

Independent Relics or Heralds of Party Decline?

The Role of Non-National Lists in Local
Politics

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The Role of Non-National Lists in Local Politics

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1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE MELTING POT OF NONPARTISAN ACTORS IN LOCAL POLITICS

Local party systems in Western democracies are highly politicized with a dominant position of national party branches in the local political arena. Yet, these local chapters of national parties have not acquired an absolute monopoly over local politics as they are still challenged by independent or nonpartisan actors in the competition for local powers. This localist dimension of local politics can crystalize into independent candidates in single-winner voting systems, while proportional representation systems generate independent local candidate lists. This research project deals with the latter and aims to contribute to our academic understanding of the role of independent candidate lists in local politics.

The presence and success of independent local candidate lists varies between and within countries, but comparative research has demonstrated that these lists have gained influence throughout Europe in recent decades (Reiser & Holtmann, 2008). This observation is beyond academic expectations as independent lists have long been considered as relicts of an old-style political system, bound to disappear with the entry of nationally organized parties in the municipal electoral arena (Rokkan, 1966). Consequently these lists have long been neglected or merely treated as a residual category by political scientists considering the party political offer in local elections. Only recently, they are given some more academic consideration and their persistent presence and success is increasingly considered as an indication for the incompleteness of the party politicization process as envisaged by Rokkan (Aars & Ringkjøb, 2005; Reiser & Holtmann, 2008).

Reiser and Holtmann (2008) meritoriously assembled the dispersed theoretical and empirical research on independent local lists in Europe providing a comprehensive overview of the existing state of knowledge in this nascent research domain. In addition to their conclusion that these lists have gained influence in local politics across Europe, they suggest two main explanations for this evolution. On the one

hand, the success of independent local lists is interpreted as a reaction to the alleged party crisis. Political parties have fundamentally evolved over time and are no longer the mass parties they once were. Traditional parties are gradually losing public support and increasingly fail to assume some traditional linkage function between society and government. They increasingly converged with the state and alienated from the citizenries, which is often associated with a decline of political parties. In local politics, independent candidate lists can seize the political disenchantment of the electorate and provide a local alternative for the maligned established parties. A second explanation of the success of independent local candidate lists refers to the emergence of post-materialist political values (nature protection, active social protection ...), especially in urbanized regions. Traditional political parties insufficiently succeed to adopt these new values and independent lists can fill this policy void as local political extensions of the new social movement (Reiser, 2008).

Despite this recent awareness of the persistent presence and success of independent local candidate lists and the assumptions concerning its causes, academic understanding of the meaning of these lists for local politics remains confined. Some authors consider them as short-term instances with little representative accountability (Soos, 2008; Steyvers, Reynaert, De Ceuninck, Valcke, & Verhelst, 2008), while others argue that these lists introduce new political cleavages in local politics and add value to local democracy (Boogers & Voerman, 2010; Breux & Bherer, 2013; Elmendorf & Schleicher, 2012). These ambiguities and uncertainties indicate the need for further research in this field. This dissertation addresses this lacuna and aims to pave the way for a more profound and refined academic comprehension of the role of local lists in local politics by studying these lists in the multi-partisan context of the Flemish region in Belgium.

The underdeveloped research field of independent local candidate lists however faces a number of critical conceptual and methodological problems. For their comparative purpose, Reiser and Holtmann suggest to identify independent local lists based on two criteria: 1) their focus on one and only one local jurisdiction and 2) their (nominal) independency of national (or supra-local) parties. Although the authors are well aware of the vast internal variation concealed by this minimal definition, methodological

concerns (comparability, aggregated perspective, lack of classification models) impel them to deal with local lists as a homogenous category in contrast to local divisions of national parties. Yet, this binary distinction between independent local lists and local party branches neglects a variety of border cases as several scholars have referred to the occurrence of pseudo-local lists, hidden party lists or other concealed sub-species (Dudzinska, 2008; Göhlert, Holtmann, Krappidel, & Reiser, 2008; Steyvers et al., 2008). Moreover, most scholars agree that the general label of independent local lists covers a highly varied content and treating them as a uniform group hampers academic knowledge-building on their role in local politics. Reiser (2008) concludes that the question of definition and criteria as well as the need for practical classification models to differentiate independent local lists are the most pivotal methodological challenges for further (comparative) research. She suggests two critical dimensions to differentiate local candidate lists in further research: 1) the actual degree of independence from national political parties; and 2) the degree of localization and geographical coverage of local lists¹ (Reiser, 2008).

Additionally, Steyvers et al. (2008) identify the notion of *partisanship* as a critical differentiating dimension as they perceive a partisanship-continuum in local lists. On the one end of this continuum they situate local lists behaving like genuine local parties, while the other end locates ‘constituencies of independents’ merely applying a party-like form as an electoral device to gain representative power without performing any other societal functions.

A quick review of the variety of labels used to refer to this widespread but poorly delineated local political phenomenon clearly illustrates the conceptual confusion concerning both their independent and their partisan character. Boogers, Soos and Worlund refer to *local parties* (Boogers, 2008; Soos, 2008; Wörlund, 2008), while Dudzinska and Aars et al. speak of *non-party* and *nonpartisan lists* (Aars & Ringkjøb, 2008; Dudzinska, 2008). Other authors explicitly refer to the independent character of these lists, without any reference to their supposed partisan character using terms like

¹ The geographical coverage of a local candidate list can be confined to only one municipality, or comprise various (or even all) municipalities in a country.

independent coalitions (Jüptner, 2008) or *independent local lists* (Kopric, 2008; Pettai, Toomla, & Joakit, 2008). Still others merely denote the restricted territorial character of these lists by speaking of *local lists* (Göhlert et al., 2008; Steyvers et al., 2008) or emphasize the role of citizens by using terms like *citizen electoral alliances*, *citizens groups* or *liste civiche* (Pettai et al., 2008; Pires de Almeida, 2008). This conceptual ambiguity confirms the need for a more systematic approach to differentiate local candidate lists.

To address the above mentioned methodological and conceptual pitfalls, I will further use the term '*non-national lists*' to refer to '*all candidate lists participating in local elections with a label that deviates from the labels used by nationally organized parties*'. The prefix '*non-national*' thus refers to their nominal dissociation from national parties without a priori assuming independence from national parties. The term '*lists*' likewise makes no a priori assumptions about the extent to which these lists behave like political parties. This wide definition allows to involve all intermediate cases between national party branches and independent local lists enabling further differentiation. I will also use the broader term of '*local candidate lists*' to refer to all candidate lists that participate in local elections, thus including the traditional party lists submitted by national party branches.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The broad denominator of non-national lists thus covers a highly variegated load. The default local-national dichotomy is an unwarranted and oversimplified representation of the local political reality and leaves little scope for internal differentiation and exhaustive knowledge-building. To develop a more comprehensive understanding of the multifarious phenomenon of non-national candidate lists and their role in local politics, empirically founded knowledge-building is needed based on practicable and relevant classification tools. The main aim of this research project is to examine the differentiated role of non-national lists in local politics in Flanders, but realizing this ambition requires a classification model to differentiate non-national lists.

Hence a first research question of this project can be formulated as follows:

1) *What is a relevant classification model to differentiate non-national lists?*

To further establish the role of non-national lists in Flanders the analysis will focus on two main features which have been identified as crucial differentiating dimensions in scholarly literature: their *actual independence* from national parties and their *partisan character*. Accordingly, the two main research questions of this project are:

2) *How independent are non-national lists in Flanders?; and*

3) *How partisan are non-national lists in Flanders?*

Generally a binary distinction is made between independent local lists and national party lists in local elections. However, political reality suggests that non-national lists are not all as independent as this label suggests. A local name can disguise more or less strong relations with a national party, as also suggested by Ackaert (2006, p 105-108). I will therefore consider the actual links between non-national lists and national parties to differentiate non-national lists and refine current academic insights concerning their political relevance and to substantiate the academic discussion on local party politicization.

Additionally, non-national lists are often characterized as ‘nonpartisan’ but at the same time they are assumed to act as functional equivalents of local parties. Empirical evidence to support this functional equation between non-national lists and local party branches is lacking and the extent to which they behave like political parties is generally left nebulous. Moreover, their assumed traditional, nonpartisan conception of local politics might even suggest a different functional behaviour of non-national lists in the local political arena as they perceive themselves as nonpartisan alternatives to political parties. Hence, I will examine the extent to which non-national lists in Flanders implement the functions generally associated with political parties.

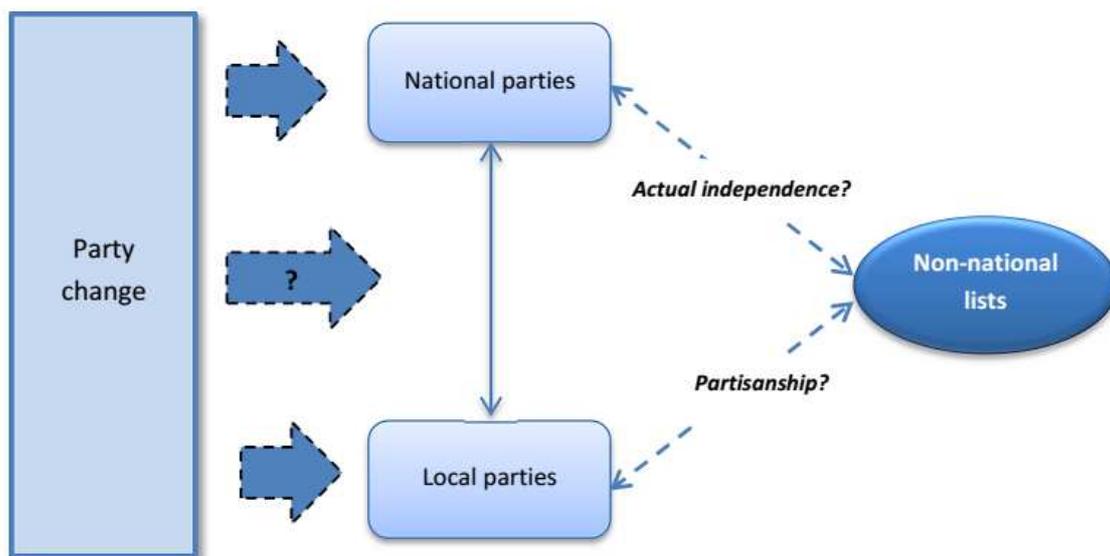
This research project thus aims to establish the differentiated role of non-national lists in local politics by analysing their actual independence from political parties and their partisan character. Political parties serve as main yardstick for these research questions and theoretical insights on the nature and functions of national and local parties provide a solid theoretical framework. Yet political parties are no consistent yardstick.

They have faced severe challenges in recent decades and their functions have altered substantially, complicating the analysis of non-national lists. Moreover, the presence of non-national lists has been related to these system-level party changes, although the repercussions of national party evolutions on local political actors remain unclear. Therefore, this dissertation not only examines the variation in the independent and partisan character of non-national lists in Flanders but also aims to link these findings with current academic insights on party change and the fourth research question reads as follows:

4) *How are non-national lists related to party change*

Figure 1.1. below summarizes this analytical framework to study the role of non-national lists in local politics in Flanders.

Figure 1.1: Analytical framework to study the role of non-national lists



The added value of this research project can be situated at different levels. First of all, it contributes to the conceptual refinement of non-national lists in local politics and responds to the call for classification tools to study this local political phenomenon. Secondly, this study provides a thorough analysis of the actual independence and partisan character of non-national lists in the Flemish region of Belgium based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods. This mixed methods

approach allows to develop a versatile perspective on the differentiated role of non-national lists in Flemish municipalities and add empirical evidence to this nascent research field. Lastly, this dissertation offers an innovative and relevant perspective on non-national lists by relating the role of these lists to system-level party changes.

1.3 OUTLINE OF THIS BOOK

Political parties are the main reference point to analyse the role of non-national lists in Flanders. Hence, the following theoretical chapter reviews the relevant concepts and insights on party functions and party change and relates these to local parties and non-national lists. Subsequently, chapter three justifies the adopted research design based on a mixed methods approach, while chapter four elaborates on the institutional context of Flanders to assess the transferability of the findings to other settings. The ensuing empirical analysis consists of two main parts. The first part addresses the actual independence or decisional autonomy of non-national lists in Flanders. Chapter five proposes an innovative classification tool to differentiate local candidate lists based on their vertical and horizontal autonomy and applies this classification tool to local candidate lists in Flanders to establish the prevalence and political relevance of the different types of local candidate lists. Chapter six considers the decisional autonomy of local candidate lists in a longitudinal perspective and aims to reveal the rationale behind the different types of non-national lists in Flanders. This first empirical part on actual independence concludes with chapter seven where the theoretical implications of this refined conceptualization of local candidate lists for the academic insights on local party system nationalization are considered.

The second empirical part of this book concerns a functional analysis of non-national lists to establish their partisan character. Three key party functions are considered, examining for each if and how non-national lists differ from local party branches in assuming these functions. Chapter nine discusses the specific methodological aspects of this functional analysis based on a combination of survey and interview data, while the three ensuing chapters successively deal with candidate selection (chapter 10), organizational strength (chapter 11) and programmatic priorities (chapter 12) of non-national lists. In a final concluding part (chapter 12), the research findings are

integrated and re-linked to the analytical framework and suggestions for further research are formulated.

2 ON PARTIES AND PARTY CHANGE

This research project aims to refine our understanding of the role of non-national lists in local politics by analysing their actual independence and their partisan character in a Flemish context. As political parties are the main point of reference in this analysis, party theory can provide us with relevant concepts and theoretical models to guide our research. However, providing an extensive overview of the academic knowledge on political parties is a mission impossible as scholarly research has resulted in an enormous body of party literature with numerous sub-fields. The present theoretical chapter will therefore review the relevant theoretical insights concerning the nature and functions of political parties and their altering role in contemporary politics and relate these insights to local parties and non-national lists.

2.1 PARTY DEFINITIONS AND PARTY FUNCTIONS

Political scientists and analysts generally agree that political parties are indispensable in modern democracy. Parties bridge the gap between voters and government and are considered as the *'only workable mechanism to ensure that the institutions of democracy can work in practice in the modern state'* (Müller & Narud, 2013). Yet, defining a political party seems a challenging endeavour. Scholarly literature provides a variety of party definitions and functional descriptions, all stressing different features of political parties. One of the oldest party definitions often referred to is Burke's, who emphasizes the ideological roots of parties and the joint pursuit of the general interest: *'[A] party is a body of men united for promoting by their joint endeavours the national interest upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed'* (White, 2006). Other definitions stress the pursuit of governing power (Downs, 1957), or accentuate the electoral means of political parties (Sartori, 2005). A single, commonly agreed upon party definition remains illusory for the boundaries between political parties and other institutions in society are complex and blurred and each definition seems to exclude some other manifestation which could also be argued to be a party (Ware, 1996).

Therefore, a political party is often considered as an ideal type rather than a clearly delineated category and many authors prefer to focus on some key features of political parties which are common to many party definitions but not necessarily all occur simultaneously. Alan Ware for example proposes a more open definition to include divergent cases: ‘*A political party is an institution that a) seeks influence in a state, often by attempting to occupy positions in government, and b) usually consists of more than a single interest in the society and so to some degree attempts to “aggregate interests”*’ (Ware, 1996). Similarly Katz portrays political parties by a selection of key features without considering these features as vital conditions. He characterizes political parties by their *objectives* (gaining control over government), their *methods* (electoral and governmental), the *competitive and free* aspect of the party system and the minimal level of *organization and unity* of political parties (Katz, 2011). Hence, empirical phenomena can correspond to a greater or lesser extent to these theoretical conceptions of a political party.

In addition to the more or less discriminating party definitions, a more functional approach focusses on the range of activities and functions performed by political parties. King for example identifies six core party functions: they 1) *structure the vote* by competing in elections and simplifying and contextualizing the political alternatives, 2) they *integrate and mobilize* the people by giving them a trusted voice in the world of politics; 3) they *recruit political leaders* at different levels and for various positions, 4) they organize the political institutions and *control government*; 5) they influence the directions and contents of *public policy*, and 6) they *aggregate interests* in society (Müller & Narud, 2013). Along with King’s often cited list of party functions, countless other enumerations of specific party activities and party functions can be found in literature. Fiers (1998) has reviewed a broad range of these functional approaches and identifies 19 different – although often intersecting – party functions, which he clustered into three main groups. The *programmatic functions* relate to the substantive policy preferences of political parties and their role to - proactively or reactively - articulate interests and prioritize public demands into a coherent policy program, identify policy solutions for these demands and defend these policy solutions in government and society. The *positional functions* of political parties are related to

the provision of political personnel. Parties seek to acquire political power and recruit and select people to occupy power positions in different segments of society. Furthermore this political personnel needs to be trained, steered, coordinated and consolidated. The *civic party functions* finally concern the relationship between parties and civil society. Parties interact with their members and with the broader electorate to bridge the gap between citizens and policy. They aim to mobilize and unify their sympathizers and convince them to participate in political activities. By providing information and socialization channels to civil society, they elucidate and legitimate the institutional arrangements and contribute to the stability of the political system (Fiers, 1998).

As these diverse party functions can be linked to different actors and arenas, political parties are also considered as '*tripartite systems of interactions*'. They engage in three distinct realms, each involving a variety of activities, actors and rationales: the *party-in-government* comprises the party representatives in public office and relates to the role parties play in managing and structuring government affairs. The *party-in-the-electorate* involves the voters and their linkages with the democratic process; and the *party-as-organization* concerns the formal machinery of internal party life and the processes within the organization (Fiers, 1998; Key, 1964; King, 1969; Sorauf, 1972; White, 2006).

A similar – though not identical - division is made by Katz, who distinguishes between three organizational faces in European membership-based organizations: the party-in-public-office (PPO) involves the party in government and in parliament; the party-in-central-office (PCO) constitutes the permanent bureaucracy and national executive organs; and the party-on-the-ground (POG) concerns the organized membership (Katz, 2005). Moreover, Katz and Mair have examined how these different organizational faces relate to each other and established that the salience of the different party functions and the rapport between these faces varies in time and space (Katz & Mair, 1994).

In addition to the range of different party functions, Fiers also mentions a number of dysfunctions of political parties. He argues that parties are able to disintegrate society

by dividing the citizens between supporters and opponents. Moreover, they tend to politicize non-political instances and reduce pluralism in society by acting as gatekeepers for policy formulation (Dewachter, 1970; Fiers, 1998). In Belgium political parties play an exceptional dominant role in society. They have a structural preponderance and shape the decision-making process much more than other components of the political system (parliament, government, administration, judicial powers, ...). Hence, Belgium is often referred to as a *partitocracy* (Dumont & De Winter, 2006).

2.2 PARTY MODELS

The common notion of a political party in Western democracies and the associated party functions are generally based on the traditional mass-party model with a broad membership base, a clear ideology and a strong party discipline. Yet, the mass party is but one of several party models that have been described in party literature. Numerous typologies have been elaborated to differentiate political parties, though often from different theoretical angles and using different classification dimensions or operational criteria. Hence, cumulative theory-building on the nature and evolution of political parties remains underdeveloped (Montero & Gunther, 2002). Krouwel (2004) aimed to provide a more general theory on party transformation in the 20th century. He identified more than 50 – often overlapping - party models in literature and clustered these into five generic party types based on clear and practical criteria concerning the origin and organizational, electoral and ideological features of parties. He discriminates between five chronologically linked party types which will be discussed in more detail below: 1) elite/caucus/cadre parties; 2) mass parties; 3) catch-all parties; 4) cartel parties; and 5) business firm parties.

Before the 19th century, the concept of party was generally equated with objectionable factions within politics, pursuing private gains and threatening the general interest (Scarrow, 2006). Political parties as we know them today emerged in the 19th century in parallel with the maturing of parliamentary democracy and the suffrage expansion. The eldest political parties are identified by Krouwel as *elite/caucus/cadre* parties. These originated in proto-democratic parliamentary systems before universal suffrage

was introduced. These parties were first described by Duverger as *partis de creation intérieure* or parties of parliamentary origin (Duverger, 1964). These parties have been created to secure the legislative power of existing MP's and consisted of only a small, privileged elite in parliament. Extra-parliamentary organization was limited and organizational structures were undue. In an era of restricted suffrage, the electorate of these parties was limited to a wealthy bourgeoisie and electoral mobilization was based on patronage and pork barrelling.

In the same period, a very different type of party arose in reaction to this privileged political class. The *mass parties* originated outside parliament aiming to integrate excluded groups into the political system. These parties were based on large-scale, extra-parliamentary mass mobilization and have been very effective in their struggle for expanded suffrage. Mass parties had a clear ideological profile, pursuing radical change and redistribution in favour of their 'classe gardée'. Mass parties fulfilled a clear class-based representative function and with a wide network of ancillary organizations and service providers they penetrated their member's daily lives and established a high degree of party loyalty and party discipline. These large member-based parties required an extensive organizational structure, characterized by a comprehensive and centralized national bureaucracy with stringent internal hierarchy. Although internal democracy was highly valued and members were involved through a National Congress, the central party pulled the strings in these mass parties.

Over time, both elite parties and mass-parties evolved into a new converging party model influenced by the expansion of the welfare state and the flattening of religious and class-based cleavages (Bardi, Bartolini, & Trechsel, 2014). These societal transformations and the modified attitudes and political expectation of citizens weakened the privileged liaison between particular social strata and their corresponding parties, resulting in *catch-all parties* as first described by Kirchheimer (1966). Catch-all parties are characterized by more moderate ideological stances and converging party programs as well as by substantially different relationships between the party and the party members. Forced by the electoral success of mass parties the elite parties aimed to broaden their electorate in order to retain their position in parliament. They adopted a similar membership structure, albeit the traditional elites

of these parties (parliamentary group) retained their dominant role. The increased competition for the general electorate incited mass parties in their turn to abandon a strict class-based representation profile and appeal to a broader range of voters. Party competition narrowed down to technical and personal issues and the widespread use of mass media enabled politicians to engage in more direct links with their electorate. The party centre professionalized and party leadership became more autonomous and powerful. While party members still played a crucial role in traditional mass parties as voluntary workforce (to contact and mobilize voters, implement national campaigns, adopt local mandates, provide input at conferences ...), this role was strongly reduced in favour of the party-in-public-office and the party-central-office in catch-all parties.

Increasing societal pressures on catch-all parties led to further adaptations in the relations between parties, civil society and the state. Katz and Mair conceptualized the *cartel party* as a new emerging party model, characterized by '*the interpenetration of party and state and a pattern of party collusion*' (Katz & Mair, 1995). Mainstream (catch all) parties increasingly joined forces and collaborated to protect themselves from electoral risks. They gradually merged with the state institutions to guarantee the necessary resources for survival and maintenance of power. Political parties became 'agents of the state' rather than 'agents of society' and electoral competition was further limited by the erection of legal barriers to avert new parties from electoral competition. Cartel parties collectively withdrew from society and state subsidies were employed for further professionalization of the party-elite in parliament and government. The distinction between party members and non-members became blurred as parties increasingly involve non-member supporters in party activities and decisions. Moreover, party membership is increasingly atomized in cartel parties and local autonomy is encouraged, resulting in stratarchical party structures (Katz & Mair, 1995).

Katz and Mair also indicated that the self-protective mechanisms installed by cartel parties are subject to internal contradictions. The growing interpenetration of parties and the state and the increasing gap between parties and the wider society has contributed to provoking popular mistrust and disaffection and generated a populist anti-cartel rhetoric. Katz and Mair identified challenges to the cartel party in the form

of new parties seeking to break into the system (Katz & Mair, 1995). Several other authors equally established that anti-party rhetoric became a common element of political discourse in many modern party systems. Both on the left and on the right new parties have tended to use anti-party arguments as electoral appeal (Bolleyer, 2008; Ignazi, 1996).

A last generic party model identified by Krouwel is the *business-firm party*. In reaction to the party monopolization of the state, affluent private entrepreneurs have established new parties aiming for broad electoral support based on populist claims of good governance. These parties have no clear ideology and their programs are mainly demand-driven. Extra-parliamentary party organization and grass-roots membership is limited as the business-firm party is centred around charismatic leadership and media exposure to appeal to a volatile electorate. Resources are generated through the private sector and essential tasks are outsourced. Forza Italy from Berlusconi and Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands are often cited as examples of these business-firm parties (Krouwel, 2004).

Although these ideal-types are situated in a sequential model, Krouwel and other scholars warn for a too linear interpretation of party change. Different party models can co-occur and parties can combine several features from different ideal types. Though the identified party types are found predominant in specific era's, remnants of older party types persist and the rise of new party models is often coupled with countermovements. Moreover, the authors point at the multitude of factors and dimensions involved in party change with sometimes contradictory evolutions and even circular movements of the historical phases.

2.3 THE DECLINE OF PARTIES

Katz and Mair's cartel party model is most frequently referred to as the blueprint for contemporary political parties as cartel-like tendencies have been observed in many European party systems and beyond (Bolleyer, 2009). In recent years, the party decline thesis has entered scholarly literature entailing heated debates on the changing role and decreasing relevance of political parties and the - whether or not - harmful

consequences for democratic processes. Notwithstanding the adaptive character of political parties, they seem gradually less able to fulfil the traditional party functions in a changing macro-economic and societal environment (Dalton & Wattenberg, 2000; Mair & Van Biezen, 2001; Scarrow, 1996; Webb, 1995; Whiteley & Seyd, 1998). Traditional societal cleavages have blurred as technological innovation and economic modernization fundamentally transformed the social structure of the electorate. The sense of collective identity based on social class has waned and secularization similarly eroded religious identity. Globalization instigated new social cleavages (concerning immigration, environmental pollution ...) and higher levels of individual resources and education prompted new values and expectations concerning citizen involvement in policy making. Political parties have generally failed to integrate these new values and expectations and seem trapped in old ideological cleavages. Moreover, modern techniques of mass communication created new direct links between citizens and politicians, bypassing traditional party structures and some of the traditional party functions have been adopted by new players (new social movements, mass media, unconventional forms of political participation,...). As a result of these interrelated evolutions *'politics has become more and more about the competition between professionalized party elites and less about the mobilization and integration of socially distinct groups'* (Van Biezen & Poguntke, 2014).

By colluding with the state, parties have increasingly alienated from the citizens and are considered no longer able to perform their representative and legitimizing functions. Politicians are assumed to have shifted their focus on governing rather than representation and became a professionalized and insulated social cast (Enyedi, 2014). Hence, several scholars have argued that political parties are in deep crisis: *'It may be that the institution of party is gradually disappearing, slowly replaced by new political structures more suitable for the economic and technical realities of twenty-first-century politics'* (Lawson & Merkl, 1988). Electoral volatility, increased anti-party sentiments, decreased electoral turn-out and increasing partisan dealignment are considered clear indications of this party crisis.

More recently the academic discussion on party decline has been linked to the changing nature of representation (Saward, 2008; Van Biezen & Poguntke, 2014).

