

SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECTS: INCOMES AND ADDED VALUES

The maps of incomes (A to E) are based on statistics published by the National Institute of Statistics. They concern the net taxable income liable to personal taxation and taxes on non-residents. The data is available by commune of residence of those contributing. The spatial analysis is carried out at the level of the amalgamated communes.

On the principal map (A), the surface of the circles is, for each commune, proportional to the total revenue for 1982 which ranges from 21 million to 120 milliard francs. Brussels-Capital is considered as a single unit, the 19 constituent communes being shown separately in an inset. The total revenue for a commune depends above all on the number of inhabitants, with the strongest concentrations in the Brussels-Antwerp-Ghent triangle, the Liège region, the Charleroi-Centre-Borinage axis, the North-East and the region of Courtrai. The colour gradations relate the mean level of income per inhabitant to the national mean (221 400 F). With the exception of the North-East, the most densely populated communes have in bulk a higher revenue per person. The highest values are seen in the residential areas peripheral to Brussels and to a lesser extent in those of Antwerp, Liège, Charleroi and Ghent. Incomes diminish as you move off from the central part of the country. It is necessary to take into account low population densities, age structures and the rural characteristics of communes (influence of lump declarations from farmers).

Tax returns (fiscal declarations) of more than one million francs represent 10,6% of the total. The heavy concentration on Brussels shows strongly on map B, if one excludes the inner communes of the agglomeration. This region of high declarations is characterised by an extension towards the South-East. The impact of the other large towns is less marked. The area of high returns diminishes rapidly as a function of distance from Brussels. The peripheral zones and the frontier areas of the North-West, the North-East and above all the South-East show extremely low values.

Tax returns (fiscal declarations) of less than 250 000 francs represent 13,2% of the total. Map C is broadly complementary to Map B, particularly in the case of the frontier areas of the North-West and the South-East; above all this concerns those communes which are less populated. But a number of similarly low returns are found in several communes of the Brussels area, in Hageland and in the Charleroi region. There exist also communes where one finds at one and the same time a number of both high and low returns, such as Tervuren near Brussels.

The change in income per inhabitant is analysed for two sub-periods. The period 1967-1975 (map D) is especially characteristic of the «Golden Sixties». At this time, revenue growth was most marked in the Flemish part of the country, in particular in the North-East, whilst the communes of the large urban agglomerations showed a slower growth. During the Crisis Years of 1975-1982 (map E), growth in income was very feeble, whilst simultaneously inflation accelerated. The spatial evolution was equally modified. Generally it can be reported that the areas of higher mean revenue (see the principal map) are those which have the most feeble growth rate. This observation implies a spatial levelling of incomes, whilst the preceding maps show that some inequalities continue to exist and that the highest incomes remain in a large measure bound to the proximity to the major towns.

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The added values (maps F to J) are those estimated for 1978 (and 1970 so as to calculate an evolution at a constant rate for the franc), at 1970 charges and prices. The statistical basis is provided by the National Institute of Statistics which apportions gross interior production by province and sector of activity. The keys to the apportionment at the commune level are described in the «Atlas Economique de la Belgique» (Société Royale Belge de Géographie and Université Libre de Bruxelles, 1983). The maps of added values describe the distribution of economic activity by place of production.

The principal map (F) delimits 36 zones, made up of amalgamations of communes. These zones present a certain homogeneity of «economic density» (added value per sq. km.) of the constituent communes and of the economic activity, determined on a basis of 20 economic sectors: agriculture, 14 industrial sectors and 5 sectors of tertiary activity. Brussels-Capital has been considered as a single zone.

Communes with a weak economic weight (less than half or a quarter of the national mean) are situated in Westhoek, in the north of Eastern-Flanders and in the Campine, in large portions of western Hainaut, in the agricultural zones of Brabant and Hesbaye but above all in High-Belgium. Map G represents this distribution of economic weight in 7 classes. The range of values is considerable: from 1,4 million francs per sq. km. produced in Léglise, an Ardennes commune, to 5 290 millions francs per sq. km. at St.-Josse-ten-Noode, a small commune of the Brussels agglomeration: that is a ratio of 1 to 3 822! The mean value for all Belgium is 50 million francs per sq. km. Few communes reach the highest values, what explains a strong concentration of added values, particularly in the large agglomerations (Brussels, Antwerp, Liège, Ghent, Charleroi) and to a lesser extent in the regional towns.

The circles on map F are proportional to the volume of the added value in each zone. The sector of activity, regrouped to number 14, are shown individually to indicate where they represent 5% or more of the added value of the zone. The circle beside the map indicates, at the same scale, the distribution of produced value in each sector for the Belgian economy as a whole. Amongst other things one notices the exceptionally heavy tertiary activity of Brussels (in particular finance and insurance activities), the importance of transport in Antwerp, of heavy industry in the Charleroi-Lower Sambre zone and in the Liège region.

A synthesis view of the economic structure is provided, at the communal level, by map H representing the relationship between the value of the tertiary sector and that of the secondary sector (which comprises extractive industries). This relationship is 1,24 at the national level. Communes where the part played by industry is proportionally stronger are found on the outskirts of the large agglomerations of Brussels (the axis of the Senne valley), of Antwerp (along the Scheldt), of Liège (along the Meuse, both upstream and downstream from that town). They are most numerous in the two parts of the country where was to be found the strongest industrial progression of the Golden Sixties (the North-East and the Courtrai-Bruges axis). With the exclusion of the towns of Liège, Namur and Mons, where tertiary activity dominates, the Haine-Sambre-Meuse furrow is noticeable on the map, and in particular the relatively feeble tertiarisation of Charleroi, putting into question its status as a regional metropolis. At the level of regional towns, the weak tertiary status of Genk is remarkable. By contrast, the tertiary role of the coast is strongly shown. In High-Belgium, the relative importance of the tertiary economy is due more to the absence of industry than to the development of tertiary activity which is usually only of local account. A single factory can make a commune «industrial» (Mognignies, Doische, Libramont, Rouvrois, etc.). On the same map, the relative strength of agriculture is underlined, especially in High-Belgium, in Hesbaye, in certain communes of western Hainaut, in Westhoek and towards the northern frontiers of the country, in Flanders and the Antwerp region of the Campine.

Map I shows the growth in added values between 1970 and 1978. There are three main observations: the stronger dynamism of the north of the country; the poor showing of Brussels; the better performance of the East than the West, as well in the Flemish region as in the Walloon one. The impact, respectively, of structures and locations in the explanation of these performances is analysed in the «Atlas Economique de la Belgique».

Map J shows the relationship between national fiscal revenue and national added values (by commune of residence and commune of work respectively). Communes where this relationship is little marked are less numerous and are those where employment is concentrated rather than residence, and in particular the residence of the well-to-do: central areas of the large agglomerations, certain isolated industrial communes and, to a lesser extent, the regional towns. Communes where the relationship is most marked belong for the most part to the strongly residential peripheries of the large agglomerations.