific immigrant-origin groups which are the most represented are also those who have long histories of immigration to Belgium.

Political parties are considered to play an important role in the representation of CIOs, left-wing parties have been found to be more inclusive and supportive of CIOs interests, notably due to their egalitarian ideologies and the electoral incentives (Kittilson & Tate, 2004; Togeby, 2008; Bird et al., 2010; Donovan, 2012; Wauters et al., 2016; Sobolewska et al., 2018). In accordance with my expectations and previous findings, my results demonstrate that left-wing parties are more conducive to the representation of CIOs and non-EU origin citizens. I also expected that due to the high share of CIOs in the population that all parties would be inclusive to a certain extent. My results support this hypothesis by finding that the largest parties all have immigrant origin councillors but that they are in majority of EU origin, with the exception of the Socialist party.

The interviews allowed me to further be able to demonstrate the importance of political parties. Although all councillors expressed that they represented the entire electorate, they also acknowledged that they were more likely to forward the interests of certain groups due to greater affinities with

certain segments of the population. These affinities seemed to be closely linked to their political party and to their sense of shared experience.

While supporting the notion that descriptive representation leads to substantive representation, I find that an immigrant background translates into more motivation to advocate for CIOs' interests because of a sense of shared experience and identity. In accordance with my expectations, I find that the degree of importance of councillors' immigrant origin identity and sense of shared experience influence the degree to which representing CIOs' interests are important to them. Moreover, I find no link between councillors' characteristics or political background for their motivation to represent CIOs' interests.

The findings of this thesis have to be seen in the light of some limitations that must be considered. First, it should be noted that this thesis was carried out on the basis of limited data, only eight local councils were studied and only 12 interviews were conducted. The work is therefore largely exploratory and would need to be conducted on a much larger scale to give us a full picture of CIOs representation. Second, the interviews were conducted in large majority with left-wing councillors (11 out of the 12 interviews). This means that no conclusions could be made on the possible differences between left and right-wing parties. Left-wing parties being more likely to support the representation of CIOs' interests, could be an important explanation as to why I find that all councillors have to a certain extent motivations to represent CIOs. Therefore, future research using interviews will need to include councillors from a wider range of political parties. Third, as previously discussed in the data cases and methodology, by using interviews there is a number of possible issues, there is a risk of participant, researcher and selection bias, and that the interviewer has the monopoly of interpretation over the data. Fourth, in the quantitative analysis, there was a number of missing information for some councillors and there is a chance that some councillors were considered as not having an immigrant background when they did in fact have an immigrant background.

The present thesis also reveals several ideas for further research. First, while my findings contribute to the literature arguing that descriptive representation furthers substantive representation and that a sense of shared experience leads to greater motivation to advocate for CIOs' interests, I only conducted interviews with immigrant-origin councillors. It would be relevant for future research to conduct interviews with both immigrant-origin councillors and non-immigrant origin councillors in the same communes with a high demographic concentration of CIOs. This would allow to explore more in detail the importance of electoral incentives and shared experience. Second, I found differences in the representation of citizens of EU and non-EU origin, with non-EU origin citizens

being less represented. I argue that this is most likely because of the greater challenges they face and discrimination, but it would be important to analyse more in detail the reasons for this difference in representation. Third, I found large differences in representation between the communes, suggesting that some communes are more inclusive than others, even though all the communes have a high demographic concentration of CIOs, have the same electoral system and have similar histories of immigration. Thus, a more in-depth analysis in the future would be relevant to better understand the reasons for these differences.

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8. APPENDICES

Table A1. *Interviews with local councillors*

Reference number	Political Party	Commune
N1	PS	Verviers
N2	MR	Ans
N3	PTB	Liège
N4	PTB	Liège
N5	PS	Liège
N6	PTB	Liège
N7	PS	Seraing
N8	PTB	Liège
N9	PTB	Herstal
N10	PS	Liège
N11	PS	Herstal
N12	PS	Verviers

S*ource:* Own elaboration created based on PRMB data.