Saward (2008) argues that political parties do not so much represent – or fail to represent – rather they *claim* to represent and these representative claims can and have historically taken a variety of forms. He outlines three ideal-typical modes of party representation: 1) the *popular* representative mode of representation is associated with traditional mass parties which claim to speak as delegates of their constituencies that are rooted in pre-existing social cleavages. They act as bottom-up agents of politicized interests on the basis of a relatively fixed ideology. 2) more contemporary catch-all and cartel parties are argued to claim a *statal* mode of representation. As top-down state actors these parties present themselves as the trustees of depoliticized issue-based positions based on flexible ideologies and policy views. Additionally, Saward provides evidence for a third emerging mode of party representation, which he identifies as *reflexive*. Parties claiming this reflexive mode of representation present themselves as sympathizers of local and issue-based positions on the basis of pragmatic and flexible policy programs. They emphasize procedural values such as openness and responsiveness rather than ideological preferences. These open parties are flexible and responsive to new ideas and interests and forge local alliances around specific value-driven goals aiming for connectedness and embeddedness in plural communities. This representative claim is reflected in decentralized party organizations with substantial autonomy for local figures, who include stakeholders and citizens in governmental decision-making.

According to Saward, representative democracy has thus increasingly depoliticized with a more explicit focus on the general or public interest and the integration of non-party actors. Although he argues that the different modes of representation are not necessarily more or less democratic, the legitimacy of political parties as vehicles of political representation is challenged both from within and from outside the electoral and parliamentary arenas and Saward predicts that '*parties may become "mutants" or "hybrids" to the point where they are no longer recognized as such*' (Saward, 2008). Van Biezen & Poguntke (2014) confirm this transformation from a partisan mode of representation - based on ex ante bottom-up mandates - to a less partisan mode of top-down representation which more explicitly focuses on some notion of the general or public interest. They also notice a growing interest in various forms of direct,

participatory and deliberative democracy '*complementing conventional vertical and hierarchical modes of politics within an increasingly horizontalized society*' (Van Biezen & Poguntke, 2014).

2.4 THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTER OF LOCAL POLITICS

In the previous sections, we have reviewed some theoretical insights concerning the (changing) roles and functions of political parties. As our research subject concerns non-national lists in a local political arena, these theoretical insights on political parties need to be related to the local context and hence this section focuses on the specific nature and (changing) functions of local parties.

Geser expects local parties to '*display similar activities and organizational characteristics as parties campaigning at the state or national level*' (Geser, 1999), yet it can be assumed that the implementation of traditional programmatic, positional and organizational party functions is strongly influenced by the particular features of local politics. Steyvers (2010) has discussed in detail the benefits of local politics, relating to freedom, democracy and efficiency. He argues that local self-government can be considered as a warrantee for freedom not only for it can counterbalance (arbitrary) decisions of the central government, but also for it is the best placed level to face political problems and challenges of the local community. The local level is the closest governmental level to the daily lives of the people granting it a unique democratic character with high participative potential. The local level is also considered as the most efficient level for public service provision because it has most knowledge concerning the local needs and demands and represents the optimal territorial connection between costs and benefits of and accountability for specific local services (Steyvers, 2010).

Reiser and Vetter (2011) argue that in times of party decline - with a decreased legitimacy of political parties - local politics can safeguard a healthy relationship between the citizens and politics. Local government can be attributed a crucial role in democratic political systems as '*it is on the local level in particular that there exists the*

chance of turning citizens into more social individuals. It is there that the mental foundation is laid on which democracy can develop' (Reiser & Vetter, 2011).

Notwithstanding these democratic benefits of local politics, local parties adopt but a negligible place within the extensive party literature. They are generally interpreted as mere subunits of national parties, forming the gateway for new party members to enter a party. Local parties suffer first from the established declining membership figures and the alleged crisis of parties as they first and foremost geographically organize the national party-on-the-ground. Consequently, several authors consider local party branches as increasingly irrelevant in contemporary - highly centralized and professionalized - political parties (Mair & Van Biezen, 2001; Webb, 1995). Other authors however stress that - regardless of the decreasing number of party members - local parties adapt to societal challenges and continue to play a central role in linking the citizens with the process of (local) government. They still provide the national party with legitimacy and the impression of a large rank and file; they organize campaign activities for supra-local elections which cannot be replaced by a professional headquarter and media specialists (producing and delivering leaflets, canvass voters ...); in between elections, they provide party members with benefits and incentives to encourage political participation and intra-party democracy. Moreover, local party branches socialize party members into the parties' values and organizational structures and allow them to gain political experience and test their motivation and aptitude for higher-level office functions (Clark, 2004).

These opposing views concerning the continued relevance of local parties reflect their Janus-faced character. Local parties assume two distinct political roles for which they need to look into opposite directions. They not only constitute the party on the ground of national parties - implementing a range of tasks to serve the national party goals - but also engage in local politics, which entails different - locally-oriented tasks. They recruit candidates to participate in local elections, aim to provide politicians for local government and engage in local policy-making (Clark, 2004; Geser, 1999). It can be assumed that the former role of local parties as party agency has changed substantially as the position of the party on the ground has altered in favour of the central party leadership. Yet, no indications point to a decline in the role of local parties as

participants in local politics. On the contrary, the relevance of this latter role is even argued to be on the rise as institutional reforms, combined with a shift towards governance networks, have increasingly politicized the local level (Geser, 1999). Copus and Erlingsson (2012) however, take a more critical stance and consider elitism and power concentration in local party groups as the local counterpart of the national party crisis. They argue that party members and citizens are gradually excluded from effective input to local politics as *'local political power becomes concentrated in the hands of fewer party members and ultimately in the local elite of councillors'* (Copus & Erlingsson, 2012).

Moreover, local parties seem to have acquired an increasingly autonomous position relative to the national party centre. While traditional party models defined parties essentially as hierarchical organizations - controlled by different dominant groups, several authors have referred to the weakening hierarchical relationships between the organizational entities of contemporary political parties. Eldersveld (1964) was the first to introduce the concept of stratarchical rather than hierarchical relationships within a political party. More recently, other authors equally argued that simple hierarchical paradigms no longer represent the reality of contemporary party structures which are characterized by a significant degree of autonomy for the respective organizational units (Carty, 2004; Katz & Mair, 1995, 1994; Mair, 1994). Mair (1994) argued that this tendency could result in completely decentralised party organisations in which mutual autonomy could develop *'to a degree in which the local party will become essentially unconcerned about any real input into the national party (and vice versa), and will devote itself primarily to politics at the local level'*. Carty on the other hand emphasized the mutual autonomy and interdependence of the organizational subunits and proposed a franchise model for thinking about stratarchical party structures (Carty, 2004). His claim of a stratarchical imperative in contemporary parties has been substantiated by Bolleyer (2012) who analysed the available tools of conflict resolution and patterns of vertical interaction within new parties in West European democracies (Bolleyer, 2012).

2.5 NON-NATIONAL LISTS IN LOCAL POLITICS

It is in this geographically confined arena of local politics that non-national lists enter the picture and compete with the above discussed local chapters of national parties. Notwithstanding their persistence and recent revival in many European countries, theoretical and empirical research on non-national lists remains sparse. Some scholars consider these lists as independent relics of a political past. They are depicted as historical artefacts reflecting the endurance of a non-political conception of local politics in municipalities that have not (yet) been completely politicized by parliamentary parties (Aberg & Ahlberger, 2015). Other authors on the contrary assume that non-national lists should be considered as heralds of a new and depoliticized system of (local) democracy, rather than as anomalies. In this latter tradition, Boogers and Voerman (2010) describe independent local parties as prototypes of a modernized party organization '*spearheading the party change from membership organization into staff-type organization*'. They demonstrate that these independent staff-type organizations have less problems than traditional party branches to fulfil an intermediary role between government and society in the Netherlands (Boogers & Voerman, 2010). Moreover, the dealignment of the electorate is considered a fertile ground for non-national lists to challenge the traditional cartelized parties at the local level and appeal to the disaffected voters (Aars & Ringkjob, 2008).

This research aims to contribute to the academic understanding of the differentiated role of non-national lists in local politics and how they are related to more system-level evolutions of national parties. Are they the long-time assumed independent relics of a nonpartisan past or can they be more accurately depicted as heralds of the party decline?

3 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH: PRAGMATISM AND MIXED METHODS

The following study of the differentiated role of non-national lists in Flanders is based on a convergent mixed methods design, combining quantitative and qualitative research methods. Mixed methods research is defined as *'the type of research in which a researcher or team of researchers combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches (e.g. use of qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, inference techniques) for the purpose of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration'* (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007). Mixed methods research has grown increasingly popular in recent decades and is even considered as a 'third methodological movement' (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Johnson et al., 2007; D. L. Morgan, 2007; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). This combination was long unthinkable as qualitative and quantitative research approaches have been linked to incommensurable paradigms with opposing philosophical assumptions concerning 'knowledge' and 'truth' (Krauss, 2005; Kuhn, 1970). Quantitative research is generally associated with a (post-)positivist perspective based on a dualistic and objectivist approach to science, while qualitative research is linked to a constructivist or interpretative tradition in science based on the assumption that reality is socially constructed. Purists have installed a stringent dichotomy in social science between these objectivist and subjectivist worldviews and defended the incompatibility of qualitative and quantitative research (Guban & Lincoln, 1994; G. Morgan & Smircich, 1980).

Only recently, this 'war of methods' has been tempered and the 'compatibility thesis' has gained influence. *Pragmatism* has been put forward as a 'third methodological paradigm' redirecting academic attention to methodological rather than metaphysical concerns and promoting methodological eclecticism (Johnson & Leech, 2005; D. L. Morgan, 2007; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Pragmatism values both objective and subjective knowledge and uses diverse methodological approaches based on 'what works' to address specific research questions. Rather than by ontological and

epistemological positions, pragmatists are guided by practical and applied research philosophy to make methodological decisions.

Several authors stress the benefits and opportunities of a mixed methods approach (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Flyvbjerg, 2011; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2010). Qualitative methods allow a detailed understanding based on individual perspectives, while quantitative methods offer a more general picture based on the variance in values on a limited set of variables. Both methods have their merits and provide a different perspective but one data source may be insufficient to provide a more complete understanding of the research subject. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) conceive of several situations where mixing methods is appropriate. The results of one method may require additional explanation, typically by qualitative research or a second (quantitative) method could enhance a primary qualitative method by generalizing exploratory findings. A second method might also be embedded within a primary method to enhance the study or a specific theoretical framework might require both qualitative and quantitative data. Finally, a research objective might involve multiple research phases and many components which need to be connected to reach an overall objective (Creswell & Clark, 2011).

Flyvbjerg also emphasizes the complementarity between qualitative (case study) and quantitative (statistical) methods, arguing that '*case study and statistical methods can achieve far more scientific progress together than either could alone*' (Flyvbjerg, 2011). Table 3.1 summarizes the strengths and weaknesses of both methods according to Flyvbjerg and illustrates how these can complement each other.

Table 3.1: Strengths and weaknesses of statistical methods and case study methods (Flyvbjerg, 2011)

	Statistical Methods	Case Studies
Strengths	Breadth	Depth
	Understanding how widespread a phenomenon is across a population	High conceptual validity
	Measures of correlation for populations of cases	Understanding of context and process
	Establishment of probabilistic levels of confidence	Understanding of what causes a phenomenon, linking causes and outcomes
		Fostering new hypotheses and new research questions
Weaknesses	Conceptual stretching, by grouping together dissimilar cases to get larger samples	Selection bias may overstate or understate relationships
	Weak understanding of context, process, and causal mechanisms	Weak understanding of occurrence population of phenomena under study
	Correlation does not imply causation	Statistical significance often unknown or unclear
	Weak mechanisms for fostering new hypotheses	

The present research into the role of non-national lists in local politics can equally be situated in this pragmatic mixed methods research tradition. It combines quantitative and qualitative approaches to uncover various related facets of the actual independence and partisan character of non-national lists and enables to develop a polygonal view on the differentiated role of these lists in local politics in Flanders.

The adopted research design can be defined as a *parallel convergent design* in which qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis occurred concurrently, but independent from one another, merging the results into an overall interpretation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Several primary and secondary data sources have been employed and analysed with customized analytical methods, each providing specific and complementary insights into the research subject:

- **Primary data:**
 - In-depth elite interviews with a selection of 22 list headers of non-national lists in Flanders
 - Electronic survey among all list headers of non-national lists in Flanders
- **Secondary data:**
 - Mediargus: digital press database, containing (local and national) media-reports on individual candidate lists²
 - Electronic election database of the Flemish Agency for Internal Affairs³.
 - Electronic survey among all presidents of local parties in Flanders made available by the Belgian interuniversity Attraction Pole PARTIREP⁴

I will briefly summarize here the rationale for the different methodological choices, which will be elaborated in more detail in the respective chapters. The first empirical part of this research project deals with the actual independence of non-national lists in Flanders. A classification model is proposed to differentiate local candidate lists based on their vertical and horizontal decisional autonomy. This classification model is applied to all local candidate lists which have participated in the municipal elections of 2006 and 2012 in Flanders. The allocation of the candidate lists in this classification model is based on a combined nominal analysis of the list names and a content analysis of local news coverage. Linking these data to the electoral results of the candidate lists further allowed a quantitative assessment of the political relevance of the different types of local candidate lists in Flanders. This cross-sectional analysis is supplemented with a longitudinal qualitative analysis to reveal the rationales behind the different types of non-national lists. A multiple case analysis based on in-depth interviews with list headers of non-national lists allows to clarify changes in the decisional autonomy of these lists and to assess the role of different internal and external factors in these changes. Moreover, the refined conceptualization of non-national lists and their decisional autonomy sheds new light on party system nationalization. Based on a refined nationalization index for local party systems a

² Now converted into www.gopress.be

³ www.vlaanderenkiest.be

⁴ www.partirep.eu

multiple regression analysis aims to account for the differences in local party system nationalizing in Flanders.

The second empirical part of this research project aims to establish the extent to which non-national lists perform the functions generally associated with political parties. This functional analysis of non-national lists is based on survey data and interview data. The electronic survey among list headers of non-national lists in Flanders provides valuable quantitative data and offers a mainly descriptive image of how non-national lists assume the three selected key party functions. These general insights are related to the research results of (and - if appropriate the data from) the Partirep-project to benchmark the functional behaviour of non-national lists with local party branches in Flanders. These quantitative findings are clarified, nuanced or corroborated with qualitative findings based on the analysis of the elite interviews with list headers of non-national lists.

4 THE CASE OF FLANDERS

This research project intends to contribute to a more generalized knowledge-building on non-national lists by analysing the role of non-national lists in the multipartisan context of the Flemish region of Belgium. The generalizability of these research findings to other settings depends on contextual congruence (Ritchie, Spencer, & O'Connor, 2003). This section therefore describes in detail the Flemish institutional context to assess the transferability to other settings.

Belgium is generally considered as representative for the southern/Franco tradition and local government is commonly conceived as the eminence of local community (inducing territorial fragmentation) with a rather limited role in public service and direct access to central power. (Copus, C., Wingfield, M., Steyvers, S. & Reynaert, H.; 2012). Belgium is also an example of consensual local democracy from a wider perspective. Proportional representation leads to a multiparty system, usually with various parties in government as well as in opposition. Hence, executive power is often shared in coalitions of different parties. Whereas elections only compose the council, monistic relations exist with an executive of the collegiate type (college of mayor and alderman) (De Rynck, Wayenberg, Steyvers & Pilet, 2010).

Since the 1970s, Belgium has a regionalized party system. Due to the emergence of regionalist parties and the proceeding reform of the Belgian state towards a federal polity, former unitary national parties split into a Flemish and Walloon faction. The national electoral system is organized subsequently implying a regionalized space of party competition. Moreover, Belgium forms no exception to the general trend of party dealignment. This has been amply demonstrated by decreasing levels of party identification, increasing volatility of the voters and reduced predictability of voting behaviour and decreasing party membership figures (Dalton, McAllister, & Wattenberg, 2005; Steyvers, 2014; Van Biezen & Poguntke, 2014; Van Haute, 2015). Yet, Steyvers (2014) argues that political parties continue to play a central role in many areas. He uses an interesting set of nautical metaphors to demonstrate how Belgium's partitocracy has gradually transformed but definitely did not disappear as political

parties in Belgium remain important anchor points and are nothing like the empty vessels they have been associated with.

Local elections in Belgium are held simultaneously in all three regions every 6 years and are characterised by a high permissiveness in terms of candidacy⁵. Although there is no formal electoral threshold and seats are distributed based on the proportionality principle, the Imperiali system slightly increases the factual electoral threshold and favours bigger parties or constellations. This quasi-proportional representation system makes it easy for (new) parties to (successfully) compete in local elections in Belgium (Copus, Wingfield, Steyvers, & Reynaert, 2012). Belgium is one of the few countries with compulsory voting and hence turn-out rates in elections remain high. As in other Western democracies, national parties play an important role in local politics in Belgium, but no clear evidence could be found for a systematic nationalisation of the local political offer (Wille & Deschouwer, 2007) and local candidate lists have always been and remain an important feature of local politics (Steyvers & De Ceuninck, 2013). Steyvers and his colleagues have examined local candidate lists in Belgium from a nominal perspective (in opposition to national candidate lists) and established that a majority of local party systems in Belgium is characterized by the presence of at least one such local candidate list. Moreover, one out of every five voters casts a vote for these lists which consequently also frequently participate in absolute or coalition governments (Steyvers & De Ceuninck, 2013; Steyvers et al., 2008). Furthermore, the authors established that the presence and penetration of these lists has increased in recent decades, although they assume that this rise can be attributed to a shift from the genuinely to the rather pseudo-types of local lists (especially cartel lists). While this assumption has not been substantiated by empirical research, the authors emphasize the hybrid nature of local politics in Belgium and stress the need for further research as local candidate lists *'are a factor not to neglect in trying to understand local electoral processes in Belgium'* (Steyvers et al., 2008).

⁵ Anyone can propose a list with one or more candidates, which then has to be submitted by a resigning councillor or by a certain (limited) number of voters.

Part 1

The Actual Independence of Non-National Lists in Flanders

5 LOCAL STRONGHOLDS OR NATIONAL DISCIPLES?

DECISIONAL AUTONOMY AND POLITICAL RELEVANCE OF NON-NATIONAL LISTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This first empirical part of this research project deals with the actual independence of non-national lists from political parties. As indicated by Reiser (2008), the lack of relevant and practicable classification models to nuance the default dichotomy between local and national candidate lists in local elections hinders the development of comprehensive academic knowledge on the miscellaneous nature of non-national candidate lists and their differentiated role in local politics. The actual independence of non-national candidate lists has been suggested as one of the critical dimensions for differentiation as several scholars have referred to the occurrence of pseudo-local lists, hidden party lists or other concealed sub-species, which can neither be considered as independent lists, nor as fully national lists (Dudzinska, 2008; Göhlert et al., 2008; Steyvers et al., 2008). In addition to these indications that presumed independent candidate lists can maintain hidden links to national parties, local party branches also behave increasingly autonomous from national party centres. Several authors have referred to the weakening hierarchical relationships between organizational entities of contemporary political parties as a characterizing feature of the cartelization tendency in political parties (Bolleyer, 2012; Carty, 2004; Katz & Mair, 1995) Hence, the traditional distinction between national/partisan and local/independent lists oversimplifies the political reality and disregards the actual links between non-national lists and national parties.

Moreover, a proper knowledge of the actual independence of non-national lists is of substantial theoretical importance as it is critical in our academic understanding of the *party politicization* process as first established by Rokkan (1966). He argued that the '*breakdown of the traditional systems of local rule through the entry of nationally organized parties into municipal elections*' would eventually result in completely

nationalized local party systems without any nonpartisan actors left. A number of studies regarding the supply-side of local elections in Western democracies do indeed give indications for such a constantly increasing homogenisation of local party systems (Bäck, 2003; Kjaer & Elklit, 2009), while more recent research challenges Rokkan's theoretical end-state by pointing to the persistence and recent revival of nonpartisan actors in many European local party systems. These alleged independent actors are argued to counterbalance the entry of national parties into municipal elections (Aars & Ringkjøb, 2005; Steyvers et al, 2008). Yet, this academic discussion on (the end-state of) party politicization is equally distorted by a flawed conception of the actual independence of these actors. If not all non-national lists are as local or independent as their popular label suggests, their prominence and role in the party politicization process should be reconsidered.

This first empirical research part concerning the actual independence of non-national lists comprises three main components. Following Reiser and Holtmann's plea, I will first elaborate a practicable and contingent classification model to differentiate non-national lists based on their decisional autonomy – a concept which is closely related to actual independence. This classification model is then applied to non-national lists in Flemish municipalities allowing to establish the occurrence and political relevance of different ideal-types of non-national lists. Secondly, I will consider the decisional autonomy of non-national lists in a longitudinal perspective and identify the causal mechanisms behind strategic changes in decisional autonomy and the rationales of the different types of non-national lists. A last component of this first research part on the actual independence of non-national list concerns the theoretical implications of this conceptual refinement of non-national lists for prevailing insights on the party politicization of local party systems. The degree of party politicization in Flemish municipalities is assessed and explained based on an innovative measure to analyse local party system composition.

5.2 CLASSIFYING LOCAL CANDIDATE LISTS: INDEPENDENCE RECONSIDERED

Literature on multilevel parties offers valuable clues to analyse the actual independence of non-national lists. The recent trend of political decentralization has fuelled academic interest in the territorial organization of state-wide parties and the inter-level relationships within multilevel parties (Hopkin, 2009; Swenden & Maddens, 2009; Thorlakson, 2009; Van Houten, 2009). In this novel research field, a distinction is often made between three dimensions of inter-level party organization. *Vertical integration* refers to the extent of formal and informal organizational linkages, interdependence and cooperation between national and sub-national levels (common party membership, shared finances, a common governance structure); *Influence* refers to the extent to which the party organizations at the lower level can affect decisions of party branches at the higher levels; and *autonomy* concerns the extent of control of higher party levels over lower ones or the freedom of the subnational level to conduct its affairs without interference from the national party (Reiser & Vetter, 2011; Thorlakson, 2009).

This theoretical framework offers valuable clues to analyse the actual independence of non-national lists, although this upcoming discipline generally disregards local party organizations as its focus is on the relationship between national, sub-national (regional) and supra-national (European) party-level. Reiser & Vetter (2011) however advocate to integrate the local party level in multilevel party analysis and consider local interest representation at higher system levels. Yet, while their focus is on vertical integration and (bottom-up) influence of local party organizations in multilevel parties, the concern of this study lies in the autonomy of local party levels and the interdependence between local and national party levels.

This interdependence between local and national parties comes with mutual benefits. National party centres aspire maximum presence at the local level as this provides them with valuable political resources (funding, activist recruitment, media exposure, ...) while the national party equally provides the local subunits with important local resources (financial, personnel, logistic) and ensures the overall integration of the local party and national image-building. In a traditional conception of political parties as

hierarchical organizations with a dominant central party, local party branches are considered to have little autonomy (Michels, 1962). More recent party scholars however have focussed on the balance between control and intra-organizational autonomy within parties and consider contemporary parties as stratarchical or franchise organizations in which national party centres and organizational sub-units have considerable autonomy (Bolleyer, 2012; Carty, 2004; Katz & Mair, 1995). As several authors have indicated that a local name can conceal more or less strong links to the national party level, non-national lists could be considered as an expression of this relative autonomy of local party branches and hence an extension of the stratarchical imperative as identified by Carty and Bolleyer (Bolleyer, 2012; Carty, 2004).

This interesting multilevel party approach however does not suffice to fully capture the actual independence of non-national lists. Especially in a Belgian context, the presence of non-national lists can to a certain extent be attributed to the increased attractiveness of so-called cartel initiatives between various local political actors⁶. Verthé and Deschouwer (2011) use the term *pre-electoral alliances* to refer to these ‘*agreement[s] between parties to form a joint list or present joint candidates to the voters*’. They argue that local party branches in Belgium often opt for such a pre-electoral alliance to reduce the electoral risks and secure office or even survival (in case of small parties) (Verthé & Deschouwer, 2011). These joint lists influence the autonomy of the cartel partners as they require agreements on a variety of aspects (joint programmatic profile, campaigning, candidate selection, list formation, cooperation...). Hence, the autonomy of non-national actors in Flanders is not only influenced by direct vertical links with higher party levels, but also by horizontal links to other local parties.

To integrate this vertical and horizontal dimension of in(ter)dependence, I will rely on the analytical concept of *decisional autonomy* as elaborated by Randal & Svasand (2002) as an essential component of party institutionalization. These authors define the decisional autonomy of a party as ‘*the freedom from interference in determining its*

⁶ Although the term ‘cartel’ generally has another connotation in political science (cfr the cartel party of Katz & Mair, 2006), the concept of ‘cartel lists’ is very familiar in Belgium (Flanders as well as Wallonia), referring to pre-electoral alliances in the form of joint candidate lists.

own policies and strategies' (Randall & Svasand, 2002). While 'interference' mainly refers to (top-down) control, the more neutral term *influence* is preferred for the current research on non-national lists since this also include less hierarchical modes of interdependence. The decisional autonomy of non-national candidate lists is thus defined as '*the extent of external influence on the lists' policies and strategies*' containing a vertical and a horizontal dimension. Their vertical decisional autonomy concerns the extent of influence from national party centres, while their horizontal autonomy involves the extent of external influence from other political actors in the local party system.

Operationalizing this analytical concept of decisional autonomy is a challenging task and needs to reconcile two concerns: validity and practicability. Assessing the extent of external influence on the policies and strategies of non-national lists requires detailed and inside information on local lists' policies and strategies and the external actors involved. As this is only feasible for small-N case studies, a pragmatic approach is more appropriate to analyse the decisional autonomy of large groups of non-national lists. Hence, for the purpose of this study, the decisional autonomy of non-national lists is measured by assessing the presence / absence of explicit / implicit links to national / local parties. The presence of *explicit* links can be inferred from the name under which the non-national lists participate in municipal elections as it is a deliberate choice to face the voter locally with a national label (or a combination of national labels) or to use a place-bound name expressing a willingness to localize the list. Assessing *implicit* links requires some additional investigation. These implicit links can be of strategic (e.g. support in cartel or coalition negotiations or conflict resolution), financial (funding of campaign activities), or logistic (provision of material) nature and it can be assumed that local media are familiar with any potential hidden alliances with national or local political actors.

On the horizontal dimension of non-national lists' decisional autonomy, a distinction can be made between *solitary lists* which face the voter at own strength and *cartel lists* which combine two or more local political parties in a specific and time-bound electoral context. On the vertical dimension a distinction is made between national, pseudo-national, pseudo-local and local candidate lists. *National* candidate lists have

explicit links to national parties. *Pseudo-national* lists equally have explicit links to the national party level, but also explicitly refer to the local context in their name. *Pseudo-local* lists have a local name without any reference to national parties, but maintain implicit links to the national party level, while *local lists* have no explicit, nor implicit links to national parties. Combining the vertical and horizontal component of non-national lists' decisional autonomy thus results in a practicable and contingent typology distinguishing four ideal-types of solitary lists and four ideal-types of cartel lists, varying in their level of autonomy regarding the national party level (Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1: DA-typology for local candidate lists

Decisional Autonomy (DA)		Vertical			
		<i>National</i>	<i>Pseudo-national</i>	<i>Pseudo-local</i>	<i>Local</i>
Horizontal	<i>solitary lists</i>	party list	extended party list	supported local list	independent list
	<i>cartel lists</i>	party cartel	extended party cartel	localized cartel	independent cartel

Party lists are local candidate lists that are submitted by local party branches under a clear and unambiguous national party label without any additional nominal reference to the local context. *Extended party lists* are solitary lists which also explicitly refer to a national mother party, but this national party label is complemented with a nominal reference to the local context⁷. *Supported local lists* are solitary lists with a local name (without any nominal reference to the national party level) but with implicit links to a national party⁸. *Independent lists* lastly have no links with a national party at all⁹.

In the category of cartel lists, a *party cartel* is a pre-electoral alliance between two or more local branches of national parties with explicit references to these national parties and without any nominal reference to the local level¹⁰. An *extended party cartel* similarly is a joint list of two or more clearly discernible local actors with explicit references to the national party level, but with an additional nominal reference to the

⁷ Examples in 2012: 'Groei met Open VLD' (Hasselt); 'SP.A Samen' (Gooik); 'N-VA Nieuw' (Herk-De-Stad)...

⁸ Examples in 2012: 'Lijst van de Burgemeester' (Steenokkerzeel = linked to Open VLD); 'Gemeentebelangen' (Beerse, linked to VB)...

⁹ Examples in 2012: 'Het alternatief' (Borsbeek); Gemeentebelangen (Herenthout); Voor U (Kortenberg)...

¹⁰ Examples in 2012: SP.A/Groen (Lier); Groen/SP.A (Dilbeek); CD&V/Open VLD (Hove)...

local context¹¹. A *localized cartel* is a joint list of two or more clearly discernible local political groups without any explicit references to the national party level, yet containing one or more national party branches¹². An *independent cartel* to conclude is a purely independent variant of a joint candidate list, in which the respective cartel partners have no links at all to any national party.

Although this typology has been developed in a Belgian context, it seems equally relevant to analyse non-national lists in other Western democracies. While not empirically established, several authors suggest that independent actors in other countries likewise are not all as independent or as local as their label suggests and instead maintain implicit or partial links to national parties (Reiser & Holtmann, 2008; Copus & Wingfield, 2013). Moreover, many other Western countries are equally familiar with various forms of pre-electoral coalitions in local politics (Golder, 2006). Consequently, the DA-typology can be considered a useful tool for national or comparative research on non-national lists in local politics. In the following section, this typology is applied to non-national lists in the local political context of Flanders.

5.3 APPLYING THE DA-TYOLOGY TO NON-NATIONAL LISTS IN FLANDERS

Previous research has indicated that local lists continue to give a place-bound flavour to local party systems in Flanders and suggested that this can be partly attributed to the existence of local cartel lists and the presence of ‘hidden party lists’ (Steyvers & De Ceuninck, 2013; Steyvers et al., 2008). However, until present no empirical evidence was available to confirm these assumptions.

To establish the prevalence of the different types of non-national lists in Flanders, the horizontal and vertical decisional autonomy of all candidate lists that have participated in (one of) the last two rounds of local elections (2006 and 2012) in the 308 municipalities in Flanders were determined, allowing to allocate these lists in the DA-typology. A two-tiered approach was adopted, firstly determining the presence of explicit links to national/local parties based on the list names as registered in the

¹¹ Examples in 2012 : VLD/Groen/M+ (Mechelen); ‘VLD -SP.A Positief’ (Westerlo); N-VA Lennik² (Lennik)...

¹² Examples in 2012 : ‘Open Voor de Mens’ (an alliance between Open VLD, Dicht bij de Mens and independents in Bever); Lijst Burgemeester (an alliance between CD&V, SP.A, Groen and independents in Affligem)...

electronic election database of the Flemish Agency for Internal Affairs¹³. This nominal analysis allowed to filter out all national lists from the non-national lists with a (partial) local denomination.

Secondly, for all remaining lists with a non-national name, the presence of implicit horizontal and vertical links to national or local parties was considered. As it can be assumed that local political journalists and local inhabitants are familiar with these concealed links, I have opted for a content analysis of the news coverage on the municipal elections. All media-reports on individual non-national candidate lists, published in the local editions of national newspapers during the 6 months preceding the elections (8 October 2006 and 14 October 2012)¹⁴ were analysed to identify implicit links. Additionally, the websites of the local lists and national parties proved a valuable source of information and in case of doubt the head of the lists concerned were contacted by telephone for further information.

The presence of implicit links with a national party was assumed in the following situations, illustrated by an example:

- The list is presented in media reports as an initiative of one or more local party branch(es):

‘For the first time Open VLD in Putte does not participate in elections under its own label, but with the name “Lijst Burgemeester”: “We consciously opted for a new project, an open list on which even some independent candidates occur”’¹⁵

- The list is presented as containing one or more dominant group(s) of members from a national party:

‘In Dilbeek former councillor Piet Ronsijn returns to local politics with the candidate list “Vernieuwing” on which both independent candidates and incumbent councillors of the Vlaams Belang occur.’¹⁶

- The front runners of the list are presented as prominent supra-local officeholders from a national party:

¹³ www.vlaanderenkiest.be

¹⁴ These media reports are publicly accessible through the media-database mediargus, now www.gopress.be

¹⁵ Van Eycken, E. Lijst Burgemeester voorgesteld; Het laatste nieuws, 9 juni 2012, p. 45

¹⁶ DHB; Piet Ronsijn komt met ‘Vernieuwing’; Het laatste nieuws, 23 april 2012, P;13

*'Jan Laurys - member of the Flemish Parliament for the CD&V- will be the new mayor of Diest. Laurys headed the candidate list DDS and obtained 9 seats.'*¹⁷ [discussion of poll-results prior to the elections]

The presence of horizontal links was assumed if local journalists reported the involvement of clearly discernible and organized political actors in contrast to the mere involvement of some individual independent candidates.

Table 5.1 offers an overview of the allocation rules applied to assign the local candidate lists in the DA typology.

Table 5.1: Allocation rules to assign local candidate lists in the DA typology

	Name	representation in media reports and/or websites as
party list	National party name; no local reference	Candidate list submitted by a national party branch
party cartel	Combination of two or more national party names; no local reference	Electoral alliance between two or more national party branches
Extended party list	National party name, supplemented with local reference	Candidate list submitted by a national party branch (extended with non-organized independent candidates)
extended party cartel	Combination of national party name(s) and local reference.	Electoral alliance between two or more identifiable partners of which at least one national party branch.
supported local list	Local name; no reference to national party level	Candidate list closely linked to and supported by a national party or a national party branch
localized cartel	Local name; no reference to national party level	Electoral alliance between two or more identifiable partners of which at least one national party branch.
independent list	Local name; no reference to national party level	An autonomous and independent political group
independent cartel	Local name; no reference to national party level	Electoral alliance between two or more independent partners

The acquired data concerning the decisional autonomy of local candidate lists have been further linked to their electoral results¹⁸ allowing a cross-sectional analysis of the political relevance of the different types of non-national lists in Flanders at two specific points in time (municipal elections of 2006 and 2012). The following section discusses the results of this analysis.

¹⁷ IVB; *Vlaams parlements lid Jan Laurys wordt de nieuwe burgemeester*, Het nieuwsblad, 8 oktober 2006.

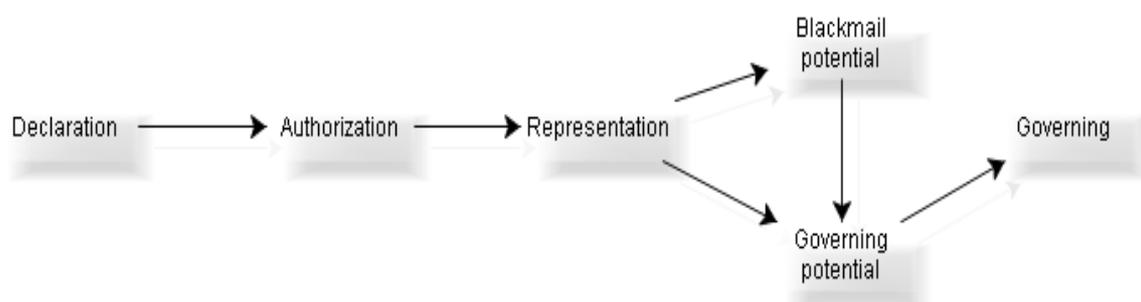
¹⁸ The electoral results of all participating candidate lists are publicly available on the website of the Flemish Agency for Internal Affairs (www.vlaanderenkiest.be)

5.4 OCCURRENCE AND POLITICAL RELEVANCE OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF NON-NATIONAL CANDIDATE LISTS IN FLANDERS

The political relevance of the different types of local candidate lists will be discussed based on the lifespan approach to political parties as developed by Pedersen (1982) and adapted by Deschouwer (2008). Pedersen depicts the evolution of political parties by means of four crucial thresholds. The explicit *declaration* or the intention to participate in elections is considered as the first crucial threshold in a party's lifespan. Subsequently, all legal requirements have to be met and official *authorization* is needed to effectively participate in elections. To surpass the ensuing *representation* threshold, a party needs to attract sufficient votes to have representatives elected in legislative bodies. And lastly, all parties are assumed to aim for the *relevance* threshold which distinguishes influential from non-influential parties (Pedersen, 1982, p. 8). These thresholds can be crossed in both directions and determine the consecutive lifecycle stages and the relevance of political parties.

The relevance threshold in this lifespan approach is the most difficult to interpret and can be narrowly defined by participation in government, but also more broadly as the power of opposition parties to intimidate coalition parties and influence the direction of party competition (Sartori, 2005). Hence, Deschouwer builds on Pedersen's model and distinguishes between blackmail potential and governing potential in the relevance threshold and introducing *governing* as a fifth threshold, which is considered a crucial transitional phase with significant consequences for the party (Deschouwer, 2008). This lifespan approach to political parties is illustrated in figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2: Adapted lifespan approach to political parties (Deschouwer, 2008)



To scrutinize the political relevance of the different types of local candidate lists, I will consider their position in four crucial momentums in the local process of power achievement which correspond to the authorization, representation and governing threshold of this lifespan approach. The local power achievement process starts from the *pre-electoral configuration*, containing all lists that have crossed the declaration and authorization threshold and compete for the grace of the voters. All enfranchised citizens can choose from this party political offer and *allocate their vote* to the list or candidates of their preference. The obtained vote-shares are then *transformed into council seats*, determining who is able to cross the representation threshold. Based on these obtained seats - and considering the governing potential of the represented lists - a *governing majority* is formed, allowing one or more participating lists to cross the governing threshold. The following sections successively deal with the political relevance of the different types of local candidate lists in the pre-electoral configuration, vote allocation, seat distribution and majority formation.

5.4.1 Pre-electoral configuration

In 2006, 1458 candidate lists crossed the authorization threshold and participated in the municipal elections. This figure amounted to 1654 in the 2012 municipal elections. All these candidate lists have been allocated into the DA-typology, offering a clear conspectus of the incidence of the different types of local candidate lists in the pre-electoral configuration of both municipal elections in Flanders. Table 5.2 summarizes the results of this allocation exercise.

Table 5.2 Occurrence of different types of local candidate lists in Flanders

	2006		2012	
	n	%	n	%
party lists	745	51,1	1104	66,7
party cartels	286	19,6	63	3,8
small national parties	25	1,7	33	2,0
Extended party lists	35	2,4	52	3,1
Extended party cartels	45	3,1	47	2,8
Supported lists	28	1,9	79	4,8
Localized cartels	83	5,7	67	4,1
Independent lists	206	14,1	208	12,6
Independent cartels	5	0,3	1	0,1
total	1458	100	1654	100

These figures demonstrate that national lists dominate the local political arena in Flanders with over 72% of all participating candidate lists having explicit and unambiguous links to the national party level. A small minority of these national party lists concerns small national parties, which are organized at national level, but with limited local representation and no national list number¹⁹. The relative share of national lists remains quasi constant between the two electoral periods, although the share of party cartels in this category has decreased substantially. The latter can be attributed to the cessation of some national cartel agreements. In the years before the municipal elections of 2006, several national parties agreed to form a cartel at national level²⁰ and following this national example, many of the local branches of these parties also formed local variants of these national alliances. Especially party cartels between CD&V and N-VA branches and between SP.A and SPIRIT were widespread in 2006. In 2012 most national cartels had been abrogated and consequently, many of the local alliances were equally terminated which clarifies the drop in party cartels and the rise of party lists between 2006 and 2012.

In addition to these local reflections of national alliances, a considerable portion of the party cartel lists concerns progressive alliances between local branches of the socialist and the green party. At national level cartel deliberations between these two Flemish

¹⁹ Small national parties are VLOTT, PVDA+, ROOD, LSP, BEB-N, VCD.

²⁰ SP.A/SPIRIT, VLD/VIVANT, CD&V/N-VA en VB/VLOTT

parties have never materialised, but their local branches were given the freedom to deal autonomously or jointly with the local reality. Furthermore, various less obvious combinations of national party branches occur within the group of party cartels²¹. The adopted list number of local cartel lists offers an indication of the dominant cartel partner in the alliance. Table 5.3 summarizes for each national list number²² (in random order) the ratio between party lists and party cartels both in absolute terms as in terms of their penetration grade (share of municipalities where the national list numbers represent a party list or a party cartel).

Table 5.3: Spread and penetration of national party lists and national party cartels per national list number

		2006		2012	
		party lists	party cartels	party lists	party cartels
SP.A	N	100	96	139	43
	penetration	32,5%	31,2%	45,1%	14,0%
Open VLD	N	163	38	181	0
	penetration	52,9%	12,3%	58,8%	0,0%
N-VA	N	33	0	259	1
	penetration	10,7%	0,0%	84,1%	0,3%
Groen	N	106	11	96	7
	penetration	34,4%	3,6%	31,2%	2,3%
Vlaams Belang	N	214	9	181	1
	penetration	69,5%	2,9%	58,8%	0,6%
CD&V	N	129	128	241	10
	penetration	41,9%	41,6%	78,2%	3,2%
Lijst Dedecker	N	0	0	7	0
	penetration	0%	0,0%	2,3%	0,0%
Total	N	745	281	1104	62
	penetration	91,6	60,1	95,1	19,8

These figures clearly illustrate the effect of the come and go of national alliances, with a sharp decline in party cartels for the CD&V and the Open VLD. Also for SP.A, the number of cartel lists has decreased substantially, though less drastically notwithstanding the abrogation of the national cartel with SPIRIT. These figures suggest that a further sub-distinction can be made in the group of party cartels between national party cartels and local party cartels. The former concern the

²¹ Some examples from 2012: CD&V/Open VLD in Hove, CD&V/Groen in Ronse, SP.A/CD&V in Antwerpen.

²² Prior to municipal elections, each submitted candidate list receives a list number. The numbers one to seven were reserved for nationally represented parties, the succeeding list numbers are allocated to local lists (and small national parties)

nationally agreed upon pre-electoral alliances between local branches of national parties, while local party cartels are not nationally acknowledged and reflect a local agreement between national party branches.

National party lists and national party cartels have been extensively studied by other authors (Kris Deschouwer, Tom Verthé, & Benoît Rihoux, 2013; Verthé & Deschouwer, 2011) and the main subject of this dissertation are those lists participating in elections under a non-national name²³. Both in the municipal elections of 2006 and 2012, it concerned a large quarter of all participating lists. Table 5.4 focusses on these non-national lists and offers a clearer image of how the different sub-types of non-national lists are distributed.

Table 5.4: share of different types of non-national lists

		2006			2012		
		n	%		n	%	
pseudo-national lists	Extended party lists	35	8,7	19,9	52	11,5	21,8
	Extended party cartels	45	11,2		47	10,4	
pseudo-local lists	Supported lists	28	7,0	27,6	79	17,4	32,2
	Localized cartels	83	20,6		67	14,8	
local lists	Independent lists	206	51,2	52,5	208	45,8	46,0
	Independent cartels	5	1,2		1	0,2	
total		402	100		454	100	

Approximately half of all non-national candidate lists in Flanders actually concern independent lists without any links to national parties. This share slightly decreased from 52,5% in 2006 to 46,0% in 2012. In both elections these independent candidate lists almost exclusively concerned solitary lists as independent cartel lists are extremely rare. Therefore, in the further analysis, independent cartel lists will be merged with the solitary independent lists.

The category of pseudo-local lists contains supported lists and localized cartels. Both types have a local name but maintain implicit links to the national party level. This pseudo-local category comprises about a third of all non-national lists (27,6% in 2006 and 32,2% in 2012). In 2006, localized cartels formed a large majority in this group,

²³ Where possible however, local party cartels will also be included in the analysis as they also represent a locally oriented logic.

while the proportion of cartel lists substantially decreased in 2012 as the amount of supported lists increased to a more balanced distribution between supported lists and localized cartels.

The pseudo-national lists contain extended party lists and extended party cartels. Both explicitly refer to one or more national parties, while their name equally contains a local component. In 2006, 19,9% of all non-national lists belonged to this pseudo-national category, slightly augmenting to 21,8% in 2012 with a balanced distribution between solitary and cartel lists.

In addition to the absolute numbers of lists in each category, the political relevance of the different list types in the pre-electoral stage can be indicated by their penetration grade (the share of municipalities in which this type of list is present) as well as by the average number of the list types per municipality as summarized in table 5.5.

Table 5.5: Penetration grade and average number of different types of local candidate lists

		2006		2012	
		%	\bar{x}	%	\bar{x}
National	party lists	91,6	2,4	95,1	3,6
	party cartels	60,1	0,9	19,8	0,2
Pseudo-national	Extended party lists	11,0	0,1	15,3	0,2
	Extended party cartels	13,6	0,2	14,0	0,2
Pseudo-local	Supported lists	8,4	0,1	23,1	0,3
	Localized cartels	23,4	0,3	19,8	0,2
Local	Independent lists	50,6	0,7	51,0	0,7

These figures corroborate the previous findings and demonstrate that party lists have a penetration grade of over 90%, with an average of 2,4 such lists in 2006, rising to 3,6 in 2012 attributable to the abrogation of national party cartels. In 2006 over 60 percent of the local party systems in Flanders contained at least one party cartel, with an average of nearly one, while in 2012 party cartels occurred in one out of five municipalities, with an average of only 0,2. Of all non-national lists, independent lists have the highest penetration grade, occurring in more than half of the 308 Flemish municipalities, with an average of 0,7 such list per municipality in both elections. The penetration grade of the other types of non-national lists is substantially lower.

5.4.2 Representation

To cross the representation threshold and have representatives elected in council, the local candidate lists need to appeal to a sufficient share of the electorate. Table 5.6 indicates the average vote share of each type of local candidate list.

Table 5.6: Average vote share of the different types of local candidate lists

	2006		2012	
	\bar{x}	σ	\bar{x}	σ
Party lists	19,7	14,09	18,5	12,06
Party cartels	25,4	12,78	21,5	13,54
small national parties	2,1	4,86	2,8	3,92
Extended party lists	23,8	11,41	20,9	12,01
Extended party cartels	24,5	13,29	23,6	14,00
Supported lists	34,3	21,36	22,5	17,13
Localized cartels	28,4	15,72	28,5	17,44
Independent lists	16,8	16,73	14,3	16,71
Total	21,1	15,00	18,6	13,73
Eta²	0,090***		0,070***	

***p<.001; **p<.005; *p<.05

These vote shares differ significantly between the different ideal-types. Small national parties obtain significantly lower vote shares than all other list types with an average below 3%. Independent local lists also score significantly lower than most other pseudo-national and pseudo-local lists as indicated by a Bonferroni test. They obtain an average vote share of around 16,8% in 2006 and 14,3% in 2012, while the different pseudo-local and pseudo-national lists obtain between 20 and 25% of the votes with a peak of 34,3% for supported lists in 2006. National party lists also obtain significantly lower vote shares than these pseudo-local and pseudo-national lists with an average below 20% in both elections.

After the elections, the acquired votes are transformed into council seats based on the quasi-proportional Imperiali quota which slightly increases the factual threshold and favours larger parties. Consequently, differences in vote shares between the different types of local candidate lists are reflected in their relative number of seats. Small national parties obtain a futile average amount of council seats (0,3). Party lists and independent candidate lists also obtain significantly less council seats than the other

types of pseudo-national and pseudo-local candidate lists in both elections. The party lists stay below an average of five seats and independent lists fluctuate around three seats, while the average number of council seats for the other list types hover between about five and seven seats (table 5.7).

Table 5.7: Average number of council seats

	2006		2012	
	\bar{x}	σ	\bar{x}	σ
Party lists	4,6	4,04	4,6	3,93
Party cartels	7,2	4,54	5,9	5,17
small national parties	0,3	1,21	0,4	1,32
Extended party lists	5,9	3,18	5,2	3,76
Extended party cartels	6,0	4,11	6,1	4,42
Localized cartels	6,6	3,90	6,9	4,91
Supported lists	6,3	4,23	4,7	3,80
Independent lists	3,2	3,71	2,7	3,66
Total	5,1	4,31	4,5	4,09
Eta²	0,116***		0,068***	

***p<.001; **p<.005; *p<.05

Moreover, small national parties and independent lists significantly less often succeed to surpass the representation threshold (table 5.8). Small national parties only rarely have candidates elected (less than 10%). In 2006 about one out of three independent lists did not succeed to cross the representation threshold, amounting to about two out of five in 2012. This share of non-represented lists is significantly lower for other types of candidate lists (Cramer's $V=0,453 - 0,408$). Moreover, table 5.8 indicates that for the other pseudo-local and pseudo-national lists, the share of non-represented lists has increased substantially between 2006 and 2012, which could be attributed to an increased fractionalization of the local party systems.

Table 5.8: Share of the different types of local candidate lists without representatives in council

	2006	2012
Party lists	10,1%	11,8%
Party cartels	1,0%	3,2%
small national parties	92,0%	90,9%
Extended party lists	2,9%	11,5%
Extended party cartels	4,4%	6,4%
Supported lists	3,6%	13,9%
Localized cartels	1,2%	3,0%
Independent lists	34,6%	42,6%
Total	12,3%	16,5%
Cramer's V	0,453***	0,408***

***p<.001; **p<.005; *p<.05

5.4.3 Majority formation

In the last power achievement momentum in municipal elections, a governing majority is formed based on the acquired council seats and a candidate-mayor is nominated. If one party or list was able to obtain a majority of the council seats, a single majority can be formed. If not, a coalition with two or more parties is required. To assess the political relevance of the different types of local candidate lists in this last phase, information is needed concerning their council position (whether or not part of the local government and mayor delivery). Yet, this information is not readily available in the electoral database of the Agency of Internal affairs and collecting this information is a time-consuming mission. As the focus of this research is on non-national candidate lists, the following part of the analysis concentrates on the different types of non-national lists excluding national lists.

Data concerning the position in council of the non-national lists after the municipal elections of 2006 was derived from a broader dataset developed by Ellen Ollslagers for her PhD-research on local coalition formation in Flanders (Ollslagers, E., 2013). The council position of non-national lists after the 2012 elections was collected from the official websites of the municipalities.

While the political relevance of independent lists significantly differed from the other types of non-national lists in the pre-electoral configuration (independent lists are more prevalent) and in the phases of vote-allocation and seat distribution (lower vote share and less representatives in council), the differences in governing relevance show a more complicated picture. It was established above that significantly more independent lists do not succeed to cross the representation threshold and consequently these lists are also significantly less involved in majority formation as illustrated in Table 5.9. In general, about one out of three of the non-national lists participate in local government (31,7% in 2006 and 32,7% in 2012). Independent candidate lists however are significantly less involved in local government with a share of about one out of four (26,1% in 2006 and 23,6% in 2012), while for the other list types this share hovers around 40%. A similar picture arises for the relative shares of lists that deliver the mayor in local government, although with less significant differences (as the number of observations is smaller).

Table 5.9: Share of non-national lists in local government

	2006		2012	
	government participation	mayor	government participation	mayor
Extended party lists	37,1%	20,0%	40,4%	23,1%
Extended party cartels	42,2%	24,4%	41,3%	26,1%
Supported lists	42,9%	35,7%	40,0%	25,0%
Localized cartels	34,9%	20,5%	40,3%	32,8%
Independent lists	26,1%	16,1%	23,6%	13,5%
Total	31,8%	19,7%	32,7%	20,8%
Cramer's V	0,284***	0,131	0,296***	0,179*

***p<.001; **p<.005; *p<.05

Remarkably however, these differences in governing relevance between independent candidate lists and the other non-national list types disappear if we restrict the analysis to those lists which have crossed the representation threshold (N = 327 in 2006, N= 341 in 2012).

The share of represented independent lists that are included in local government increases to a comparable figure as for the other list types (39,3% in 2006 and 41,9% in

2012). This is also the case for the share of represented independent lists that deliver the mayor (24,3% in 2006 and 27,6% in 2012) as summarized in table 5.10.

Table 5.10: Share of represented non-national lists in local government

	2006		2012	
	government participation	mayor	government participation	mayor
Extended party lists	38,2%	20,6%	46,7%	26,7%
Extended party cartels	44,2%	25,6%	42,2%	26,7%
Supported lists	44,4%	37,0%	46,4%	29,0%
Localized cartels	35,4%	20,7%	41,5%	33,8%
Independent lists	39,9%	24,6%	41,9%	23,9%
Total	39,5%	24,4%	43,4%	27,6%
Cramer's V	0,063	0,100	0,044	0,08

These findings suggest a dichotomy within the group of independent local lists. The average vote share of independent local lists is significantly lower than for the other subtypes and they are less likely to cross the representation threshold. However, once having crossed the representation threshold, the governing relevance of independent lists is quite similar to other non-national lists in terms of their chances to participate in the governing majority and in their ability to obtain the mayoralty.

5.5 CONCLUSION

The default dichotomy between local and national candidate lists in local elections prevents a comprehensive understanding of the internal variation of local candidate lists and of local politics more generally. In this chapter a practicable classification model was proposed based on the horizontal and vertical decisional autonomy of local candidate lists to conceptualize local lists beyond this traditional binary distinction and better understand their actual independence.

Applying this typology to the local political offer in Flanders revealed significant differences in the political relevance of the different list types, varying with the successive power achievement momentums related to local elections. In the pre-electoral constellation, national lists constitute a large majority of all local candidate lists in Flanders. Yet, a substantial amount of over 25% of the local candidate lists

concerns non-national candidate lists, which participate in municipal elections under a label that deviates from the national party label. Yet, these non-national lists can certainly not all be considered as independent occurrences as commonly assumed. Only about half of these non-national lists have no links to national parties and can thus be defined as independent. The other half concerns pseudo-national or pseudo-local lists as they do maintain explicit or implicit links to national or other local parties, though distance themselves from national parties by assuming a local or a localized name.

The electoral results of the independent local candidate lists - and consequently the political relevance of these lists in council - proved significantly lower than for other (national and non-national) list types (disregarding small national parties). Independent lists more often fail to obtain sufficient votes to surpass the electoral threshold and play along in the municipal council. It can therefore be concluded that independent lists have less electoral guarantees when entering the electoral arena. As the Belgian local electoral system is very permissive with hardly any financial or logistic thresholds to submit a candidate list, they easily enter the local electoral competition - even with low or uncertain electoral prospects - but they have more difficulties to establish themselves in the local legislative arena.

Pseudo-local and pseudo-national lists (including party cartels) on the other hand obtain significantly higher average vote shares than the traditional local party lists and have more representatives in council. Once past the representation threshold however, differences in political relevance between the different types of non-national lists evaporate. Although independent lists less often succeed to cross this threshold, still a considerable part does compete with traditional local parties at the top levels of local politics and play a highly relevant executive role in the final stage of local power achievement. We can therefore conclude that the gap between political relevance and political irrelevance is harder to bridge for independent local lists than for the other local candidate lists.

6 DECISIONAL AUTONOMY IN MOTION: PARTY CHANGE IN LOCAL CANDIDATE LISTS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, a practicable classification model has been proposed to differentiate local candidate lists based on their decisional autonomy. Eight ideal-types of local candidate lists have been identified, varying in their vertical (influence from national party centres) and horizontal (influence from other local actors) autonomy. Applying this classification model to the local offer in Flemish municipal elections revealed interesting cross-sectional insights on the distribution and the political relevance of the different types of local candidate lists in Flanders. This chapter approaches the decisional autonomy of local candidate lists from a longitudinal perspective and focuses on changes in the horizontal and vertical decisional autonomy.

Decisional autonomy has been operationalized as the occurrence / absence of implicit / explicit links to national / local political actors. The presence or absence of these links can be considered as the result of strategic decisions concerning alliances with local or national political actors and the name adopted to present the list to the electorate. These links can change from one election to another (or in between): existing links can be cut through, new links can be forged and explicit links can be made implicit or vice versa. More specifically, engaging in a local cartel list results in a decrease of the horizontal autonomy, while the abrogation of a cartel re-increases the decisional autonomy of cartel partners. Changes in the composition of local cartel lists (involving additional partners or eliminating old ones) can also alter the horizontal autonomy of the cartel partners involved. The vertical autonomy of local candidate lists increases by fully or partially dissociating from the national party level (localization), while it decreases by joining a national party (affiliation) or making implicit links explicit (nationalization).

Local candidate lists can thus move from one ideal-type in the DA-typology to another as their horizontal or vertical autonomy increases or decreases. Newly established candidate lists enter the DA-typology by deciding on potential alliances and on the label to face the electorate, while candidate lists can also disappear from the pre-electoral configuration and exit the typology.

This chapter analyses the motives and causal mechanisms behind these strategic changes in decisional autonomy and aims to comprehend the rationale of the different ideal-types of local candidate lists. In the following sections, I will firstly review some relevant theoretical insights on party change and elaborate a conceptual framework to analyse changes in the decisional autonomy of local candidate lists. Next, the adopted multiple case design is justified before discussing the changes in decisional autonomy of the selected cases and how these changes can be clarified based on the detailed accounts provided by the in-depth interviews.

6.2 ANALYSING PARTY CHANGE

To structure the qualitative analysis of changes in the decisional autonomy of local candidate lists, I will rely on some theoretical insights provided by party literature on party change and strategic party behaviour. Party change is a popular research field in political science although the precise nature of change is often left hanging in midair. Political parties are versatile organizations engaging in a variety of activities and party change therefore can relate to an equally diverse set of party characteristics. Harmel & Janda describe party change as: *'any variation, alternation or modification in how parties are organized, what human and material resources they can draw upon, what they stand for and what they do'* (Harmel & Janda, 1994). As this definition is not very practicable, they further suggest to focus empirical research on those changes that result from deliberate actions within the party.

Empirical research on party change generally focusses on the causal factors of change, often avoiding the issue of definition. Three academic approaches to party change can be distinguished (Harmel, 2002). The *lifecycle approach* considers party change as the result of a natural process of development. Parties are assumed to follow an analogous

course of life in which each life cycle phase is characterized by specific organizational appearances. The previously mentioned lifespan model of Pedersen is illustrative for this approach (Pedersen, 1982), as is Michels' famous iron law of oligarchy which claims that all political parties eventually and inevitably develop into oligarchic elite-controlled organizations (Michels, 1962). A second, *system-level approach* considers the organizational development of political parties mainly within a societal context. Party change is seen as a cumulative process in which parties conjointly adapt to changing societal circumstances. The evolution from elite- and mass parties to catch-all and cartel parties and the party-decline thesis result from this popular school of thought (Duverger, 1964; Katz & Mair, 1994; Kirchheimer, 1966). The *discrete change approach* to conclude, considers party change less as a clustered ensemble of changes but rather looks at concrete adaptations within individual parties. It favours a hybrid explanation, considering party change as the effect of a combination of external and internal factors: '*Both the environment and internal party politics produce important stimuli, which result in discrete organizational change only when relevant party actors allow them to do so*' (Harmel, 2002).

This latter tradition offers a valuable approach to study changes in the decisional autonomy of local candidate lists as these can equally be considered as intentional changes resulting from a combination of external environmental factors and internal circumstances. In the discrete change approach, the internal factors for party change mainly relate to changes in power relations within parties and the role of party leadership, factions and dominant coalitions (Belloni & Beller, 1978; Panebianco, 1988; Verstraete, 2003; Wilson, 1980). Wilson (1980) considers party leadership as the motor of party change. Party leaders analyse the environmental stimuli and decide on the appropriate organizational changes to better pursue the goals of the party. The internal factors thus interact with external stimuli which can be further subdivided in party-related external factors (electoral defeat, government participation) and non-party-related external factors (socio-economic changes, electoral law, party system changes) (Verstraete, 2003). Harmel and Janda (1994) consider external stimuli with direct relevance to the parties' primary goal as external 'chocks' which result in the most dramatic and broadest changes. Initially, these external chocks were mainly associated

with electoral performance assuming that electoral defeat could explain all party change (Janda, 1990). In their later works Harmel and Janda acknowledged that these external shocks could also relate to other goal priorities (Harmel & Janda, 1994).

This prominent role of party goals is also manifest in the rational choice school aiming to clarify competitive party behaviour. Since the pioneering work of Downs (1957), the rational choice perspective has entered political science assuming that party behaviour results from a rational cost-benefit assessment. This school has long distinguished between vote-, office- and policy-seeking parties depending on their main goal. Vote-seeking parties mainly aim to maximize electoral support; office-seeking parties aspire to maximize control over the private benefits of government participation; and policy-seeking parties seek to maximize their impact on policy decisions (Muller & Strom, 1999; Strom, 1990; Wollinetz, 2002). More recently, this rational choice approach has been criticized for its highly simplifying assumptions and its limited correspondence with political reality. It disregards the organizational complexity of political parties and the adopted static models of party behaviour ignore internal conflicts and institutional and contextual factors influencing party goals (Bartolini, 2002; Green & Shapiro, 1994; Strom, 1990). In reaction to these perceived flaws, neo-institutionalists have developed a 'soft' rational choice approach, adopting more plausible representations of the rationality of political actors and integrating contextual factors to analyse party behaviour (Aldrich, 1995; Montero & Gunther, 2002; Muller & Strom, 1999; Strom, 1990). Strom's (1990) unified model of competitive parties is especially illustrative in this adjusted rational choice tradition. She asserts that political parties pursue different goals simultaneously and considers the interrelations and trade-offs between vote-seeking, policy-seeking and office-seeking objectives. Moreover, she argues that these strategic goals can have instrumental or intrinsic purposes and that party leaders' behaviour is equally affected by organizational constraints, political institutions and situational determinants (Muller & Strom, 1999).

Golder (2009) adopted a similar soft rational choice approach to analyse the causes of cartel formation (at national level) and provides interesting clues for this research on changes in the horizontal decisional autonomy of local candidate lists. In her

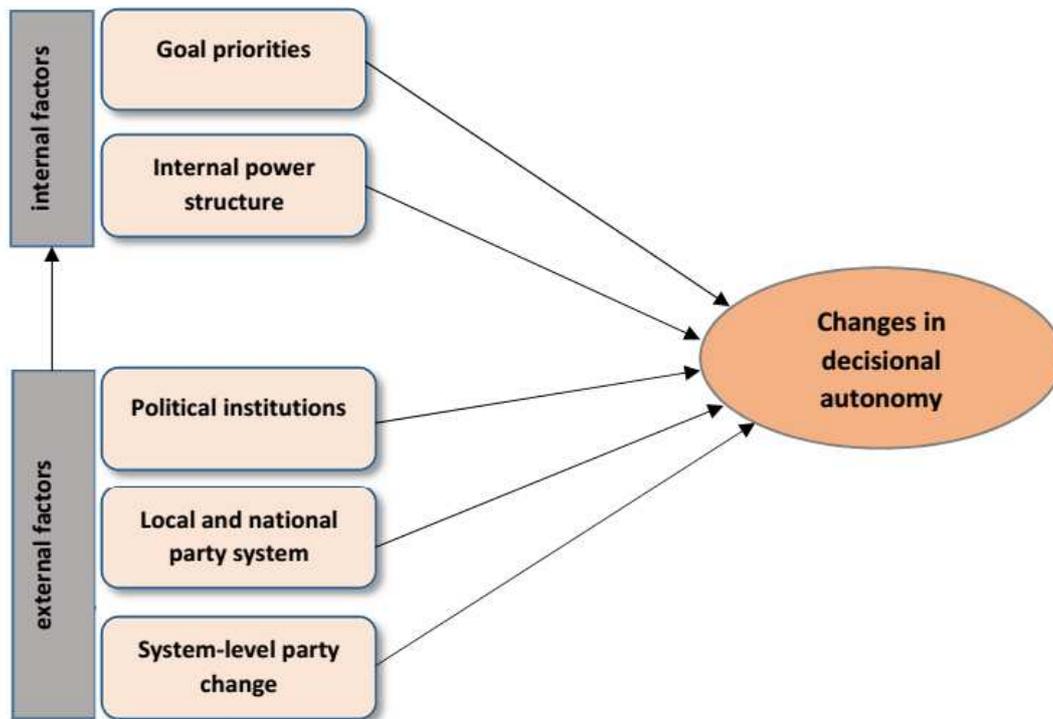
pioneering work on the topic, Golder argues that pre-electoral coalitions²⁴ are the result of a cost/benefit assessment relating to political parties' office-seeking and policy-seeking aspirations. Ideological proximity, expected size of the coalition (large but not too large) and relative size of the partners (similar in size) are found to have an important predictive value for national pre-electoral coalitions. Moreover, Golder established that pre-electoral coalition formation is more likely if the party system is ideologically polarized and if the electoral rules are disproportional (Golder, 2006). In a Belgian context, Verthé and Deschouwer (2011) similarly established that the principal motive for (local) parties to engage in a cartel list and renounce their autonomous character is their aim to participate in government. Additionally, small parties are found to form joint lists in order to cross the electoral (and representation) threshold and secure their survival. The (nearly-proportional) Imperiali system and the fractionalization of the party system are indicated as important incentives for cartel formation in Belgium (Verthé & Deschouwer, 2011).

An additional research strand in this strategic choice approach which is relevant to this analysis of local candidate lists concerns the emergence of new parties in established party systems (Cox, 1997; Hug, 2001; Tavits, 2006). The theory of strategic entry considers party emergence as the result of strategic decisions by party elites who aim to maximize their vote share, for the sake of influencing policy or for the spoils of office, or for both. These strategic decisions are influenced by the costs of entry, the benefits of office and the probability of receiving electoral support. The costs of entry are determined by political institutions, including the monetary costs to register a party and the electoral rules for seat distribution. The benefits of office relate to the monetary rewards and prestige associated with office functions, but also to the capability of office-holders to shape the policy which has been associated with the level of corporatism. Moreover, the probability of receiving electoral support (electability) depends on party system characteristics. The more crystalized an existing party system, the smaller the probability of electoral support for new parties (Tavits, 2006).

²⁴ Golder's concept of pre-electoral coalitions encloses a broader phenomenon of various pre-electoral cooperation strategies between political actors than only cartel lists (public promise to govern together, joint campaign, joint candidate list).

Combining these overlapping theoretical models of discrete party change and strategic party behaviour offers an analytical model to analyse changes in the decisional autonomy of local candidate lists as illustrated in Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1: Analytical model to study changes in decisional autonomy of local candidate lists



It can be assumed that changes in the decisional autonomy of local candidate lists are equally influenced by a combination of internal and external factors and the following qualitative analysis will assess the role of goal priorities, internal powers structures, political institutions, local and national party system changes and system-level party changes. We can expect local candidate lists to also care for votes, policy and office in varying ratios and that these goal priorities are a driving force for the strategic decisions concerning alliances with local or national political actors and the adopted list name. Moreover, we assume that organizational features regarding internal power structures and the role of party leaders are relevant. As for national political parties, external factors concerning political institutions and situational determinants could also influence the political opportunity structure of local candidate lists. Local elections are often thought of as second-order elections as the strategic decisions of local parties (and voters) are often influenced by the national political context (Reif & Schmitt, 1980; Steyvers & Kjaer, 2014). Hence, both local and national party system

characteristics could be influencing the political opportunity structure for local candidate lists. Moreover, we have theoretically associated the occurrence of non-national lists with system-level changes faced by contemporary parties and thus presume that the decisional autonomy of local candidate lists are also influenced by these national party evolutions, characterized by inter-party collusion, the interpenetration of parties and the state, and the dealignment of the public from party politics.

Based on in-depth elite interviews with list headers of non-national lists, I will assess the role of these different internal and external factors and reveal the rationale of the different types of non-national lists and the causal mechanisms at play.

6.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN

A qualitative multiple case study is considered the most appropriate method to examine the strategic choices of local candidate lists and the causal mechanisms behind changes in decisional autonomy. Case study research is a popular method in political science. Case studies allow an in-depth focus on a single or a small number of 'cases' and generate context-dependent knowledge on a wide range of topics. Gerring defines a case study as '*an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units*' (Gerring, 2004). Case studies are especially valuable to study complex social phenomena and are considered most appropriate to answer 'how?' or 'why?' questions about a contemporary set of events on which the investigator has little or no control (Yin, 1994). A distinction is often made between single and multiple case designs. A single case study provides detailed and in-depth understanding of one case - which is especially advisable for critical, extreme or unique cases - while multiple case designs not only allow for within-case analyses, but also across-case analyses which can add confidence to the findings.

Although case studies play an important role across different fields in social science, they have often been criticized for they would lack scientific rigor and do not allow for 'generalization'. Flyvbjerg (2011) argues that these reproaches are based on misunderstandings about case study research relating to theory, reliability and validity, as depicted in figure 6.2.

Figure 6.2: Five misunderstandings about case study research (Flyvbjerg, 2011, p. 521)

Misunderstanding 1: General, theoretical (context-independent) knowledge is more valuable than concrete, practical (context-dependent) knowledge.
Misunderstanding 2: One cannot generalize on the basis of an individual case; therefore, the case study cannot contribute to scientific development.
Misunderstanding 3: The case study is most useful for generating hypotheses; that is, in the first stage of a total research process, whereas other methods are more suitable for hypotheses testing and theory building.
Misunderstanding 4: The case study contains a bias toward verification, that is, a tendency to confirm the researcher's preconceived notions.
Misunderstanding 5: It is often difficult to summarize and develop general propositions and theories on the basis of specific case studies.

Flyvbjerg (2011) discusses and corrects each of these misunderstandings and demonstrates the added value of concrete case knowledge. He points to the generalizability by 'force of example' or by transferability as opposed to statistical generalizability. The latter involves inferences on data extracted from a representative statistical sample to the population from which the sample was drawn, while qualitative researches are rather interested in analytical generalization to contribute to theory building.

Case study research seems especially appropriate to analyse processes of change as argued by Fisher: *'the key to how (policy) change comes about has to be grounded in detailed contextual examination of the circumstances at play in specific cases. For this purpose quantitative methods have to take a back seat to qualitative research'* (Paredis, 2013). Therefore, a multiple case study design is most appropriate to analyse changes in the decisional autonomy of non-national candidate lists. By contrasting and comparing multiple cases, a detailed and contextual examination of the different internal and external factors influencing the changes in the decisional autonomy of non-national lists is possible.

Methodological guidelines for case-selection recommend a sample size close to data-saturation or the point where additional data no longer generates additional theoretical insights (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). In this perspective, our sample contains 22 non-national lists, based on a theory-driven purposive sampling method (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As our main aim is to clarify the rationales behind the different types of non-national lists, horizontal and vertical decisional autonomy

served as theoretical selection criteria. The selected cases are spread across the different ideal-types as defined in the DA-typology.

The data collection on these cases is based on elite interviews. For each selected case the most suited political leader was identified to provide us with insightful information concerning the competitive behaviour of the list. This person was invited for a face-to-face, semi-structured interview. It should be mentioned that this actor-centred approach entails a risk of reductionist fallacy as the leaders of these list provide their personal interpretation of the functional behaviour of their list. Yet, it can be assumed that the leading candidates have a clear and comprehensive understanding of the rationales and strategic choices of the lists.

Considering the cyclical nature of qualitative research, two independent series of data collection occurred, enabling to redirect data collection based on preliminary findings. A first wave of interviews took place by the end of 2010 with a focus on the 2006 municipal elections. The second phase of data collection took place by the end of 2012 focusing more on the 2012 local elections.

These in-depth elite-interviews provided ‘thick descriptions’ concerning the origins, evolutions and rationales of the selected cases and allowed a longitudinal analysis with a focus on changes in their decisional autonomy. All interviews were transcribed and the software program NVivo proved a helpful tool to reduce, organize and analyse this enormous amount of qualitative data. The analysis of the data was structured by the analytical model presented above.

6.4 CHANGES IN DECISIONAL AUTONOMY

The elite-interviews with list headers of a selection of non-national lists in Flanders allowed to map the movements of the selected cases in the DA-typology. This descriptive analysis confirms that the decisional autonomy of local candidate lists is a mutable feature. Table 6.1 summarizes how the cases have moved in the DA-typology across the three latest elections. The established changes are subdivided into three categories: 1) changes in horizontal autonomy distinguishing between cartel formation, cartel abrogation and changes in the cartel composition; 2) changes in vertical

autonomy with a distinction between affiliation with a national party, nationalization (making implicit links more explicit) and localization (making explicit links more implicit); and 3) changes in the mere presence in the party system (entry or exit).

Four analysed cases have entered the local party system during the period examined, while three cases disappeared from the local political arena. The latter three all concern independent candidate list. On the vertical level, three of the 22 cases were founded as independent lists and decided to affiliate with a national party²⁵. Three others made the already existing implicit links to the national party level more explicit, reinforcing the links with the national party level and resulting in a decreased decisional autonomy. In the opposite direction on this vertical dimension, six cases decided to distance themselves from the national party level and increase their vertical decisional autonomy by adopting a local(ized) name. On the horizontal level, ten cases in the sample decided to engage in a cartel list, thus decreasing their horizontal autonomy. Only one cartel was closed down, while in several other cases the composition of the cartel changed between the different electoral periods, including new partners or shedding old ones.

²⁵ One case affiliated with the national green party, while the other two affiliated with the Flemish-nationalist party N-VA

Table 6.1: Established changes in the decisional autonomy of the analysed cases

	type of candidate list			change in decisional autonomy		
	2000	2006	2012	presence	horizontal	vertical
case 1	independent local list	independent local list	national party list	/	/	affiliation
case 2	independent local list	independent local list	independent local list	entry	/	/
case 3	independent local list	independent local list	independent local list	/	/	/
case 4	localized cartel	localized cartel	national party list	/	cartel formation, cartel abrogation	affiliation
case 5	independent local list	independent local list	/	exit	/	/
case 6	independent local list	independent local list	extended party cartel	/	cartel formation	affiliation
case 7	national party cartel	extended party cartel	extended party cartel	/	cartel formation, cartel change	localization
case 8	independent local list	independent local list	/	exit	/	/
case 9	/	independent local list	/	entry and exit	/	/
case 10	extended national list	extended national list	supported local list	/	/	localization
case 11	national party list	national party list	national party cartel	/	cartel formation	/
case 12	localized cartel	localized cartel	localized cartel	/	cartel formation, cartel change	/
case 13	national party list	supported local list	extended party cartel	/	cartel formation	localization
case 14	national party list	supported local list	supported local list	/	/	localization
case 15	independent list	extended party cartel	extended party cartel	/	cartel formation + cartel change	/
case 16	/	independent local list	independent local list	entry	/	/
case 17	independent local list	independent local list	extended party cartel	entry	cartel formation	/
case 18	national party list	localized cartel	localized cartel	/	cartel formation + cartel change	localization
case 19	supported list	supported list	national party list	/	/	nationalization
case 20	national party list	extended national list	national party list	/	/	localization + nationalization
case 21	supported local list	supported local list	supported local list	/	/	/
case 22	localized cartel	localized cartel	extended party cartel	/	cartel formation+ cartel change	nationalization

These findings confirm that decisional autonomy is a fluid concept as the analysed cases frequently move from one ideal-type in the DA-typology to another. The following section aims to reveal the rationale behind these horizontal and vertical changes in the decisional autonomy by analysing the role of internal and external factors in these changes.

6.5 INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FACTORS CAUSING CHANGE IN DECISIONAL AUTONOMY

To clarify the established changes in the decisional autonomy of the cases, I will successively assess the role of goal priorities, internal power structure, political institutions, local and national party system characteristics and system-level party changes.

6.5.1 Goal priorities

The interviews clearly show that any change in the decisional autonomy of the cases is primarily motivated by vote-seeking ambitions. Local candidate lists are essentially a device to participate in municipal elections and gather votes. The respondents report in detail about their efforts to gain as many votes as possible and have representatives elected in council. In this quest for votes, their first aim is to compose a full²⁶, wide-ranging and complementary candidate list. Especially candidates with a high electoral profile are considered a valuable asset: *'You don't need to be the smartest guy in town, but you need to have electoral capacity'* (case 3). Only one (deviant) case in the sample (case 9) does not follow this vote-maximizing logic as it concerns a one-man's list with only one candidate.

Composing such a full candidate list is perceived as a challenging mission and several cases report severe difficulties to attract adequate candidates. Changes in the horizontal and vertical decisional autonomy of the cases often result from these difficulties, aiming to attract extra candidates with a high electoral profile (and the

²⁶ The maximum amount of candidates on a local candidate list equals the amount of councillors to be elected (dependent on the size of the municipality). No minimum of candidates is stipulated, so local candidate lists can contain between one candidate and the maximum number of candidates.

additional votes these candidates represent). Several lists in the sample spring from national party branches that have decided to open up their local party list and involve independent candidates from outside the party to cope with a lack of adequate candidates: *'It is not that easy to appeal to people, so we decided to open up to independents because we needed people who are broad-minded, and who are not necessarily tied to a national party'* (case 10). These lists have adopted a local(ized) name to reflect this openness to independent candidates. Some have added a local reference to the national party label (resulting in extended party lists), while others have abandoned the national label and adopted a local name, though maintaining the links to the national party (resulting in supported lists). These increases in vertical decisional autonomy thus result from the perceived scarcity of party candidates and the electoral strategy to involve independent candidates to pursue the vote-seeking ambitions of the list.

A different strategy to cope with recruitment problems and maximize the vote share is to engage in a local cartel list. This strategy decreases the horizontal autonomy of the individual cartel partners but also reduces the amount of candidates required to compose a full list. Joining recruitment forces allows the cartel partners to put forward their strongest candidates and maximize the electoral capacity of the list: *'Honestly, 23 names on a list is no longer possible. That's the advantage of forming a list with three parties and some independents [...]. You can all forward your best people and come to a balanced mix to score with as a team'* (case 12). Hence, local cartel formation can equally be considered as an electoral strategy resulting from the vote-seeking ambitions of the local political actors involved and the limited supply of candidates

The vote-maximizing ambition of the cases - and the strategic choices to increase the electoral potential of the lists - are not so much a goal in itself, but an important lever for other policy- and office-related objectives. Most cases aim to maximize their votes in order to have representatives elected in council and influence local policy. The respondents agree that local policy decisions are very specific and managerial in nature and they stress the importance of the personal characteristics of executive politicians rather than their ideological affiliation to shape local policy: *'Electoral programs don't differ a lot from one another, merely different accents, or maybe a slightly different*

interpretation. In fact, local politics is about persons' (case 4). Consequently, policy-seeking goals are closely related to office-seeking goals. Moreover, the nature of these office-seeking goals seems to evolve over time. Several cases report that their initial office-seeking ambitions were relatively low. Their first aim was to have some representatives elected in council and disrupt the power of the established dominant party(ies). Especially when confronted with an alleged undemocratic (absolute) majority²⁷, the initial objective of several non-national lists in the sample was to attract sufficient votes to break the long-standing majority (mostly CD&V) and offer a democratic alternative to the citizens, without necessarily aspiring government participation themselves: *'We felt that there was more and more need to break the enduring CVP-bastion [...]. Being in power for so many years makes power self-evident and decisions are made without properly listening to arguments'* (case 17). However, once having representatives elected in council, several cases experienced that a mere legislative role in opposition is not very rewarding. Policy initiative in Flanders is dominated by the executive and generally there is a strongly anchored divide between majority and opposition infused by party discipline. Consequently, policy influence from the opposition benches is perceived as confined and government participation becomes increasingly attractive. Government participation is also increasingly associated with access to other valuable political resources (financial resources, information, communication channels). Hence, initial power-breaking goals develop into more explicit office-seeking goals: *'What can you do with 2 or 3 seats? Nothing according to me, or you should come in a balancing position. [...]. So, whereas we never had the ambition in the past to participate in a majority, I am convinced we should prioritize that at this moment'* (case 17). Furthermore, incumbency further intensifies these office-seeking goals. Once having experienced the benefits of government participation, sustaining this privileged executive position becomes more central: *'Afterwards [after having participated in government] I realized that it is important to have power, otherwise you can't realize much'* (case 6).

²⁷ In Flanders the Christian-democratic party CVP traditionally stood very strong in local politics, with many absolute majorities.

We can conclude that goals priorities are a key determinant in changes in the decisional autonomy of local candidate lists. The strategic decisions influencing the decisional autonomy of the lists are motivated by vote-seeking ambitions, which are instrumental to interlinked policy- and office-seeking objectives. Moreover, the office-seeking ambitions seem to evolve from power-breaking, to office-taking and office-holding.

6.5.2 Internal power structure

The analysis confirms the crucial role of list leaders. These list leaders evaluate the political context and estimate the consequences of different strategic options for the objectives of the list. Their strategic decisions are strongly influenced by personal preferences. Changes in the decisional autonomy of the analysed cases often result from leadership changes. In five cases, the changes resulted from a generational turnover in the party elite as exemplified in case 13: *'there was a new wind [in a former cartel partner]: a new board, a new president, and they decided not to continue the cartel'*.

Yet, these party leaders do not decide free and autonomously but have to take account of the inclinations of other members or activists of the list to safeguard their common goals. If the strategy preferred by the list leaders is in conflict with sub-group preferences or other (personal) ambitions within the group, internal resistance might hamper the intended changes. Cartel formation for example implies arrangements concerning the distribution of candidate positions on the list and of any executive mandates (in case of government participation). Several cases reported internal discussions concerning these arrangements: *'All of a sudden, we were forming a cartel and so there was a great shift (on the list). I was promised a specific position, and I had to drop only one place, but there was someone else who had to give in six places, so they really had some explanation to do'* (case 7). How this internal resistance is dealt with and how it affects the intended changes in decisional autonomy depends on the leadership style and the decisional culture of the list. The analysis suggests a clear distinction between democratically organized candidate lists with transparent decision-making process and commitment to support-building within the group, while

other cases show a more authoritarian culture in which the party elite decides autonomously on strategic choices.

The resistance to intended changes in the decisional autonomy of local candidate lists can also emanate from the national mother party who might resent the preferred strategy in view of other national objectives. Several respondents stated for example that the N-VA strongly discouraged its local branches in 2012 to form local cartels in their aim to develop autonomous political anchorage at local level. Yet two cartel lists in the sample did involve a local N-VA branch. Consequently also national resistance can be overcome by strong and influential local leaders.

The data suggest an additional organizational constraint which influences the strategic decisions of the list leaders. Maintaining an active party organization requires adequate financial resources, but also activist engagement. The lack of these essential resources also proves an important internal organizational influencing the changes in decisional autonomy, especially for independent candidate lists. Several independent cases in the sample report difficulties to uphold their political activities and compete with traditional parties in the local party system. Two cases (without representatives in council) did not see another option than to cease their political activities and disappear from the local political arena in 2012 (case 5 and case 8). Another independent list decided to affiliate with the green party to cope with this experienced lack of resources: *'A local party means hard work. You have to write statutes, generate revenues, write flyers and booklets.... We joined the green party because of a lack of manpower and insufficient influx of younger people to uphold our political activities. It's a pure necessity'* (case 6).

6.5.3 Political institutions

After elections, council seats are distributed according to the Imperiali quota, which slightly favours bigger parties or constellations and installs a factual electoral threshold, according to the size of the municipality. The obtained number of council seats is a key consideration in local coalition formation (Olislagers & Steyvers, 2015) and accordingly the Imperiali-quota stimulates local political actors with high office-seeking ambitions to join forces which increases the chances for government participation: *'If we wouldn't*

have formed a cartel, we might have obtained maybe five seats, or four. Then we could have sit by and watch how things went around here, but now we will be in power for 18 years' (case 12).

The same institutional arrangement also encourages smaller actors – with less office-seeking ambitions - to form a cartel list as this offers them more certainty to surpass the implicit electoral threshold: *'Simply because of the electoral system we'd better join forces, because it increases our chances of having representatives' elected* (case 4). Furthermore, the local electoral system in Flanders is highly permissive in terms of candidacy and the costs for submitting a candidate list are very low. Individual vote-seeking, office-seeking or policy-seeking ambitions therefore easily result in the establishment of an (independent) local candidate lists.

6.5.4 Local and national party system characteristics

The data also demonstrate that both local and national party system characteristics equally influence the decisional autonomy of the analysed local candidate lists. At local level, the increased fractionalization of local party systems has aggravated the problems to attract candidates. The more candidate lists compete in the elections, the higher the competition for adequate candidates: *'We always had two parties competing in elections, while there are now four lists coming up and we all fish in the same pond'* (case 10). The fractionalization of the party system thus incites local party leaders to consider alternative strategies to cope with the perceived scarcity of candidates (involving independent candidates or engaging in joint candidate lists).

These strategic decisions concerning the decisional autonomy of the candidate lists are not only influenced by the number of parties/lists in the local party system, but also by the internal power relations between them. The competitive position of local lists in the local party system determines the attractiveness for potential candidates. Small candidate lists in opposition are deemed less attractive than governing lists for *'nobody likes to identify with a party in the opposition'* (case 23). Smaller lists therefore experience more problems to find adequate candidates. They often need to settle for candidates with limited electoral capacity (often friends and relatives). Successful lists experience less problems to attract candidates as they have more *'positions'* to

distribute, but still even the most successful lists are constantly in search for notorious candidates to further increase the electoral profile of the list.

Moreover, the electoral potential of competing lists in the local party system proves an important argument in cartel considerations. In case of a strong opponent, a joint list can increase the competitive position and the odds of government participation, while in case of a weak and fractionalized contenders, autonomous government participation becomes more likely. Case 11 for example has been a very successful governing list since years. Yet, the hot breath of an increasingly successful competing list, incited the party leader to form a cartel list in 2012: *'6 years ago, the (other) cartel had exactly 2 votes less than our CD&V list, so we were well matched. We therefore sought reinforcement to remain the largest party'* (case 11). Also for smaller lists in opposition, the strength of the competition is considered when deliberating cartel formation. A fractionalized opposition is argued to reinforce a strong opponent, while cooperation increases the odds of small groups to play a more prominent role in council: *'If we would participate in elections separately, we would each have about two seats in council and the CD&V-supremacy would continue'* (case 13).

While the ideological proximity of parties has an important predictive value for national cartel formation (Golder, 2006), our data suggest that ideological proximity of potential cartel partners in the local party system plays a more confined role in cartel formation at local level. National party cleavages are considered of limited relevance for local politics and seem not not decisive in local cartel formation: *'What is left, what is right? [...]. On the ideological level, there are issues on which we [cartel partners] do not really match, but that rather concerns national politics. Local politics is really focused on what's happening in my neighbourhood, in my street'* (case 7). Instead, personal proximity and past cooperation experiences are considered far more pivotal as stated decisively by a party cartel in our sample: *'If you don't get along with the persons, you obviously cannot form a cartel'* (case 11).

In addition to these current features of the local party system, historical features equally influence the vertical decisional autonomy of local candidate lists. Municipalities are often associated with a specific party-political tradition and these traditional party affiliations affect the perceived benefits of explicit and implicit links

to a national party. Several respondents argue that confronting the voter with a national party label that differs from this local tradition would impair the electoral potential of the list. The national party label is perceived as an electoral disadvantage in these situations and the respondents prefer to conceal the links to that party by adopting a local name. *'We are a liberal mark in a Christian-democrat bastion [...]. If I would contest as an Open VLD-list in that bastion, we would risk losing votes'* (case 22).

The changes in the decisional autonomy of local candidate lists are also influenced by changes in the national party system. The power relations between national parties trickle down to the local level and incite local party leaders to capitalize national successes or distance themselves from national defeats. The evolution of the Flemish-nationalist party is illustrative in this matter. The former Volksunie has degenerated in the nineties and eventually moulded into two new parties (SPIRIT and N-VA). Several cases in the sample are historically links to the Volksunie but have decided to cut all links with that national party when it was waning as they did not want to be associated with the internal problems (case 1, case 4, and case 15). These local groups often continued their political activities at local level as independent lists. With the recent national success of the N-VA these lists retighten the links with the national party for the assumed electoral benefits: *'Our biggest strength today is the brand N-VA, so we should play that off'²⁸* (case 4). Two of these cases with roots in the Volksunie transformed into a local branch of the N-VA, while another lost some activists to a newly founded local N-VA branch, and joined a cartel list with this group. Two more cases with less clear roots in the Volksunie equally explicitly engaged in a cartel with the local N-VA branch, hoping to surf on the same wave of success (case 22 and 17).

6.5.5 System-level party change

The interviews show mixed results on the role of system-level party changes in the strategic decisions affecting the decisional autonomy of local candidate lists. The changes in the decisional autonomy of local candidate lists generally result from the ambition to maximize the electoral potential of the list and a perceived lack of

²⁸ The Flemish-Nationalist party N-VA experienced enormous electoral successes in the past years and has grown from a small party to the biggest party in parliament.

adequate candidates. This limited availability of candidates can be linked to the partisan dealignment of the electorate. Several respondents indeed argue that party politics has lost its appeal and that potential candidates are reluctant to stand for elections: *'It is not easy to convince candidates, politics is no longer a hot item'* (case 10). Electoral strategies to cope with this lack of candidates (localizing a party list or engaging in a local cartel list) could thus be considered as a result of this dealignment tendency. While citizens turn away from national party politics, local parties adapt to this situation and implement alternative strategies – resulting in non-national lists - to maintain their local political functions. These non-national lists might thus be considered as a local response to the decreased appeal of political parties, illustrating the adaptive character of political parties at local level rather than their demise. On the other hand, the dealignment of the citizens appears quite selective. We have argued above that the perceived scarcity of candidates and the preferred electoral strategy is strongly influenced by the competitive position of political parties in the local and national party system. Several respondents indicate that specific (and especially 'winning') party labels maintain their substantial appeal to both voters and candidates.

National party evolutions are also characterized by the collusion between parties and the demise of ideological differences between traditional parties. The local cartel lists between parties from different ideological affiliation seems to substantiate this interparty collusion at local level. Several respondents have argued that atypical local cartels are possible because local electoral programs hardly differ from one another. Yet, these similarities in local policy preferences might rather be attributable to the specificity and the personal character of local politics than to the ideological convergence between the parties: *'[local policy] is not about what you want and what the other wants, it's about collecting the right people to implement it'* (case 4). The local political context thus seems less relevant to assess intraparty collusion.

The interviews are also inconclusive on the stratarchical imperative associated with the cartelization tendency. Several cases demonstrate a considerable autonomy of local party branches to interpret the local political situation and tune their electoral strategies to respond to local specificities, resulting in changes in the decisional autonomy. Some respondents indicate that these decisions are taken without much

intervention of the national party level, yet other respondents indicate that the national party remains closely involved in the strategic decisions at local level. The influence of national party centres in these local decisions seems to depend on the authority of the local party elite in the national party. Further research is needed to reveal the precise nature of the inter-level relationships between local party branches and their national mother party.

6.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has focused on decisional autonomy as a fluid characteristic of local candidate lists to uncover the rationale of the different types of non-national lists. The in-depth interviews with list headers of the selected cases revealed that non-national lists generally result from vote-seeking ambitions. In their quest for votes, the list leaders seek *'the path of least resistance'* to maximize the vote share of the list in order to achieve other office- or policy-related objectives. The list leaders are identified as a key internal factor influencing the decisional autonomy of local candidate lists. They interpret the political situation and consider internal and external factors to decide on the most appropriate electoral strategies to pursue their goals. Internal resistance and inadequate resources can represent important internal constraints to adopt the preferred strategy. The style of the list leaders and their capacity to deal with these constraints and build internal support for their preferred strategies is a determinative internal factor in the decisional autonomy of local candidate lists.

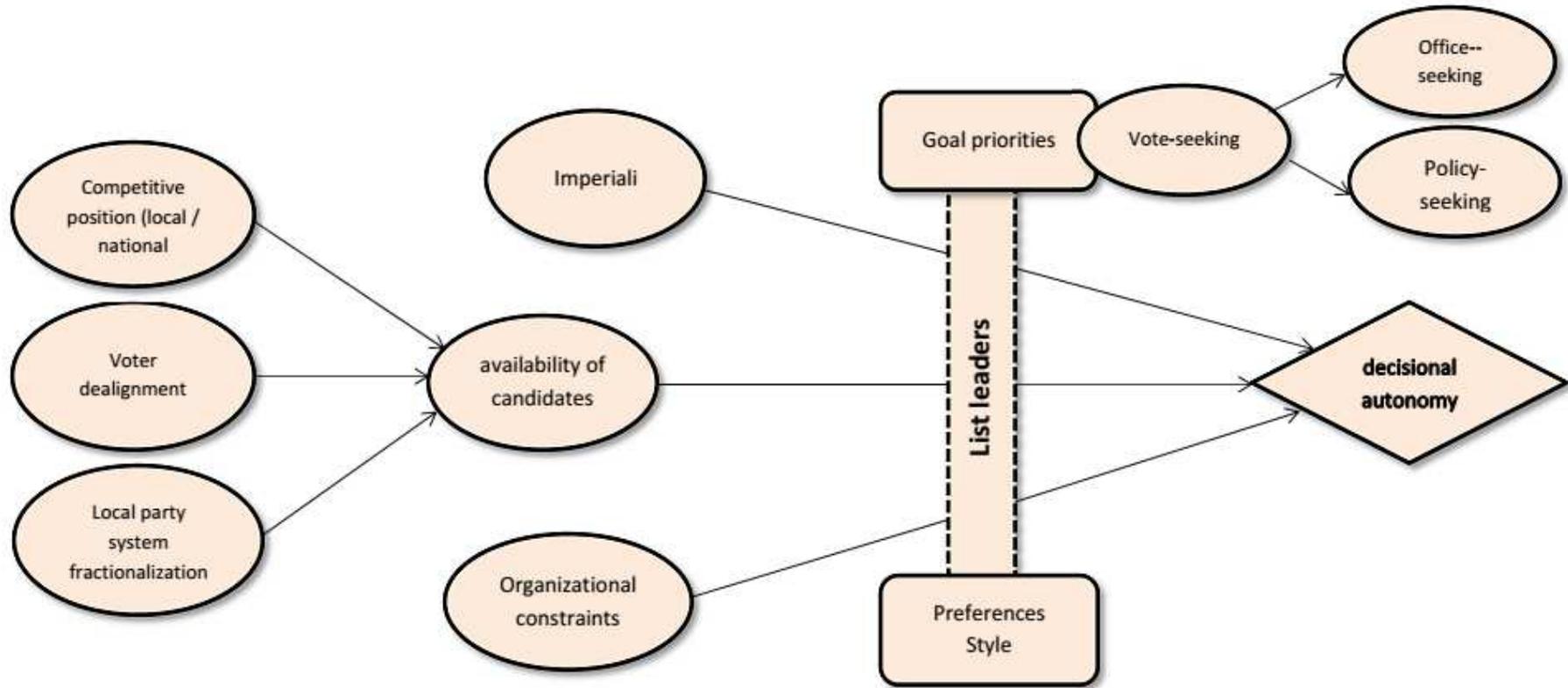
In their vote-seeking ambition, local list leaders are often confronted with a limited availability of adequate candidates to compose a candidate list with high electoral potential. This is partly attributed to system-level changes of political parties and the general dealignment of the voters, but also by other local and national party system characteristics. As the public turns away from political parties, less citizens are found prepared to stand for (municipal) elections. Yet, the attractiveness of specific candidate lists to potential candidates (and voters) seems highly influenced by the competitive position of the associated party in the national party system and the competitive position of the local list in the local party system. Local candidate lists that are associated with electoral success (locally or nationally) face far less problems to

appeal to candidates than less successful lists. Moreover, the fractionalization of the local party system also influences the availability of candidates as the competition among parties for the available candidates increases if more candidate lists enter the electoral arena.

To increase the electoral potential of the list in this context of limited availability of candidates, local list leaders can decide to alter the decisional autonomy of their list by involving independent candidates, engaging in a cartel list or modifying the list name. The Imperiali quota for seat distribution are an important additional institutional stimulus for cartel formation as it benefits the office-seeking goals of the list leaders.

Figure 6.3 illustrates the causal mechanisms - and the interrelations between these internal and external factors - resulting in changes in the decisional autonomy of local candidate lists. While Harmel has previously argued that electoral defeat is the mother of all change (Harmel, 2002), our analysis suggests that electoral hunger is the mother of changes in the decisional autonomy of local candidate lists and party leaders function as main filter by making sense of several internal and external factors and relating these to their electoral hunger.

Figure 6.3 Internal and external factors causing changes in decisional autonomy



7 FIFTY SHADES OF ROKKAN? RECONCEIVING LOCAL PARTY SYSTEM NATIONALIZATION IN BELGIUM

This chapter is based on a paper written in collaboration with Prof. Dr. Steyvers and presented at the 2015 ECPR General Conference (Montreal).

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter considers the implications of the refined conceptualization of non-national candidate lists for our insights on local party system nationalization. In one of the main strands in the colligated literature, nationalization is conceived as the uniform end state of an ongoing party politicization process at the local level. The Norwegian comparativist Stein Rokkan (1966) was among the forbearers of this thesis explicitly associating it with the advancing of modernization. However, the enduring presence and success of a range of non-national phenomena at the local level serves as a more recently emphasized empirical counterfactual to this teleology. We have argued for a more fine-grained approach to the default local-national dichotomy by assessing the vertical autonomy of the parts comprising the system invoking the subtypes of national, pseudo-national, pseudo-local and independent local lists. Applying this classification model to all lists partaking in the last two rounds of local elections in Flanders demonstrated the municipal scene is predominated by lists at least having implicit links with a national party. This refines previous conclusions accentuating the imprint of such parties on the local soil with an array of non-national forces maintaining relevance. This chapter aims to develop, apply and assess in an explorative manner a more close-knit measure of local party system nationalization based on the vertical decisional autonomy of local candidate lists. We will first situate the object of inquiry into the study of party systems and then propose a refined index to describe party system nationalization in Flanders. Moreover, we will study the explanatory power of different categories of social and political factors for variation in this index.

7.2 LOCAL PARTY SYSTEM NATIONALIZATION: TOWARDS A RECONCEPTUALIZATION

7.2.1 Reassessing Iconic Focus and Locus in Party System Nationalization

In the multilevel approach of party systems, nationalization has emerged as a key theorem. Its basic tenet holds that political differences are disappearing between the various geographic units of a nation (Lago & Montero, 2014). The extent to which this is the case in the configuration of party systems has become central herein. Most of this research has been concerned with convergence in the aggregate composition of the partisan offer and the distribution of partisan success in elections over time and across space. Increasingly refined yardsticks have eventually spurned mixed empirical results. Whereas some have discerned a general trends towards party system nationalization, other accounts are more sceptical or emphasize its contingency (Caramani, 2004; Morgenstern & Swindle, 2007)

However, these efforts predominantly focus on the state-wide level and actually address the territorial homogeneity of *national* party systems ('local' referring to the constituency level). To overcome this bias and obtain a more fine-grained vista, scholars have pleaded a reversed outlook (Mustillo & Mustillo, 2012). This would include taking *local* party systems as an alternative frame of reference for which relatively scarce evidence on longitudinal and cross-sectional nationalization is indeed available. Therein, its emergence over time is often conceived as indicating a process of party politicization. This a is central element in the work of Rokkan (Rokkan, 1966) associated with societal modernization implying '[...] *the breakdown of the traditional systems of local rule through the entry of nationally organized parties into municipal elections*'. Although this suggests an almost teleological take-over of local politics by national political parties, in many contexts traditional nonpartisan elements continue to hold local ground (Aars & Ringkjøb, 2005; Back, 2003; Kjaer & Elklit, 2010b). Apart from remaining differences in the territorial anchorage of national political parties, this is due to the enduring presence and success of various types of non-national candidate lists in local polities (Copus et al., 2012).

The cross-sectional approach then refers to the extent to which the national party political presence (the degree to which all state-wide parties are competing) and performance (the grade of territorial homogeneity of their electoral results) at a given local election are geographically alike (Thorlakson, 2006). In line with most longitudinal findings, the sustaining and contingent divergence in local party system nationalization is often emphasized. Based on a discrete numerical measure to assess multilevel partisan resemblance Kjær & Elklit (Kjaer & Elklit, 2010) confirmed the positive effect of municipal size on nationalization in the Danish context whereas comparable evidence for Austria (Ennser & Hansen, 2013) highlighted the additional explanatory value of the (regional) degree of party organization.

Similar tendencies appear in Belgium. In the long run and accelerated by municipal amalgamations in the 1970s, national parties effectively superseded merely place-bound phenomena in local elections. Generally, a straightforward and increasing nationalization cannot be discerned however. The presence, success and shifts of and between parties are not homogenous for the whole country. Local results largely follow similar evolutions as those for national elections but dissimilarities continue to characterize the geographical division of party systems (Wille & Deschouwer, 2007). Very much alike, supply-sided evidence shows the local party field is infused with national candidate-lists. Nevertheless, non-national counterparts have maintained their presence stemming in mixed or predominantly national local party systems in at least 70% of all municipalities (Steyvers et al., 2008).

This traditional approach is generally based on the basic nominal distinction between national lists (acknowledged local chapters of nationally renowned parties) and their local counterparts (all other non-national local candidate lists). Yet we have argued above that this simplified juxtaposition does not correspond to political reality and is incomprehensive in disregarding the polymorphous linkages between local and national party levels. An alternative taxonomy has been proposed, based on the horizontal and vertical decisional autonomy of local candidate lists (cfr. chapter five). As this chapter focusses on the vertical autonomy of local candidate lists, we will concentrate on the distinction between 1) *national*; 2) *pseudo-national*; 3) *pseudo-local* and 4) *independent local list* including their counterparts with a curtailed degree of

horizontal autonomy in cartel lists. Table 7.1 resumes the results of applying this fourfold typology to all lists participating in the last two rounds of local elections (2006 and 2012) in the 308 municipalities in Flanders (N = 1458 and 1645)

Table 7.1: Distribution of local candidate list subtypes according to the vertical autonomy

Subtype list	2006		2012	
	%	N	%	N
National	72,4	1056	72,6	1200
Pseudo-national	5,5	80	6,0	99
Pseudo-local	7,6	111	8,8	146
Independent local	14,5	211	12,6	209
Total	100	1458	100	1645

These figures confirm the predominance of national lists on the local electoral scene. A bit more than 72% are nominally recognizable place-bound chapters of national political parties. This share is constant in both rounds of elections. The remaining part of a bit less than 28% thus electioneers under a (partially) local denominator. Almost half of the latter have either partially explicit or implicit links with a national party. Pseudo-local lists are then more prevalent than their pseudo-national counterparts. A small majority of non-national local candidate lists can be termed as genuinely independent. In the most recent local elections these proportions have remained largely constant. It can be noted that the share of independent local lists has decreased mainly to the benefit of their pseudo-national counterparts. Overall, more than 85% of all candidate lists thus have links with national parties constricting their scope of vertical autonomy to differing degrees.

7.2.2 Reconfiguring the Canvas: Indexing Local Party System Nationalization

This typology of vertical decisional autonomy allows us to aggregate more close-knit the assemblage of the local partisan canvas and the degree to which this resembles its supra-local counterpart in every municipality. Subsequently, we here develop a discrete index of local party system nationalization taking the ratio between the different subtypes set out above into consideration. For the exploratory purpose of this paper, the index will concentrate on the number of lists of each subtype (their relative

share in the party system)²⁹. These numbers are weighted by a factor reflecting their actual linkage with national political parties: a) national lists: factor = 2; b) pseudo-national lists: factor = 1; c) pseudo-local lists: factor = -1 and d) independent local lists: factor = -2.

These weighted numbers are then added up and the result is divided by the total number of lists in the local party system. The index of local party system nationalization can thus be represented by the following formula:

$$I_{LPSN} = [(2a+b) - (c+2d)]/n$$

With a = the number of national lists; b = the number of pseudo-national lists; c = the number pseudo-local lists; d = the number of independent local lists and n = the total number of lists.

In line with the distinction between the *electoral* (lists participating in the local electoral supply) and the *parliamentary* (lists obtaining elected representatives in the local council) party system (Kjaer & Elklit, 2010b) and to take further account of the political relevance of the various types of lists two variants of the index are calculated: a) the electoral index of local party system nationalization (EI_{LPSN}) and b) the parliamentary index of local party system nationalization (PI_{LPSN})³⁰.

The index thus reflects the weighted ratio between the amount of (pseudo-)national and (pseudo-)local lists allowing to incorporate the relative importance of vertical decisional autonomy in the assertion of the composition of the local party system (in elections or in the council). It ranges from +2 in completely nationalized local party systems to -2 in completely place-bound counterparts. Table 7.1 below display the measures of central tendency and dispersion of the distribution of the scores on the electoral and parliamentary indexes for the local elections of 2006 and 2012.

²⁹ Small national parties were not included in the analysis as these lists have a different status.

³⁰ For the latter index, only the number of lists of a given subtype represented in the council have been taken into account with the total number of lists adjusted accordingly.

Table 7.2: Measures of distribution of the indexes for local party system nationalization

	\bar{x}	median	σ	skewness
El _{lpsn} 2006	1,05	1,20	0,88	-1,32
Pl _{lpsn} 2006	1,16	1,25	0,92	-1,48
El _{lpsn} 2012	1,08	1,20	0,83	-1,47
Pl _{lpsn} 2012	1,20	1,33	0,89	-1,55

The figures point at an undercurrent of relative local party system nationalization. The mean and the median vary between respectively 1,0 to 1,2 (with a standard deviation between 0,8 and 0,9) and 1,2 to 1,3. The skewness confirms a relative long tail to the left. The electoral indexes are on average relatively lower than their parliamentary counterparts. In the eventual council composition the nationalization of the local party system is more outspoken than in the preceding partisan supply. Comparing 2006 with 2012, the pattern remains highly similar with a slight increase of local party system nationalization.

Given this distribution and for the logistic regression purposes explained below, discrete index scores were categorized into four specific ranges of relative local party system nationalization leading to the following subtypes: a) *nationalized party systems* = 1 to 2; b) *pseudo-nationalized party systems* = 1 to 0; c) *pseudo-localized party systems* = 0 to -1 and d) *localized party systems* = -1 to -2. Here also, a distinction between the electoral and the parliamentary arena was made. The data in table 7.3 display the relative share of these subtypes.

Table 7.3: Relative share of local party system types according to nationalization (%)

Election arena \ LPS-type	2006		2012	
	Electoral	Parliamentary	Electoral	Parliamentary
Nationalized	57,5	63,6	53,9	64,0
Pseudo-nationalized	30,5	24,7	35,4	25,0
Pseudo-localized	6,8	5,5	6,2	6,2
Localized	5,2	6,2	4,5	4,8

The table indicates that the majority of all municipalities has a nationalized electoral arena. This share increases to about two out of three for its parliamentary counterpart, suggesting that non-national candidate lists face more hurdles in obtaining representation. Regarding pseudo-nationalized local party systems the ratio between

both arenas is reversed. Whereas about one third of all municipalities has an electoral offer that can be termed accordingly, this is the case for around one fourth of all associated councils. The more localized party systems are rather uncommon. Conjointly, (pseudo-)localized party systems characterized the electoral or parliamentary arena of around one out of every eight (2006) to nine (2012) municipalities. Localized party systems are generally least prevalent. During the last local elections they have even lost ground representing less than 5% of all municipalities.

7.3 GETTING THE PICTURE: ACCOUNTING FOR VARIATION IN LOCAL PARTY SYSTEM NATIONALIZATION

In this section we will probe into similarities and differences between localities accounting for variation in local party system nationalization. First, we will introduce the explanandum (the nationalized subtype of the local party system). Second, the explanans will be outlined along sets of variables respectively labelled as social morphology and political ecology. Their explanatory direction and strength will be tested by binary logistic regression.

7.3.1 Explanandum: nationalized local party system

For the dependent variables we refer to the subtypes of local party system nationalization based on the re-categorized electoral and parliamentary index scores. More in particular we will try to account for the nationalized subtype of these indexes.

We argue that this is both theoretically as well as empirically meaningful. First, the associated index scores (1 to 2) reflect the undercurrent of relative nationalization still leaving substantial room for the potential relevance of non-national candidate lists with differing degrees of linkage to national political parties. Within this category both semi- as well as fully nationalized local party systems are included³¹. Second, this

³¹ From a cross-tabulation we can infer that if the municipality belongs to a local party system that is electorally nationalized, this implies that it has at least two national candidate lists present in the electoral supply. However, invariably about one fourth of all cases have respectively at least one pseudo-national, pseudo-local or local candidate list as well on offer. Hence, more than 61% of all cases have at least one non-national candidate lists. The pattern for the parliamentary variant is highly comparable.

theoretically relevant distinction also divides the population in empirically practicable shares vis-à-vis the dependent reference category. For both reasons it is preferred over alternatives based on measures of central tendency or the marginal frequency distribution of the discrete indexes which in themselves are too skewed for linear regression.

Given the exploratory nature of this research, we will focus on the most recent local elections of 2012. This will also allow us to include some derivatives of the data gathered for their counterparts in 2006 to account for different aspects of path dependency in the local party system (cf. *infra*). The dependent variable in the analysis will thus be the position of a locality outside (o) or inside (i) the nationalized electoral and parliamentary local party system in the municipal elections of 2012. For reasons of clarity the hypotheses below do not differentiate between expected effects for presence in elections and representation in councils.

7.3.2 Explanans: between social morphology and political ecology

Two sets of independent variables will be incorporated accounting for the local party system nationalization of each municipality. Each contains various explanatory factors inspired by the sparse literature on local party system nationalization and made operational in a manner argued to be meaningful in the Belgian context. The factors will be formulated such as to expect significantly increased odds for a municipality to dispose of a nationalized local party system. The comparability of these effects and the overall parsimony of the models are enhanced by a dichotomization of the original indicators.

Does social morphology matter?

One string of independent variables refers to the place-bound characteristics of the locality pertaining to the wider social morphology of the municipality against which more specific political thrusts are moulded. More in particular, three dimensions will be covered.

First, differences in nationalization have been associated with variation in municipal size. The traditional strand is summarized by Kjær and Elklit (Kjaer & Elklit, 2010b):

'the local party system in more populous municipalities tends to resemble the party system at the national level more than is the case in smaller municipal units, i.e. the larger the municipality, the more 'nationalized' the local party system'. Size does not tend to work directly but through intermediate variables such as political diversity however. Larger municipalities have a heterogeneous social make-up implying a complex cleavage structure and diversified interests represented by different political parties. These demand-side explanations are reinforced by an increased supply of national political parties on the local courtyard coming with an enhanced size. In larger municipalities, local councils are seen as an organizational base from which national parties can mobilize important resources (Kjaer & Elklit, 2010).

This relationship has often been corroborated in empirical research underlined by significant leaps in nationalization over time following scale-enlarging reforms such as municipal amalgamations (Ennsner & Hansen, 2013; Kjaer & Elklit, 2010; Steyvers et al., 2008). In contrast, non-national local candidate lists have traditionally fared better in smaller municipalities associated with more harmonious and factual modes of local decision-making. However, in recent decades a trend has been discerned in which alternatives to national parties established themselves in larger cities as well indicating the emergence of newer types of non-national lists allegedly embodying anti-system sentiments (Reiser, 2008).

Hence, two indicators of size have been included in our analysis to grasp ditto related but not interchangeable aspects relevant in Belgium. On the one hand, with the traditional criterion of the number of inhabitants we discern the relatively largest from the smaller municipalities³². On the other hand, population density has been measured analogously³³. This should help us to distinguish municipalities that are sizeable in terms of inhabitants but cover a commodious polycentric area consisting out of numerous smaller settlements from their more consolidated mono-centric counterparts (stemming from differences in the nationally imposed amalgamation process in the 1970s, see De Ceuninck et al., 2010). We expect that population (number

³² This distinction is based on the marginal frequency distribution of the number of inhabitants. Highest refers to the third of municipalities where this is above 18 643 (N = 105 or 34,1%).

³³ This distinction is based on the marginal frequency distribution of population density. Highest refers to the third of municipalities where this is above 556 inhabitants per square kilometer (N = 103 or 33,4%).

and density) will increase the odds for a nationalized local party system. Hence, two hypotheses (with subdivisions in a and b for each dimension of the local party system type) will be tested:

H1: in municipalities with the highest number of inhabitants the odds for an electorally (a) or parliamentary (b) nationalized local party system are significantly higher

H2: in municipalities which are the most densely populated the odds for an electorally (a) or parliamentary (b) nationalized local party system are significantly higher

Second, we assert the effect of metropolitan status on local party system nationalization. The emergence of functional metropolitan regions and the embeddedness of various municipal jurisdictions therein has been identified as one of the main trends of contemporary political geography (Sellers, Kübler, Walks, Rochat, & Walter-Rogg, 2013). In Belgium, the official conception outlines these regions as the factual overarching layer of an urban agglomeration and its (suburban) *banlieue*. Beyond that commuter living areas are distinguished as part of the urban living complex. For inclusion of specific localities, functional zones have been adjusted to municipal administrative divisions (Luyten & Van Hecke, 2007)³⁴.

Metropolitan status is often considered as the topical variant of the traditional center-periphery divide invoking delineated sources of political behaviour. Recent comparative research demonstrated metropolitan ecologies shape whether citizens participate in voting and the ideological orientations brought to enact this right (Sellers et al., 2013). Most research efforts concerned the geometry of national cleavage structures in the metropolis identifying typical strongholds of the right and left. Less attention has been paid to the relative presence and success of national versus non-national candidate lists within. Explorative research for Belgium discerned some relevant tendencies (albeit from the default nominal perspective). The closer to the

³⁴ The urban agglomeration is the central city before sprawl, i.e. the city center, its 19th century extensions and its 20th century outskirts. The *banlieue* is the outer zone of the metropolis; i.e. the spatial expression of suburbanization from the urban agglomeration. Population density and spatial planning in terms of housing form the base for distinguishing the agglomeration from its *banlieue*. Commuting, population growth and immigration serve as criteria to determine if a municipality is part of the metropolitan region or not.

metropolitan core, the more nationalized the overall political offer. In terms of specific labels a relative (but incomplete) homogenization of the national partisan offer can be discerned. Variation in terms of voter demands is even more outspoken as partisan orientations tend to differ significantly according to metropolitan status. In central cities (centre-)left wing voting is more popular with an electoral landscape much more polarized in national terms and limited electoral leeway for non-national candidate lists. In the (outer) suburbs and outside the metropolitan area (centre-)right wing voting predominates. Further away from the metropolitan core, more centrist tendencies emerge. For local lists the pattern is diversified with relatively higher shares in the inner suburbs and outside the metropolis (Steyvers, 2009)

For this research a simplified distinction is made based on the typology mentioned and the assignment of specific localities therein to separate municipalities inside (part of an urban agglomeration or its *banlieu*) from their counterparts outside (part of the wider living complex) a metropolitan region³⁵. We expect in the former the odds for a nationalized local party system are higher. Hence, one hypothesis will be tested:

H3: in municipalities that are part of a metropolitan region the odds for an electorally (a) or parliamentary (b) nationalized local party system are significantly higher

Third, the effect of socioeconomic morphology will be scrutinized. This arguably differs from the demographic configuration (i.e. size) and the spatial location (i.e. metropolitan status) of the municipality. In her comparative conclusions on local lists Reiser (2008) already hints at the general importance of such factors. More specific empirical evidence linking socioeconomic features to local electoral tendencies is scarce however. Existing explorations concern the relationship between specific socioeconomic characteristics of the municipality and the presence and success of one or more particular parties (Coffe, Vermeir, & Heyndels, 2007; Hooghe, heyndels, Jottier, Birsan, & Bottermans, 2007). We assume that these findings can be extended to

³⁵ Metropolitan status refers to the position of a specific municipality inside a metropolitan region (N = 109 or 35,4 %).

the aggregated level, linking the socioeconomic status of a municipality with local party system nationalization.

For the purpose of this paper, we have derived this status from a multifaceted and comprehensive typology often adopted by the regional government for official purposes (Dessoy, Erouw, & Rombouts, 2007). This typology is based on a factor analysis of data on a bit more than hundred characteristics collected for each municipality eventually clustered in six subgroups for sixteen clusters. We have ultimately aggregated the subgroups of municipalities with central functions (*central*), with a concentration of economic activity (*industrial*) or which are semi-urban or an agglomeration (*urban*) into one category expected to be associated with higher odds for a nationalized local party system³⁶. Hence, one hypothesis will be tested:

H4: in municipalities that are central, industrial or urban the odds for an electorally (a) or parliamentary (b) nationalized local party system are significantly higher

Does political ecology matter?

Another string of variables refers to the electoral features of the local political milieu pertaining to the more specific institutional and partisan ecology of the municipality. Here, the literature is in even shorter supply. However, there are some relevant clues in the seminal work of Reiser and Holtmann (2008) on the presence and performance of non-national candidate lists that may benefit from aggregative reframing in terms of local party system nationalization by connecting two of their central slants adding a third.

First, Reiser (2008) stresses the importance of the organizational capacity of parties. The penetration of national lists in the local electoral arena has a strong negative effect on the vote shares for non-national ones. In a substantial number of European countries national candidate lists are only present in a minority of municipalities facing difficulties in finding and mobilizing personnel to contest under their label and vying with the perception that politics at this level is factual and harmonious and thus

³⁶ For central, industrial or urban municipalities N = 120 or 39%.

hostile to partisan conflict. Here non-national candidate lists are the only groups running. However, when contesting national lists are almost invariably able to occupy a large slate of the vote. Non-national lists *'[...] benefit predominantly from the low [presence] or even total absence of political parties'* (Reiser, 2008). In a sense, they fill the voids left and *'[...] often exist as a substitute when political parties are absent from the local political scene'* (Holtmann, 2008).

From an aggregate perspective, this could imply the better national lists are entrenched in a locality the higher the nationalization of its party system. However, the risk arises of a circular interpretation provoking questions of causality. If the presence and performance of national and non-national lists correlate which is than the consequence of the other? The above suggests the key-decision lays with national lists: *if they choose to run they tend to appropriate the bulk of the vote and their non-national counterparts can only act as surrogates or by filling the remaining electoral holes.* Yet, this initial decision in turn seems to be influenced by a preceding assessment of their political viability in a given municipality. Consequently, in a mere cross-sectional analysis co-variation can thus hardly be distinguished from causality.

In trying to overcome this circularity, the factor time should be integrated. This relates to a second core empirical finding of the aforementioned comparative research. Reiser (2008) namely emphasized the importance of path dependencies in political traditions conceived as enduring place-bound focal points of non-national candidate lists. Here also, an aggregated postulate could be derived arguing that the stronger the tradition of national candidate lists in a given municipality, the higher the nationalization of its local party system. An antecedent predominance of national candidate lists in a certain locality will constitute barriers for authorization and representation of non-national alternatives. Ideally, such a history-sensitive approach includes longitudinal measurement over various electoral cycles. Since we only dispose of sufficiently fine-grained and comprehensive data for 2006 and additionally assuming that the political conditions at the end of the previous cycle will be most decisive for the dynamics at the beginning of the next, we will use these one but the most recent elections as our point of reference.

Combining national party entrenchment with political tradition, three indicators will be used to scrutinize the effect of the anterior degree of national party organization on the current local party system nationalization. As a first indicator the electoral local party system type in 2006 will be used dichotomizing nationalized from non-nationalized variants. This takes the antecedent ascendancy of national lists in the partisan offer into consideration. A second indicator probes into the relative success of national lists in the associated local elections discerning municipalities where this was above average from those where this was not in 2006³⁷. This clarifies the voting preponderance of lists with explicit links to national politics. As a third indicator the parliamentary local party system type in 2006 will be considered making an analogous distinction between nationalized and non-nationalized variants. This highlights the subsequent representative primacy of national lists in the council. We expect that each of these antecedents will increase the odds for a current nationalized party system type. Hence, three hypotheses will be tested:

H5: in municipalities where the anterior electoral local party system was nationalized, the odds for an electorally (a) or parliamentary (b) nationalized local party system are significantly higher

H6: in municipalities where the anterior vote for national parties was relatively higher, the odds for an electorally (a) or parliamentary (b) nationalized local party system are significantly higher

H7: in municipalities where the anterior parliamentary local party system was nationalized, the odds for an electorally (a) or parliamentary (b) nationalized local party system are significantly higher

A third empirical finding at the heart of the comparative research mentioned is the effect of within-country differences in the institutional framework for local elections. Here, the impact of substantial alterations and/or in-built differentiation of the electoral system are frequently cited. In Belgium virtually no reforms have been enacted substantially affecting the longstanding semi-open proportional list system

³⁷ For this variable the mean (76,3%) is preferred as a cut-off point since the marginal frequency distribution suggests a strong skewness to the right. For vote share national lists in 2006 relatively high N = 193 or 62,6%.

uniformly spread throughout the country (Wouters, Verlet, & Ackaert, 2012). One aspect of institutional difference exists however in the variation in the number of seats up for election often termed as the district magnitude. In their account of Denmark, Kjaer and Elklit (2010) have included this as a control variable for municipal size finding the sustenance of an autonomous size-effect with district magnitude having a significantly positive effect on the parliamentary variant of local party system nationalization. Moreover, in explaining local party system fragmentation in Belgium, Geys (2006) found significant interaction effects between district magnitude and social heterogeneity suggesting an electoral arena more open to accommodate the full array of national political forces. Building on these findings we assume that where district magnitude is highest the odds for a nationalized local party system will increase³⁸. Hence, one hypothesis will be tested:

H8: in municipalities where the district magnitude was highest, the odds for an electorally (a) or parliamentary (b) nationalized local party system are significantly higher

7.4 RESULTS: LOGISTIC REGRESSION

The relationship between the independent variables and their dependent counterparts is studied by binary logistic regression. This will help us to assess the direction, the strength (Exp(B)) and the significance (Sign) of the odds that a municipality has a nationalized electoral or parliamentary local party system, given its morphological and ecological features encapsulated in the independent covariates. The analysis consists out of two models with the first only including the morphological characteristics of the municipality and the second adding ecological variables to the equation³⁹. Within both moulds of the nationalized local party system type we will discuss each model in turn. Significant covariates are displayed in bold. The overall explanatory power of the models is expressed by Nagelkerke R².

³⁸This distinction is based on the marginal frequency distribution of the number of seats. Highest refers to the third of municipalities where this is above 25 (N = 105 or 34.1%).

³⁹Some independent variables correlate significantly. However, further diagnostics based on the variance inflation factor do not raise problems of multicollinearity.

Table 7.4: Results of the binary logistics regression analysis

Independent variables	Dependent variable Local party system type [nationalized; 2012]							
	Electoralley				Parliamentary			
	Model 1a		Model 2a		Model 1b		Model 2b	
	Exp(B)	Sign	Exp(B)	Sign	Exp(B)	Sign	Exp(B)	Sign
<i>Social morphology</i>								
Number of inhabitants [h]	1.53	.12	2.67	.09	3.61	.00	7.65	.01
Population density [h]	0.85	.56	0.63	.17	.96	.90	0.65	.23
Metropolitan status	1.06	.84	1.14	.65	1.88	.04	2.36	.02
Central/industrial/urban	0.83	.45	0.78	.39	1.31	.34	1.27	.46
<i>Political ecology</i>								
Electoralley nationalized 2006			1.31	.52			1.12	.82
Vote share national lists 2006 [rh]			4.02	.00			3.01	.00
Parliamentary nationalized 2006			2.59	.05			4.75	.00
District magnitude 2012 [h]			0.24	.02			0.22	.05
Nagelkerke R²	.01	.60	.30	.00	.14	.00	.41	.00

N = 308

In model 1a morphological variables conjointly do not significantly increase the odds for a municipality to have an electoralley nationalized local party system. The overall explanatory power of the model is very low and none of the separate variables has a significant effect. Social morphology does not seem to matter for the relative presence of national candidate lists over their non-national counterparts. Therefore and with regard to model 1a H1-4a cannot be confirmed.

As model 1b shows jointly morphological variables significantly increase the odds for a municipality to have a parliamentary nationalized local party system. The overall explanatory power of the model remains relatively low but is significant. This is particularly due to the positive effect of the number of inhabitants and the metropolitan status of a municipality. In the relatively largest municipalities the odds are about four times higher whereas in those that belong to a metropolitan region these are about two times higher. For population density and central, industrial or urban status no significant effects appear. Aspects of the social morphology thus matter for the relative representation of national candidate lists over their non-

national counterparts. Therefore and with regard to model 1b H1b and H3b can be confirmed whereas H2b and H4b cannot.

In model 2a the overall explanatory power increases to 30%. This is entirely due to adding political ecology variables. Again, morphological variables jointly do not significantly increase the odds for a municipality to have an electorally nationalized local party system. The same holds for each of the morphological variables considered separately. Among the political ecology variables the vote share for national lists in the preceding local elections is most determinative. Where this share was above average the odds increased by a factor of more than four. To a lesser extent significance can also be established for the effect of the antecedent parliamentary local party system. Where this was nationalized in 2006, the odds are a bit less than three times higher for the electoral party system in 2012 to be nationalized. Path dependencies thus matter. The electoral preponderance of national lists in the preceding local elections and their subsequent representative primacy seem to elevate barriers for the proliferation of non-national alternatives in the partisan offer. But not all path dependencies do: the nationalization of the anterior electoral party system did not affect significantly that of its successor. Whereas earlier demonstrated vote-stacking capacity matters, prior pre-electoral ascendancy does not. Remarkably, the effect of district magnitude opposes our expectations: in municipalities where the highest number of seats are up for election the odds significantly decrease that the local partisan offer is nationalized. With regard to model 2a H6a and H7a can be confirmed whereas H1-5a and H8a cannot.

Finally, in model 2b the R^2 amounts to a bit more than 40%. Now both types of variables produce significant effects in a way combining the predictors of model 1b and 2a. Here also, the number of inhabitants and metropolitan status matter. Where this number is relatively highest or municipalities are located in a metropolitan region the odds that the parliamentary local party system is nationalized increase with a factor of respectively a bit less than eight and a bit more than two. Municipal context-factors thus co-determine the representative primacy of national lists. But not all do: the effect of population density or the central, industrial or urban status of a municipality is not significant. Similar effects as for electoral nationalization can be found with regard to

political ecology factors. Here the best predictor of actual parliamentary nationalization is its antecedent in 2006 (the odds are more than five times higher). This is followed by the vote share for national lists in the preceding local elections. Where this was above average, the odds are a bit more than three times higher. The effect of district magnitude is highly comparable (and equally unexpected) to that for the electoral local party system. Where the highest number of seats are contested the odds for a national predominance in the council are significantly lower. Therefore and with regard to model 2b H1b, H3b, H6b and H7b can be confirmed whereas H2b, H4b, H5b and H8b cannot.

7.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter tried to contribute to the study of local party system nationalization emphasizing a more fine-grained approach beyond the hitherto predominant national versus non-national dichotomy to acknowledge the shaded palette colouring the place-bound partisan canvas.

Assessing the vertical autonomy of the parts comprising the system demonstrated an array of non-national forces maintain relevance on the local soil and hence refines previous conclusions accentuating the imprint of national parties.

Based on the more close-knit distinction between national, pseudo-national, pseudo-local and independent local lists we have developed discrete indexes of local party system nationalization to assess the nationalization of the place-bound partisan assemblage. These indexes express the ratio between the different subtypes outlined above in both the electoral and the parliamentary arena and pointed at the undercurrent of relative nationalization of local party systems. Based on a re-categorization of the discrete values nationalized, pseudo-nationalized, pseudo-localized and localized local party system subtypes have been discerned with a majority of all municipalities situated in the first. Nationalization is more outspoken in the council than in the electoral offer. This fine-tunes the prevalence of mixed or predominantly national party systems discerned in previous categorical research in Belgium (Steyvers et al., 2008). The alleged end-state of exclusive nationalization has

thus not been reached in a large majority of municipalities both due to the persistence of independent local lists as well as of those (partly) concealing their linkage to national parties.

Moreover, we have tried to explain variation in local party system nationalization by considering the conjoined effect of place-bound social morphology and political ecology variables hitherto considered in isolation or less systematically (Ennsner & Hansen, 2013; Kjaer & Elklit, 2010b; Reiser, 2008). With the nationalized subtypes as dependent reference categories, the binary logistic regressions show that overall political ecology matters more (often) than social morphology. Taken together the covariates are also more predictive for the parliamentary variant of local party system nationalization than for its electoral counterpart. This further accentuates the importance to distinguish between the local presence and performance of various types of lists.

Also more particular effects appear. First, morphological factors do not significantly increase the odds for the electoral local party system to be nationalized. This applies both when considered in isolation as well as in conjunction with their ecological counterparts. In other words, context does not matter for the relative nationalization of the partisan supply. Second, specific morphological factors do matter for the parliamentary local party system to be nationalized. In municipalities with the highest number of inhabitants or within a metropolitan region the odds are significantly higher that local chapters of national political parties predominate the council. Context thus matters for the relative nationalization of the partisan success. Third, the same specific ecological factors matter for both electoral and parliamentary party system nationalization. Here, the particular relevance of path dependency as the preceding degree of national party organization for the current local party system comes to the fore. Especially the anteriorly demonstrated vote-stacking capacity of national political parties stands out. In municipalities where national lists have previously been able to collect a relatively high share of the vote or occupy a ditto subsequent slate of council seats, the odds increase significantly for the electoral and parliamentary local party system to be nationalized confirming the assumptions of

Reiser and Holtmann (2008). Unexpectedly, the significant effect of district magnitude on both aspects of nationalization was negative and needs further research.

Finally, a substantial amount of variance remains unexplained. Herein lay the limits of a quantitative approach focusing on the effect of exogenous social and political conditions on local party system nationalization. Notwithstanding the merits of measuring nationalization through the aggregated vertical autonomy of all place-bound lists, circumstances can only partially account for systemic variation. Arrangements of decisional autonomy are equally driven by endogenous factors within specific candidate lists and often affected by temporal contingencies of place as demonstrated in chapter six.

Part 2

The Partisan Character of Non-National Lists in Flanders

8 TO PARTY OR NOT TO PARTY? A FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS OF NON-NATIONAL LISTS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The first empirical part of this research project has focused on the actual independence of non-national lists in Flanders, based on the concepts of vertical and horizontal decisional autonomy. This second empirical part deals with the partisan character of non-national lists or the extent to which they functionally behave like political parties, to further contribute to our understanding of the role of these lists in local politics.

Non-national lists are generally considered as functional equivalents of local parties for they compete in the same local electoral arena (Reiser & Holtmann, 2008). Yet, this functional equation is hardly substantiated by empirical research. Non-national lists are typically omitted from any functional approaches to local parties as exemplified by recent large-scale studies on the functioning of local parties in Belgium which largely ignore non-national political occurrences (Buelens, Rihoux, & Deschouwer, 2008; K. Deschouwer, T. Verthé, & B. Rihoux, 2013). Moreover, this functional equation might be erroneous. Non-national lists are often associated with a nonpartisan conception of local self-government (Saiz & Geser, 1999; Steyvers et al., 2008) and hence, it could be assumed that they behave differently than their national counterparts. Steyvers et al. support this hesitation by suggesting that the degree to which local lists behave like political parties can vary significantly and that 'partisanship' should be interpreted as a continuum (Saiz & Geser, 1999; Steyvers et al., 2008). The following chapters examine whether this functional equation is justified by analysing similarities and differences in the functional behaviour of the different types of non-national lists and local parties in Flanders.

Chapter two discussed in detail the range of programmatic, positional and civic functions national parties (are expected to) perform (Fiers, 1998) and how these functions have changed over time as political parties gradually evolved towards cartel-like organizations with an increasingly professionalized party centre close to the state

and a declining party on the ground (Bolleyer, 2012; Carty, 2004; Daalder, 2002; Enyedi, 2014; Katz & Mair, 1994).

While non-national lists are functionally equated with local parties, local parties are expected to perform similar functions as national parties (Geser, 1999), but it remains largely unclear how local parties deal with the contemporary challenges faced by national parties and how national party evolutions affect the functional behaviour of local parties. Some authors argue that local parties have become increasingly redundant considering the decline in membership figures (Mair & Van Biezen, 2001; Webb, 1995). Others contend that local parties adapt to these challenges and develop a new political logic with a main focus on municipal elections (Deschouwer & Rihoux, 2008). Still others assert that local parties continue to play a crucial linking role between the electorate and (local) policy as the remaining party members assume a more active role in the party and compensate for the decline in members.

However, when assessing the functional behaviour of local parties (and non-national lists), a distinction needs to be made between the two divergent roles of local parties. On the one hand local parties constitute the organizational subunits of national parties, organising the party on the ground and performing a number of functions to serve the national party goals (provision of political personnel, socializing and mobilizing the members, providing programmatic input ...). On the other hand, they participate in local politics and perform several locally-oriented party functions (providing local candidates, involving local adherents, influencing local policy, ...). We can assume that both 'faces' of local parties are affected differently by national party evolutions. As national party centres have become increasingly professionalized and less and less dependent on the political resources of the local subunits, local party functions in this former role as party agencies might have lost significance. Their functions as local political actors however might not have lost importance. Local party branches behave increasingly autonomous in local political affairs (Carty 2004) and institutional reforms in combination with a shift towards governance networks have increasingly politicized the local level, resulting in more and increasingly complex competences for local party branches (Geser, 1999).

To assess the partisan character of non-national lists, the following chapters will focus on the locally-oriented party functions. Three key party functions are selected for analysis inspired by the conceptualization of political parties as *tripartite systems of interaction* as discussed in chapter two (Fiers, 1998; Key, 1964; King, 1969; Sorauf, 1972; White, 2006). Political parties engage in three different realms - each involving a variety of activities, actors and rationales. This distinction between the *party-in-government*, the *party-in-the-electorate* and the *party-as-organization* is highly topical and equally relevant to study the functional behaviour of non-national lists. Hence, the following chapters deal with 1) candidate recruitment as a key function of non-national lists role in the electorate; 2) non-national lists as organizations, analysing their organizational strength; and 3) the programmatic preferences of non-national lists as an important function in the governmental realm. These three complementary functional assessments jointly provide a comprehensive image of the partisan character of non-national lists.

Each chapter follows a similar structure starting with an introduction on the theoretical relevance of the corresponding party function both in national and local perspective. Subsequently, existing insights on how local parties in Belgium assume these three party functions are discussed. The empirical sections then combine quantitative and qualitative research findings and discuss functional differences between the different types of non-national lists and local party branches. For each chapter, first the quantitative results are presented - based on survey data - providing a general understanding of how non-national lists assume the three selected key party functions and differ from national party branches. These quantitative findings are then further explored and refined based on a qualitative analysis of elite-interviews with list headers of non-national lists. In the following methodological section I will further elaborate in detail on the adopted mixed methods research design for this functional analysis.

8.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The functional analysis of non-national lists in Flanders is equally based on a parallel convergent mixed methods design as elaborated in chapter four (Creswell & Plano

Clark, 2011)(Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011)(Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011)(Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011)(Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Quantitative and qualitative data have been collected concurrently but independent from one another to obtain a comprehensive and multifaceted view on the functional behaviour of non-national lists. The qualitative approach for this functional analysis is based on a multiple case study equal to the adopted method for analysing changes in the decisional autonomy. The elite-interviews with list-headers of the 22 selected non-national lists in Flanders equally dealt with the functional behaviour of these lists and offer ample information on how and why the cases assume the three party functions under study. More details on this qualitative multiple-case approach can be found in chapter six, while this section elaborates on the methodological aspects of the quantitative component of this functional analysis.

The quantitative part of this functional analysis of non-national lists in Flanders is based on a mail survey among list headers of non-national candidate lists in Flanders. Mail surveys have significant advantages as they offer a relatively cheap and time-saving method to collect standardized data. Moreover, they can increase the accessibility of the research population and allow for flexibility of the respondents (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 1996). However, mail surveys also come with some disadvantages as they don't allow complex questions and lack the flexibility to probe for clarifications and comprehensive answers. Additionally, mail surveys generally have a limited response rate given the absence of personal contact. The average response rate of mail surveys is estimated between 20% - 40% (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996).

The research population for this functional analysis in the first place concerns the 454 non-national lists that have participated in the municipal elections of 2012 in Flanders. Additionally local party cartels have been included in the survey. As elaborated in chapter five, these local cartel lists concern locally agreed upon alliances (in contrast to the national party cartels in local politics which are decided upon by national party centres) which equally reflect a non-national rationale. It can be assumed that the functional behaviour of these local cartel lists rather resemble other local cartel types (extended party cartels or even localized cartels) than that of local party branches and

therefore, the 63 local cartel lists which have participated in the 2012 municipal elections in Flanders have been included in the research population of this functional analysis.

The questionnaire can be found in appendix and contains four main topics: 1) objectives and evolution of the list; 2) list composition; 3) content and style; and 4) internal organization of the list. This questionnaire has been partly based on a survey conducted in 2012 among local party presidents in Belgium by the Belgian Interuniversity Attraction Pole PARTIREP⁴⁰. Similar topics are dealt with but the questionnaire for non-national lists headers was shortened and modified to lower the threshold for participation and to meet the specific research goals of this research project. Although these similar but not identical survey data do not allow for direct comparison between local party branches and non-national lists, the Partirep data provide a meaningful benchmark to assess the partisan character of non-national lists.

While the PARTIREP-survey was send to the presidents of local party branches, our survey was distributed among list leaders of non-national lists as it cannot be a-priori assumed that non-national lists have a party-like structure with clearly identifiable formal party leaders. List headers of non-national lists instead can be easily identified in the publicly accessible electoral database of the Agency of Internal Affairs⁴¹. Yet collecting the contact details of all these list headers was a challenging endeavour, requiring different information resources such as the ‘ABC of local governments’⁴², websites of the municipalities, websites of the candidate lists themselves and finally some public search sites. In the end, we were unable to trace the contact details of about 30 list headers.

The survey procedure was based on Dillman’s suggestions for a ‘tailored design method’ to minimize non-response. He emphasizes an attractive lay-out and a close follow-up of response (Dillman, 2000). By the end of April 2014, 485 list leaders

⁴⁰ www.partirep.eu

⁴¹ www.vlaanderenkiest.be/verkiezingen2012

⁴² www.abclokalebesturen.be

received a formal personalized letter⁴³ to frame the study and announce the survey. This letter was followed a couple of days later by a mail⁴⁴ with a personalized link to the online questionnaire⁴⁵. After one week 141 completed surveys had returned (29,1%). The respondents who did not respond to this call received a mail reminder 10 days later, whereupon the response rate increased to 45,2%. As the survey was send in full campaign period for the national elections on May 25th and local front runners can also politically engage in supra-local election, we sent a last reminder after the national elections resulting in a definitive and satisfactory response rate of 53,4% of the contacted frontrunners or 50,1% of all non-national lists in Flanders (including party cartel lists). Table 8.1 demonstrates how this response rate is distributed over the different types of lists as identified before based on their decisional autonomy.

Table 8.1: Response rate of the different types of local candidate lists

	total number of responses	total N	response rate
party cartels	35	63	55,6%
extended national lists	23	52	44,2%
extended party cartels	24	47	51,1%
supported local lists	38	79	48,1%
localized cartels	33	67	49,3%
independent local list	106	209	50,7%
Total	259	517	50,1%

Although the different types of local candidate lists are sufficiently represented in the response, the total number of observations in the various categories is too small for relevant statistical comparison and therefore non-national lists are categorized based on a simplified version of the DA-typology, merging related list types to a more limited number of categories. I will further distinguish between cartel lists (party cartels, extended party cartels and localized cartels), associated lists (extended party lists and supported lists) and independent lists, which allows for more meaningful comparison between these categories.

⁴³ These letters were send by post mail, except for 15 respondents from whom no postal address was found and who received the announcement letter by electronic mail.

⁴⁴ For 46 of the front runners, we only found a postal address and they received the questionnaire by post with a stamped envelope, with the explicit opportunity to receive an online version of the questionnaire.

⁴⁵ All respondents were offered the opportunity to receive a paper version of the questionnaire by post mail

9 CANDIDATE RECRUITMENT

9.1 INTRODUCTION

The recruitment and selection of political personnel is considered '*one of the central defining functions of a political party in a democracy*' (Katz, 2001). Political parties recruit candidates to stand for elections under a common party label and invest in campaign activities to have these candidates elected for legislative or executive positions. This also holds true for local parties, who select candidates for legislative or executive functions in the competition for local powers. To assess the partisan character of non-national lists in Flanders, this first chapter considers similarities and differences in the candidate selection process of non-national lists and local parties.

In party literature, candidate selection and recruitment is generally considered as a structured market-place in which supply and demand factors interact (Jacob, 1962; Norris, 2006; Prewitt, 1970; Schwartz, 1969; Seligman, 1961). The supply-side of this market-place concerns the availability of eligible candidates which is influenced by formal eligibility criteria (age, residence, certain amount of signatures ...), but also by individual motivations and personal perceptions concerning the rules of the political game. The demand-side of this political recruitment and selection process refers to the screening of eligible candidates and how from the many candidates are chosen the few to stand for elections and pursue a political career. Political parties provide the main gatekeepers in this selection process and internal party rules and procedures as well as prevailing party traditions determine the structure of opportunities for aspirant candidates to be selected. Furthermore, the interaction between supply and demand factors is influenced by the characteristics of the electoral system (proportionality, size of constituencies, electoral threshold, ...) and the party system (competition, heterogeneity of the party system) (Norris, 2006, 1997).

Based on this market-based approach, scholars have focused on different features of the selection and recruitment process. A first line of research concentrates on the supply-side and considers *who is eligible* for nomination. This research strand

examines the social and personal characteristics of eligible candidates, as well as socializing and mobilizing experiences which facilitate political careers⁴⁶. A second line of research concerns the locus of decision-making within political parties (*who nominates?*). This strand studies the centralization and the breath of participation in the decisions on candidate selection within political parties⁴⁷. A third component of the selection process often scrutinized by scholars concerns the outcome of the process (*who is nominated?*) and the consequences for representative democracy. Especially the social bias of the legislative/executive force (in terms of gender, occupational class, ethnic background ...) has been intensively studied⁴⁸.

Although traditional selection theories clearly distinguish between selection and election, they often apply a narrow focus on elite recruitment and only consider those candidates that have successfully ran through the sequential selection filters, including election by the electorate. This elite bias could be justified by the political relevance of elected (office-holding) candidates, but neglects a vast majority of candidates that have been selected to stand on a candidate list but did not mobilize enough votes to get elected (or appointed) for any legislative or executive function. Although, non-electable candidates are sometimes disparagingly labelled as 'list filling', they play a crucial role in the overall electoral performance of political parties.

This market-based approach to candidate selection is also relevant to study candidate selection at local level (Steyvers, 2005), yet the supply of eligible candidates is much more confined in a local context. Traditional selection and recruitment theories generally assume an abundant supply of eligible and motivated candidates, where local party selectors often struggle to find adequate candidates, especially in smaller municipalities (Kjaer, 2007; Meadowcroft, 2001; Rysavy & Bernard, 2013). As established in chapter six, the eroding public support for increasingly cartelized political parties further constricts the availability of eligible candidates for local parties.

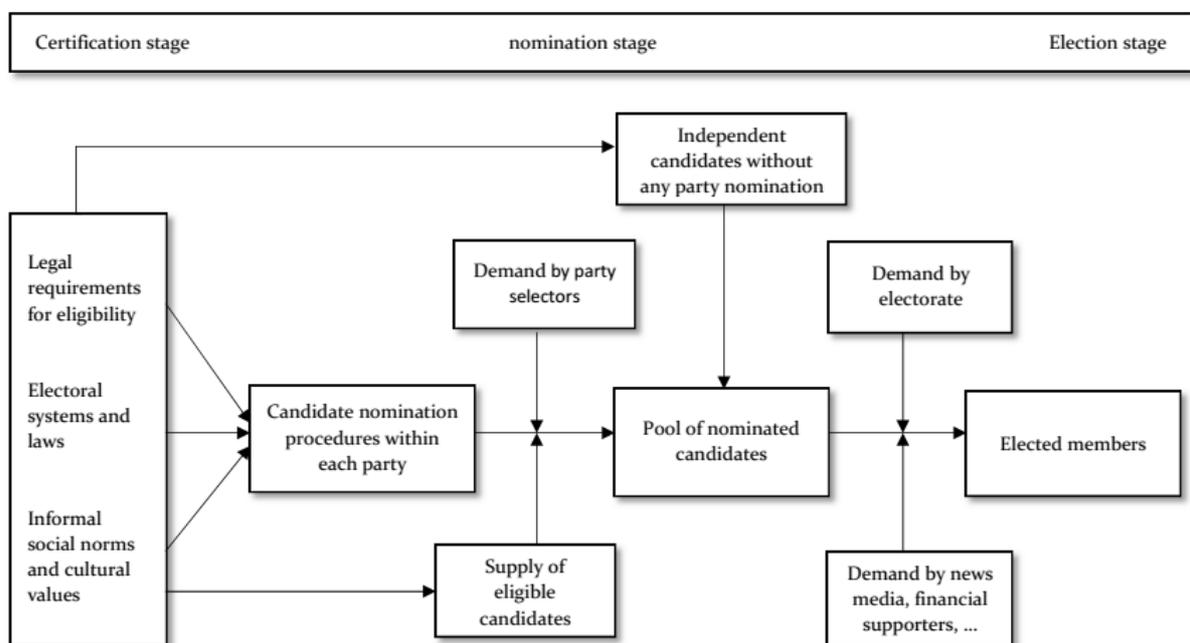
⁴⁶ cfr. i.a. Farly, Budge, & Irwin, 1977; Steyvers, 2005

⁴⁷ cfr. i.a. Bille, 2001; Hazan & Rahat, 2006

⁴⁸ cfr. i.a. Kenworthy & Malami, 1999; Rule & Zimmerman, 1992

Analysing the candidate selection process of non-national lists will therefore focus on the list composition process as a first and key stage in the further recruitment of local political elites. Norris's (2006) market-based model of the candidate selection process provides a valuable framework to study the composition of non-national lists. It is especially interesting as it also considers independent candidates as illustrated in Figure 9.1. The pool of nominated candidates in this model consists of candidates nominated by party selectors and independent candidates without party nomination.

Figure 9.1: Model of the candidate selection process (Norris, 2006: 90)



To assess if and how non-national lists in Flanders differ from local party branches in the implementation of this key party function of candidate selection, I will focus on the nomination stage and consider the list composition of non-national lists as a result of supply- and demand factors with specific attention for the role of independent candidates. In the following sections, I will first outline the legal requirements for eligibility and then discuss previous research results on the list composition of local party branches in Belgium.

9.2 LOCAL CANDIDATE RECRUITMENT IN BELGIUM

9.2.1 Legal requirements

As in other countries, local candidates have to meet some minimal legal qualifications to be entitled to stand for local elections. Candidates are required to have the Belgian or a EU member state nationality. They must have reached the age of 18 and be registered in the municipality in which they plan to stand for elections. They may not be deprived of their rights to vote or to be elected and lastly, a small number of professions are considered incompatible with candidacy⁴⁹.

Furthermore, some formal procedures need to be respected to stand for local elections in Belgium: candidates have to be nominated by an incumbent councillor (regardless of party affiliation) or by a certain number of registered voters⁵⁰. The nomination certificate contains all candidates of a list (at least one and not more than the total amount of councillors to be elected, depending on the size of the municipality) and determines the definite sequence on the list. Gender quota have been introduced in the Belgian electoral law to guarantee a balanced mix of man and woman. The difference between the total amounts of candidates from the same sex cannot exceed one and the first two candidates on the list need to have different sexes.

9.2.2 List composition in traditional local parties in Flanders

Several scholars have studied the list composition of traditional local party branches in Belgium (Buelens, 1996; De Winter, Erzeel, Vandeleene, & Wauters, 2013; Devos, Reynaert, & Verlet, 2008). These studies revealed that local candidate selection is primarily a local matter with a confined role for national party organs or national considerations. The list composition of local party branches is predominantly determined by local selectors (local leaders, outgoing mandataries and candidates) and the selection criteria are very locally oriented. Local associations figure as the largest source of recruitment and potential candidates' commitment to and prominence in

⁴⁹ For example police officers or magistrates

⁵⁰ The precise amount of voters needed to nominate a candidate depends on the size of the municipality.

local associational life and in neighbourhood activities are considered far more relevant than their role in national politics or other nationally oriented features.

Additionally, local party branches proved highly concerned with balancing the ticket and involving a mix of candidates to appeal to a large group of voters. Especially the balance between various neighbourhoods and various age groups is deemed important (De Winter et al., 2013; Devos, 2006; Devos et al., 2008). Notwithstanding these general findings, significant differences were found between the party families. De Winter et al. (2013) distinguish between the selection process of the more traditional parties and that of the newer green and nationalist parties. The former attach even more importance to the local embeddedness of the candidates and have more contacts with leisure and socio-economic organizations to recruit candidates. These local associations function less as recruitment channel for the newer parties in which the candidates themselves play a more dominant role and local anchorage is considered less important (De Winter et al., 2013).

Both Buelens (1996) and Devos et al. (2008) also confirmed that the supply of eligible candidates for local elections is limited. They established that local party branches in Belgium often encountered problems to find sufficient candidates. A general lack of interest in politics and the reluctance of potential candidates to commit to a specific party are indicated as main thresholds for candidacy. Especially finding sufficient woman to meet the gender quota has been put forth as challenging (Buelens, 1996; Devos et al., 2008). While Buelens could not find a statistical link between these selection problems and the electoral performance of the local party or the position in council, Devos et al. cautiously argued that finding adequate candidates is more troublesome for parties in opposition. Moreover, Buelens has argued that involving independent candidates served as a widespread 'remedy' for local party branches to cope with the encountered lack of candidates. Regrettably, the role of independent candidates on local party lists has been disregarded in later research of national party branches.

The following sections scrutinize the list composition process of non-national lists to establish differences and similarities between the different types of non-national lists

and local party branches in Flanders. Firstly, a quantitative analysis of the survey data provides a general picture of the supply and demand factors influencing the list composition of non-national lists. Subsequently, these findings are refined based on a qualitative analysis of the interview data.

9.3 THE LIST COMPOSITION PROCESS OF NON-NATIONAL LISTS IN FLANDERS

In this section I will present the survey results concerning the list composition process of non-national lists in Flanders and successively discuss the applied selection criteria, the encountered recruitment problems, the share of independent candidates and the recruitment ability of associated lists, cartel lists and independent lists.

9.3.1 Selection criteria

The survey data demonstrate that non-national lists value similar locally oriented selection criteria as has been established for local party branches (De Winter et al., 2013). The non-national list headers were asked to indicate the importance of a range of selection criteria on a scale from 0 (not important at all) to 4 (very important). Table 9.1 summarizes the average scores in decreasing order of importance and demonstrates that no significant differences were found between associated lists, local cartel lists and independent local lists. Involvement in the municipality is considered by far the most important selection criterion by all three types of non-national lists, followed by some criteria relating to the commitment and political capacities of the candidates (dedication and available time and issue knowledge and governance capability). Political experience proves the least important criterion (table 9.1).

Table 9.1: Average importance of local selection criteria for non-national lists

	associated lists		cartel lists		independent lists		Eta ²
	\bar{x}	σ	\bar{x}	σ	\bar{x}	σ	
involvement in the municipality	3,32	0,651	3,37	0,631	3,17	0,845	0,015
dedication and available time	2,95	0,693	2,97	0,673	2,95	0,767	0,000
issue knowledge / governance capability	2,82	0,785	2,86	0,904	2,78	0,970	0,002
Ideological profile	2,46	0,897	2,80	0,760	2,48	1,049	0,030
communication and campaign skill	2,49	0,788	2,40	0,756	2,32	0,937	0,007
political experience	1,90	1,045	2,07	1,065	1,72	1,129	0,019

(N=246-249) (**p<.001; **p<.005; *p<.05)

Moreover, non-national lists recruit from similar recruitment channels as established for local party branches. Table 9.2 summarizes the shares of the three types of non-national lists that recruit from the different local organizations and demonstrates that more than two thirds of the associated lists and only slightly less of the local cartel lists equally mainly recruit from local associations (cultural, youth, leisure and sports organizations). Independent lists recruit significantly less from these traditional local associations with shares around and below 50%. As independent lists do not recruit substantially more from other organizations, this could indicate more general recruitment problems of these lists. Potential candidates in local associations might be discouraged by the lower political relevance of independent lists. Table 9.2 also indicates that local cartel lists recruit significantly more from environmental movements. This can be explained by the substantial share of progressive cartel lists, involving green party branches - often in combination with socialist party branches - which traditionally recruit more in the environmental movements.

Table 9.2: Share of non-national lists recruiting from different recruitment channels

	Total	associated lists	cartel lists	independent lists	Cramer's V
cultural organizations	59,1%	68,9%	67,4%	46,2%	0,218**
youth organizations	58,7%	68,9%	63,0%	49,1%	0,169*
leisure organizations	57,1%	67,2%	56,5%	51,9%	0,12
sports clubs	55,2%	68,9%	55,4%	47,2%	0,169*
employer's organizations	37,1%	44,3%	33,7%	35,8%	0,085
environmental movements	32,0%	21,3%	51,1%	21,7%	0,303***
woman's organizations	32,0%	32,8%	37,0%	27,4%	0,09
family organizations	23,9%	31,1%	21,7%	21,7%	0,094

(N=259) (**p<.001; **p<.005; *p<.05)

9.3.2 Recruitment problems

The survey results demonstrate that a large majority of non-national lists (72,6%) has encountered problems to recruit candidates in the run up to the municipal elections of 2012 confirming that eligible candidates are a scarce asset at local level. Significant differences occur between the three types of non-national lists. Associated lists more often experienced recruitment problems (82%), while local cartel lists faced the least problems to attract candidates (63%). Table 9.3 summarizes the specific nature of these recruitment problems and demonstrates that – as for local party branches - most of these problems are related to the increasing distance between citizens and political parties and the decreasing public support for political parties (reluctance to confess to a political party, lack of interests in politics, negative image in politics). These specific problems are more pervasive for associated lists. Independent lists more often face other (unspecified) problems which are less related to national party politics.

Table 9.3: Share of non-national lists indicating problems to attract candidates

	Total	associated lists	cartel lists	independent lists	Cramer's V
no problems to attract candidates	27,4%	18,0%	37,0%	24,5%	0,168**
problems to attract candidates	72,6%	82,0%	63,0%	75,5%	
candidates refuse to confess to a party	47,5%	67,2%	44,6%	38,7%	0,225***
lack of interest in politics	42,1%	59,0%	35,9%	37,7%	0,191*
negative image of politics	32,4%	42,6%	19,6%	37,7%	0,208**
other problems	18,5%	13,1%	14,1%	25,5%	0,149
candidates fear to be elected	9,7%	9,8%	9,8%	9,4%	0,006

(N=259) (**p<.001; **p<.005; *p<.05)

9.3.3 Independent candidates

Involving independent candidates has been identified above as an alternative electoral strategy of local party branches to cope with the limited supply of candidates and increase the electoral capacity and the recruitment ability of the list. The survey results allow to establish the prevalence of this strategy. Table 9.4 summarizes the average number and average share of independent candidates on associated lists, cartel lists and independent lists and demonstrates that the share of independent candidates varies significantly ($\eta^2 = 0,354^{***}$). Remarkably, independent lists contain a large majority of independent candidates, but are not exclusively composed of independent candidates (72,7%). More in-depth analysis is needed to clarify this figure. Local cartel lists contain about one out of five independent candidates (20,3%), while associated list are situated in between with an average of 36% independent candidates.

Table 9.4: Average number and share of independent candidates on non-national lists

	\bar{x}	%
associated lists	7,7	36,0
cartel lists	4,5	20,3
independent lists	13,6	72,7
Total	8,9	45,1
Eta ²	0.189***	0.354***

(N=242) (**p<.001; **p<.005; *p<.05)

These figures confirm that independent candidates are common in the different categories of non-national. However it remains unclear to what extent independent

candidates enable non-national lists to overcome the encountered recruitment problems. The following section therefore considers the recruitment ability of non-national lists.

9.3.4 Recruitment ability

As non-national lists are found to be highly vote-seeking, it can be assumed that they equally aim to maximize the number of candidates as each additional candidate could entail additional votes (cfr. Chapter six). Hence, the completeness of the lists or the number of candidates on the list relative to the maximum number of candidates allowed⁵¹ indicates the recruitment ability, or the capacity to cope with the limitations of the supply side and attract sufficient candidates to compose a complete candidate list. Table 9.5 summarizes the average recruitment ability of the different types of non-national lists as well as the respective shares of complete, nearly complete (more than half of the maximum number of candidates) and far from complete lists (less than half of the maximum number of candidates). Most non-national lists (76,4%) were able to submit a complete list, with an average recruitment ability of 85,5%. Independent lists however demonstrate a significantly lower average recruitment ability than associated lists or cartel lists. While more than eight out of ten associated lists and cartel lists succeeded to compose a complete list in 2012, only 64,2% of the independent lists submitted a complete lists. Moreover, associated and cartel lists contain only a limited share of lists with less than half of the available council seats, while for independent lists this share of far from complete lists rises to nearly 25%.

⁵¹ The maximum number of candidates equals the available council seats in the municipality and depends on the population size

Table 9.5: Average recruitment ability and corresponding shares of complete, nearly complete and far from complete lists

	average recruitment ability	share of		
		complete lists	nearly complete lists	far from complete lists
associated lists	92,6%	85,9%	9,8%	4,3%
cartel list	93,4%	83,6%	9,8%	6,6%
independent list	74,5%	64,2%	11,3%	24,5%
total	85,5%	76,4%	10,4%	13,1%
	Eta²: 0.094***	Cramer's V: 0,242***		

(N=256) (**p<.001; **p<.005; *p<.05)

We can thus conclude from these figures that independent lists have significantly more problems to compose a complete candidate list. Moreover, a more detailed analysis of the absolute number of candidates on independent lists demonstrates that a small, but substantial share of these lists (13%) does not contain more than one single candidate. These latter one-person lists can be assumed to participate in elections with a different, less vote-seeking logic than the candidate lists containing a substantial number of candidates.

The recruitment ability of non-national lists significantly influences their electoral performance of all three list types (Pearson = 0,333*** – 0.482***) indicating that non-national lists with high vote-seeking ambitions have every interest to aim for a complete candidate list. Involving independent candidates has been indicated as an alternative electoral strategy to increase the recruitment ability of local candidate lists and consequently the vote share. Yet, a negative correlation was found between the share of independent candidates and the recruitment ability of the lists (Pearson = -0.180**). This can largely be attributed to the group of independent lists with high shares of independent candidates but a low recruitment ability. For local cartel lists and associated lists no significant correlation were found between the share of independent candidates and their recruitment ability. Moreover, no significant correlation was found between the share of independent candidates and the electoral performance of non-national lists. For associated lists a negative correlation was even found. The larger the share of independent candidates on associated lists, the lower the electoral performance of the list (Pearson = -0.270*).

These findings indicate that independent candidates on non-national lists in the first place reflect recruitment problems rather than a remedy to overcome these problems. Independent candidates might attract some additional votes, but do not compensate for the limited electoral appeal of the list which can be attributed to other – contingent – factors. Local cartel lists demonstrate a higher recruitment ability with a lower share of independent candidates and hence we can conclude that engaging in a pre-electoral alliance is the most effective electoral strategy to overcome local recruitment problems and increase the electoral capacity of the list.

9.3.5 Interim conclusions

These survey results offer valuable insights concerning the nomination stage of the selection process of non-national lists for municipal elections in Flanders. In Norris's model of candidate selection presented in the introduction, a clear distinction is made between candidates nominated by party selectors and independent candidates without party nomination. The former are subjected to a candidate nomination procedure within the party and the interaction between supply- and demand, while independent candidates are assumed to enter the pool of nominated candidates directly without intervention of any nomination procedure to align supply- and demand factors. The survey results indicate that this distinction is inconsistent with the political reality of the candidate selection process for municipal elections in Flanders. The pool of nominated local candidates in Flanders equally contains a mix of party candidates and independent candidates, but the nomination of independent candidates equally results from supply- and demand factors and nomination procedures.

Party selectors and independent selectors both value similar locally oriented selection criteria and are faced with a limited supply of eligible candidates for local elections. The demand by both selector types is influenced by strategic choices to cope with these supply-side limitations. Cartel lists experience less problems to attract candidates as they have joined recruitment forces. Party selectors can also involve independent candidates, while independent selectors also recruit non-independent candidates. This results in varying shares of independent and party candidates on the different types of non-national lists. Independent candidate lists contain the largest share and cartel lists

the lowest share of independent candidates. Moreover, independent selectors are found to have significantly more problems to overcome the supply-side limitations as they less often succeed to compose a full candidate list, resulting in a lower electoral appeal.

9.4 ROLE AND ORIGIN OF INDEPENDENT CANDIDATES

The quantitative analysis clearly indicated that non-national lists differ from each other in their recruitment ability and the numeric role for independent candidates. This qualitative section further explores these differences by analysing the origin and position of independent candidates on non-national lists and how this differs from party candidates. Based on the elite-interviews with list headers of non-national lists, I will examine in more depth where the independent candidates come from and what position they assume in non-national lists. Do they merely serve to fill up these lists and generate some additional votes to reinforce the position of leading party candidates on the list? Or do they adopt winnable positions on the lists and are they further included in the non-electoral political activities of the list? Successively, the origin and position of independent candidates on associated lists, cartel lists and independent lists are discussed.

9.4.1 Associated lists

Associated lists (extended party lists or supported list) have been initiated by local party branches in their aim to involve independent candidates and attract additional votes by taking some distance from the national party. Our sample contains 6 associated lists, all involving a number of independent candidates in addition to the party members on the list. These independent candidates are selected for their local notoriety and subsequent electoral potential. Some of these independent candidates are recruited from local associations, others from local activist groups, still others from the local middle class or liberal professions. In fact their origin seems of little concern to the local party selectors as long as they are able to attract additional votes *‘We welcome independents on our list. It usually concerns people - and their voters - whom*

we can't reach otherwise. We also welcome action groups. [...] if they are willing to present themselves to the voter' (case 20).

Some of these independent candidates however do have a party-background in a different party. Case 21 for example embraced some former local VU-members who were left orphaned as the national party was waning in the second half of the nineties and the local VU-branch ceased to exist: *'In that time, several VU-people joined us. The local VU here was at its last gasp and some came to us as the VU was practically non-existent'* (case 21). These former VU-members received the status of independent candidates notwithstanding their party-background.

The interviews also reveal that independent candidates on associated lists generally occupy a prominent position on the lists. Only in one case, the independent candidates on the list merely served as list filling to attract some additional votes without any further interest to remain involved in the party. In the other cases, the independent candidates were assigned prominent positions on the list and given their high electoral potential, they often got elected in council and were integrated in the further legislative work of the list: *'two or three of our independent candidates were elected, but they were included in the group [...]. They have no party membership card, but we form one group.'* (case 10). Three associated lists in the sample were part of a governing majority and the independent candidates also obtained executive positions, indicating their prominent position in the group. In chapter 11, I will further examine the organizational consequences of including independent candidates in the political activities of a local party branch. For now, we can conclude that independent candidates on associated lists are selected for their high electoral potential and generate sufficient votes to also assume an important role in the legislative of even executive activities of the party.

9.4.2 Local cartel lists

Most cartel lists in the sample⁵² equally included independent candidates to increase the electoral potential of the list. Only one analysed cartel list contained no

⁵² The sample contains 10 cases which have (at least once) engaged in a pre-electoral alliance during the period analyzed (2000-2012), three of which were only just starting up when the interviews took place in 2012 and did not

independent candidates (case 11), while all others contained at least one, but mostly several independent candidates. In three cases the independent candidates formed a separate group presented as a distinct (independent) cartel partner. Two of these independent groups also have their origins in local party branches. In case 15, the independent cartel partner has been established long ago by VU-members (before the decline of the national party) following a personal conflict between the leading candidate of the local VU-branch and the national party leadership concerning his place on the national list. In case 7, the group of independent candidates on the cartel list concerned a splinter group of the local Christian Democrat party: *'the cartel also contained three former CD&V Aldermen [...] and some other people who used to be CD&V-minded but joined our list as independent Christian-Democrat candidates'* (case 7). These candidates similarly left their former party after a disagreement on strategic choices of the local party.

The other analysed cartel lists in the sample contained a smaller amount of individual independent candidates which have been included on the list because of their electoral potential. It equally concerns local notables with many supporters who easily get elected and hence adopt a prominent place within the list as they are often involved in the legislative or even executive activities. Yet, some respondents consider these independent candidates as a cumbersome necessity. They do generate highly coveted votes, but especially if the list gets to participate in government, independent candidates can also generate additional tensions within the cartel. The cartel partners need to negotiate on the distribution of mandates and independent candidates further complicate these negotiations. Including them after the elections in the political activities of the list is not always done with great enthusiasm: *'We had one independent on our list and he got elected too. He didn't want to confess to one of the parties on the list but he had a large family, very notorious and respected, and he did get elected! That made things more difficult'* (case 18). Another respondent judges independent candidates as unpredictable and unaccountable. They are considered as potentially problematic for they have no political superiors who can rebuke them and hence it is

contain sufficient information on the list composition and are not included in the analysis, which is based on seven lists.

more difficult to keep them under control: *'If I would have a problem with my socialists, I could turn to Brussels, as there is a hierarchy. Independents don't have that [...]. They can say a different thing tomorrow because they have no ideology, no president, no party, and no structure. They are beyond my control and that is a problem'* (case 12).

As for associated lists, we can conclude that independent candidates on local cartel list often assume a prominent position on the list. Their high electoral potential makes them indispensable for the lists and they are often elected and hence also included in the post-electoral activities of the list. The involvement of independent candidates in the policy work of the cartel partners seems to generate some more reluctance than in associated list. The independent candidates on local cartel lists are also recruited in the local community, but can also originate in traditional local parties.

9.4.3 Independent lists

The sample contains 9 independent lists without any implicit or explicit links to any national party when the interviews took place. Some of these lists have extra-parliamentary origins, initiated by citizens who feel dissatisfied with established local policy making and aim to provide a democratic alternative in the electoral arena. These candidates generally concern well-educated and socially engaged citizens with roots in the local civil society as exemplified by case six: *'We started out by the end of the 1980's because we were dissatisfied with established local politics. We gathered several people from local organizations such as the women's movement, 11.11.11, Oxfam, the peace movement, VAKA'* (case 6).

Yet, a substantial share of the analysed independent lists have their origin in traditional local party branches. Several independent lists in the sample were founded by local politicians with ample experience in local politics as a party member. One of the cases for example can again be traced back to the former Volksunie. The local VU-branch had been able to deliver the mayor, but decided to profile themselves as an independent mayoral list when the national party disappeared. This independent

course was regarded as *'the path of least resistance'* to obtain the goal to re-deliver the mayor⁵³.

Several other independent lists in the sample were also established by formal members of a local party branch – often with executive experience in local council. The interviews reveal that crushed personal ambitions and internal conflicts often serve as main motive to initiate an independent candidate list. Three cases were prompted by disavowed local party politicians who left their former party following an internal discord concerning their personal position within the party. Case two was established by two former councillors of the Open VLD who had suspended their political activities as elected councillors due to family circumstances. After a few years they decided to re-engage in local politics *'for the political microbe continued to tickle'* (case 2). Yet, their political come-back was not appreciated by the local party elite and their re-application was rejected. Thereupon, they decided to participate in the ensuing elections with an independent list and successfully gathered additional (independent) candidates to support the list. A similar story can be constituted for case 16 which was established by a former CD&V-councillor who felt disadvantaged when his local party appointed the office mandates. He equally decided to gather a group of (independent) candidates to contest his former party and *'demonstrate what we are capable off'*. Similarly the deviant one-man's list in the sample (case 9) can be considered as a symbolic act of rancour, inspired by mere personal motivations. The single candidate on this list used to assume a prominent position in the local CD&V-branch of his municipality but after an internal conflict concerning the distribution of executive mandates, he decided to submit a candidate list of his own: *'I was persona non-grata and honestly I was offended. I was upset for some months, but then it started itching again as I am a bit of a political animal'* (case 9). This independent candidate did not get elected, but was later rehabilitated in his former party.

We can conclude that independent lists benefit from the permissiveness of the local electoral system in Flanders. The costs for submitting a candidate list are very low and individual vote-seeking, office-seeking or policy-seeking ambitions easily result in the

⁵³ In the latest elections of 2012, this list affiliated with the N-VA for electoral reasons

establishment of an independent candidate lists. The lists can comprise independent citizens or representatives of civil society, but also former party members who look for a different path to achieve their political ambitions.

9.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter dealt with candidate selection as a first of three selected key party functions to assess the partisan character of non-national lists in Flanders. Based on a combination of survey data and interview data the list composition process of different types of non-national lists was analysed and compared with existing insights on list composition in local party branches. The analysis indicates that the list composition process of the different types of non-national lists shows many similarities with that of local party branches. Candidate selection in the local political arena proves largely determined by a shared local context with a limited supply of eligible candidates. When selecting candidates, both party selectors and independent selectors value similar selection criteria with a preference for notorious, locally embedded candidates. As the supply of adequate candidates is confined, selectors face difficulties to attract adequate candidates and modify the selection demands to compose a full candidate list. Party selectors often involve independent candidates on associated lists or cartel lists while independent selectors also involve party affiliated candidates on independent list. This results in varying shares of independent candidates on the different types of non-national lists. Local cartel lists contain the least independent candidates as recruitment efforts are shared which reduces the number of list places available for additional independent candidates (some cartel lists however concerns pre-electoral alliances between local party branches and groups of independent candidates often involving a larger share of independent candidates). Associated list contain higher shares of independent candidates, while independent lists contain the highest share of independent candidates, although supplemented with non-independent candidates. Traditional recruitment channels (local associations) are less relevant for independent selectors and these independent selectors face more problems to overcome recruitment problems and less often succeed to compose a complete list.

The independent candidates on the different types of non-national lists are not only recruited from the local community (local notables, professions, middle class, ...), but also frequently emanate from traditional local party branches. Hence, the analysis indicates that independent candidates on non-national lists should not simply be equated with nonpartisan candidates as their independent character not always refers to a nonpartisan background, but often to the mere fact that they no longer belong to a party. The interviews revealed that several independent candidates on the different types of non-national lists have substantial political experience in traditional parties. Especially leading candidates of independent lists or independent groups on cartel lists could be traced back to traditional party branches where they once were active as notorious party-members often with local office functions. They dissented from their former party and continued their local political engagement as independent candidates on non-national lists. The motivation for such secessions seem not the most noble as they often relate to individual feuds and unprocessed personal setbacks. Hence it can be concluded that not only the autonomous character of local candidate lists is a fluid concept (as demonstrated in chapter six), but also the independent status of individual candidates can change over time.

If we look at these findings from the broader analytical lens of party change, a mixed picture arises. On the one hand, non-national lists can be considered as a response to the partisan dealignment of the electorate. They recruit independent candidates who refuse to affiliate with established political parties and hence expand the pool of eligible candidates to citizens who might have defected from traditional party politics. Moreover, these independent candidates can further mobilize dealigned voters who might otherwise turn their back to the (local) electoral process. Hence, it can be argued that non-national lists add value to the local representative democratic process by broadening the pool of nominated candidates and consequently the electorate in a context of party dealignment. In doing so, non-national lists can increase the legitimacy of the local party system and contribute to bridging the gap between the electorate and local policy. On the other hand however, the established party political background of many independent candidates tempers this democratic argument. Independent candidates often developed political experience in a local party branch

but resigned from this party because of frustrated personal ambitions. Their independent position is just an alternative way to realize their personal ambitions. This could confirm the image of politicians as '*postjespakkers*' and hence, reinforce the distrust of politicians.

10 ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTH

10.1 INTRODUCTION: PARTIES AS ORGANIZATIONS

After having analysed how non-national lists proceed to select candidates for local elections, I will focus in this chapter on non-national lists as organizations to contribute to our understanding of the partisan character of non-national lists. Political parties require a certain level of organizational maintenance to assume their political functions and bridge the gap between local government and civil society. This second component of the functional analysis aims to assess if and how the organizational features of non-national lists resemble those of local parties.

Although forerunners of party research such as Ostrogorski, Duverger and Michels had a strong organizational predisposition, the study of parties as organizations has long been a lacuna in contemporary political science with a general focus on the party system level and not on individual party organizations. Only by the end of the previous century, scholars' interest in the systematic study of party organizations revived. Panebianco was the first to re-focus attention on the fact that '*parties are above all organizations and organizational analysis must therefore come before any other perspective*' (Panebianco, 1988). Indebted to prevailing organizational theory, he proposed a comprehensive conceptual framework to study party organizations as the result of internal struggles for power among different sub-actors within a party. His theoretical insights inspired a renewed organizational approach to political parties as complex systems consisting of diverse sub-actors within one single organization. Commonly, three different organizational faces of political parties are distinguished, each with their own specific rationales and behaviour: the *Party on the Ground* (party members), the *Party in Public Office* (office-holding members) and the *Party in Central Office* (professional officials). Many scholars have focussed on the interaction and power relations between these three organizational faces and the recent decline of parties is generally interpreted as a changing balance between these faces to the detriment of the party on the ground and in favour of the party in central office and

the party in public office (Bolleyer, 2009; Janda, 1980; Katz, 2005; Katz & Mair, 1994; Panebianco, 1988; Van Biezen, 2000).

Party organizational strength has long been studied in terms of electoral achievements. Yet, measuring the organizational strength of political parties should rather capture the sustained and predictable nature of their party activities beyond electoral periods. In their aim to assess the organizational strength of political parties in the United States – Gibson and his colleagues conceptually distinguish between *programmatic capacity* and *organizational complexity* as two main components of organizational strength (Gibson, Cotter, Bibby, & Huckshorn, 1983, 1985). The programmatic capacity of party organizations refers to their activity level or the stability and frequency of political activities, while organizational complexity denotes the formalized nature of the procedures for interaction between the different components of the organization to engage in sustainable party activity. At the extreme end of this scale, Gibson et al. situate bureaucratic parties with a professionalised and formalised structure, adequate resources and sustained activity. At the other extreme of this scale they identify the dormant party with no leaders and with limited palpable existence (Gibson et al., 1985).

While national party organization has attracted growing academic attention in recent decades, the organizational aspects of local parties have received much less academic interest. Local parties are generally considered as mere subunits of national parties forming the – declining - national party on the ground. Although local parties require some degree of organizational maintenance and organizational arrangements to assume the versatile party functions in a local political context, the (interaction between) different subunits within local parties are generally disregarded.

In a comparative attempt, Saiz and Geser (1999) have assembled the scarce research on local parties in political and organizational perspective across nation states. In the absence of a general local party theory, this comparative endeavour yielded disparate yet interesting insights into the nature and status of local parties. Although the organizational characteristics of local parties remain underexposed and the national contributions demonstrate considerable variance, Saiz (1999) concludes that local party activity in general is vigorous and increasing, stimulated by the national party

centres which still highly value local anchorage and invest in local organizational continuity. Moreover, the authors established that local party organizational strength is correlated with community size and with other features of the local communities. More populous communities have larger, more professionalized party systems, while local parties are weakest in communalities with a young and highly educated population, signalling a shift away from traditional class-based politics (John & Saiz, 1999). Dalton and Wattenberg (2000) equally argue that declining party membership does not necessarily signify the demise of party organizations as the degree of party activity among the remaining members has typically increased. They contend that political parties have adapted to a more volatile campaigning environment by broadening their organizational base even if the foundations of their mass membership are thinner. Hence, local party branches can still be considered as institutionalized local organizations with a stable organizational structure, notwithstanding the decline in membership figures.

Few scholars have equally touched upon the organizational strength of non-national lists. Especially independent local candidate lists have been criticized for being short-term and only loosely structured political groups with little representative accountability (Soos, 2005; Steyvers et al., 2008). Other authors have argued that this traditional perception of independent local lists as parochial or folkloristic occurrences is erroneous as these lists have evolved over time and diverge less from their national counterparts than previously assumed (Reiser & Holtmann, 2008; Reynaert & Steyvers, 2004; Van Tilburg & Tops, 1990). Empirical evidence to substantiate any of these assumptions is scarce and again distorted by the unsatisfactory dichotomous distinction between national party lists and 'independent' candidate lists.

This chapter aims to increase our understanding of the organizational characteristics of non-national lists in Flanders and how these differ from local party branches. I will adopt the distinction proposed by Gibson's et al (1983; 1985) between organizational complexity and programmatic capacity to assess the organizational strength of non-national lists in Flanders and establish whether these lists should be considered as short-term, underactive and weakly structured political groups or rather as durable and active institutionalized political organizations similar to local parties. Yet, to avoid

confusion with the programmatic functions of non-national lists which are dealt with in chapter 12, I will further use the term organizational capacity instead of programmatic capacity.

In the following sections I will first review previous research findings relating to the organizational strength of local party branches in Belgium which can serve as a benchmark in assessing the partisan character of the organizational features of non-national lists. Subsequently, the quantitative analysis is presented assessing the organizational capacity and organizational complexity associated lists, local cartel lists and independent lists in Flemish municipalities based on the survey results. These findings are then further refined and interpreted in a qualitative section based on the interviews with list headers of non-national lists. In a concluding section the results are interpreted through the broader analytical lens of party change.

10.2 LOCAL PARTY ORGANIZATIONS IN BELGIUM

Deschouwer and Rihoux (2008) have established that the activity level of local party branches in Belgium is decreasing as a result of decreasing membership figures. These findings thus contradict Saiz's (1999) conclusions of increasing party activity. More recent research on Belgium however indicates that the decline of party activities has ceased in recent years (André & Depauw, 2013). Moreover the organizational strength of local parties in Belgium is found to vary across party families. Traditional mass parties are among the most active local parties, while the newer party families (green and Flemish-nationalistic parties) are generally less vigorous. Moreover, a positive relation has been established between the activity level of local party branches and their electoral performance, especially for the traditional party families (André & Depauw, 2013).

Local party branches in Belgium are also found to be organizationally complex. Deschouwer and Rihoux (2008) established that most party branches maintain a highly formalized party structure, with a formal demarcation between the local party-on-the-ground (nationally registered members), the local party-in-central-office (formally elected board of governors presided by a local party president) and the local party-in-

public-office (council group), including statutory defined interaction procedures. Yet, the authors argue that these formal party structures mainly subsist for they are inherited from the past, but that local parties are less and less the local fundamentals of national party organizations. Instead, they would have developed their own local political logic, often with a focus on local elections. Furthermore, Deschouwer and Rihoux (2008) have established loosening statutory relationships between local party branches and national party centres, confirming the evolution towards stratarchical party structures. These findings also indicate that the organizational practices of local party branches can deviate significantly from the formal arrangements as provided by the statutory prescriptions of the national party.

10.3 ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY OF NON-NATIONAL LISTS

To assess the organizational strength of non-national lists in Flemish municipalities, I will first consider their organizational capacity, referring to their ability to sustainably engage in political activities beyond elections and maintain a stable activity level. Two aspects of organizational capacity are successively dealt with: the age of the list and their activity rate.

10.3.1 Organizational age

The age of non-national lists provides a first indication of their organizational capacity in terms of stability. The questionnaire asked list headers to indicate when their list first participated in municipal elections under their present name. Table 10.1 (left part) summarizes the results and indicates that a majority of all three types of non-national lists participated for the first time with this label in the most recent municipal elections of 2012. Only a small minority of all non-national lists (12,9%) has been electorally active for more than three successive elections. The differences between associated lists, cartel lists and independent lists are limited and proved statistically not significant. At first sight these figures seem to confirm that non-national lists in Flanders are predominantly short-term and unstable organizations. However, an additional question inquired if a related predecessor of the lists had participated in prior municipal elections under a different name. Nearly half of the respondents

indicated that this was indeed the case, which offers a very different image of the organizational stability of these lists (right side of table 10.1). If we include these precursors the share of actually novel lists decreases to about one third of all non-national lists (33,7%), while nearly 35% have been electorally active since before 2000.

Table 10.1: First electoral participation of non-national lists in Flanders

	forerunners excl.			forerunners incl.		
	In 2012	In 2000 or 2006	Before 2000	In 2012	In 2000 or 2006	Before 2000
non-national lists	61,2%	25,9%	12,9%	33,7%	31,3%	34,9%
Associated lists	67,2%	21,3%	11,5%	33,9%	23,7%	42,4%
Cartel lists	61,1%	32,2%	6,7%	28,1%	44,9%	27,0%
Independent lists	57,7%	23,1%	19,2%	38,5%	24,0%	37,5%
Cramer's V	0,143			0,157*		

(N=255, 252) (**p<.001; **p<.005; *p<.05)

Although the differences in age between associated lists, cartel lists and independent lists are limited, they proved statistically significant. Independent lists contain slightly more recent organizations, while supported lists most often concern older organizations which have been electorally active since before 2000. Nearly half of the cartel lists have been established in 2000 or 2006. These figures indicate that independent lists are less stable than cartel lists and associated lists ($V = 0,157^*$).

10.3.2 Activity rate

In addition to the first electoral participation of non-national lists, their organizational capacity is determined by the rate of party activities. Hence, I will consider if non-national lists organize typical party activities and at what frequency. Local party activities can vary in nature and target audience. Some only involve a limited group of active core members, while other activities address a more inclusive group of (active and passive) members or an even wider public of sympathizers or interested citizens (political debates, festivities, social events ...). Moreover, local parties typically engage in diverse communication activities to keep their rank and file informed about their political demands and realizations and on upcoming activities. The questionnaire included several questions on this diverse range of party activities.

The survey results show that not all non-national lists in Flanders do engage in party activities beyond election periods. About one out of five of the respondents indicated that their lists turns to a non-active state in between election periods. These lists can therefore be considered as *dormant* organizations, following the denomination used by Gibson et al. (1985). These dormant organizations occur more frequently in the group of independent lists, although these differences proved not significant (table 10.2)

Table 10.2: Share of dormant non-national lists

	dormant lists
non-national lists	20,6%
associated lists	15,3%
cartel lists	18,2%
independent lists	25,7%
Cramer's V	0,110

(N=248) (**p<.001; **p<.005; *p<.05)

A large majority of non-national lists does engage in political activities beyond elections and thus maintains a certain activity level in between elections. The respondents were asked to indicate how frequently their list organizes 1) board or core group meetings to prepare council work or organize other party activities; 2) general meetings for all (active and passive) members / sympathizers; 3) communication with their members through a members magazine (paper or electronic); and 4) public activities for members or sympathizers.

Table 10.3 summarizes the shares of non-dormant lists that regularly organize core group meetings (at least once a month), general member meetings (at least once a year), public activities (at least two a year) and regularly communicate with their members (at least several times a year). These shares demonstrate that a large majority of four out of ten of the non-national lists which do engage in political activities in between elections regularly organizes core group meetings and communicates with their members on a regular basis. A slightly smaller majority of above 60% organizes yearly general meetings or at least two public activities a year. The differences between associated lists, cartel lists and independent lists are statistically not significant.

Table 10.3: Share of non-dormant lists with regular activities

	regular core group meetings	regular member meetings	regular communication	regular public activities
non-national lists	83,0%	62,0%	82,0%	62,4%
associated lists	77,3%	65,3%	77,8%	70,0%
cartel lists	87,5%	57,3%	72,0%	63,9%
independent lists	82,2%	61,4%	76,6%	56,0%
Cramer's V	0,114	0,124	0,115	0,115

(N=197) (**p<.001; **p<.005; *p<.05)

The four activity domains have been integrated, allowing to establish the overall organizational activity level of the different types of non-national lists and distinguish between *dynamic* organizations with a high and stable activity level (regular activities in at least three of the above mentioned activity fields) and *relaxed* organizations which do engage in some party activities in between electoral periods, but on a less regular basis - in addition to the previously identified *dormant* organizations. Table 10.4 illustrates the distribution of the different types of non-national lists between these three organizational types and demonstrates that slightly more than half of all non-national lists can be identified as dynamic. Independent lists contain the lowest share of dynamic lists, although these differences again proved not statistically significant. Additionally, somewhat more than one out of four of the non-national lists in Flanders can be identified as relaxed organizations with only a limited level of party activity in between election periods.

Table 10.4: Organizational capacity of non-national lists

	dormant	relaxed	dynamic
non-national lists	20,6%	27,4%	52,0%
supported lists	15,3%	27,1%	57,6%
cartel lists	18,2%	26,1%	55,7%
independent lists	25,7%	28,7%	45,5%
Cramer's V	0,088		

(N = 248) (**p<.001; **p<.005; *p<.05)

The organizational capacity of non-national lists could be influenced by their electoral performance and their role in council. It can be assumed that council work is considered a priority for local party organizations and that most other party activities

relate to their work in council. Core group meetings serve to prepare the council work, communication activities report on council work, public activities promote council work etc. Without any representatives in council, these party activities have less substance and party life risks to fade away together with the lack of tangible political leverage. Table 10.5 confirms that non-national lists with representatives in council more often have a high activity level, while non-national lists that did not pass the representation threshold more often concern dormant or relaxed lists (Cramer's $V=0.256^{***}$). The difference between lists in opposition and governing lists is less pronounced.

Table 10.5: Organizational capacity and role in council of non-national lists

	non-national lists		
	dormant	relaxed	dynamic
Total	20,6%	27,4%	52,0%
in government	13,5%	25,8%	60,7%
in opposition	18,2%	20,9%	60,9%
not represented	38,8%	44,9%	16,3%
Cramer's V	0,256***		

(N=248) (**p<.001; **p<.005; *p<.05)

The direction of this correlation between non-national lists' role in council and their organizational capacity however is not quite clear as there is also empirical evidence to substantiate a positive effect of organizational capacity on electoral results (Audrey & depauw, 2016). Hence, it could also be assumed that non-national lists with a low activity level are less rooted in the community, attract less votes and encounter more difficulties to surpass the representation threshold. More research is needed to delve into the specific causes of the low activity levels of non-national lists.

10.4 ORGANIZATIONAL COMPLEXITY OF NON-NATIONAL LISTS

To further analyse the organizational strength of non-national lists, this section deals with their organizational complexity, considering the formalized nature and the delineation of the different organizational faces of the lists. Local party branches are generally considered as highly formalized, with formal membership structures and formal rules and procedures for interaction provided by the national mother party

(Deschouwer & Rihoux, 2008). The questionnaire for non-national list headers therefore comprised several questions concerning the character of their membership (formal, informal, no members), daily management (formal elected board, informal core group of active members or no daily management) and the procedures for interaction (formal statutes or not).

As established above, one out of five respondents have indicated that their list does not engage in any party activity in between elections. It can be assumed that these dormant lists neither have any organizational arrangements or procedures for interaction, as there is no active party life. Hence, these respondents were guided beyond the questions relating to the organizational complexity of the list, and not included in the tables below.

Table 10.6 summarizes the formalized nature of the membership, the daily management and the procedures for interaction within non-dormant non-national lists.

Table 10.6: Shares of non-dormant lists with formal and less formal organizational arrangements

	membership			daily management			statutes	
	formal	informal	none	formal	informal	none	yes	no
non-national lists	40,7%	42,3%	17,0%	47,4%	38,7%	13,9%	48,7%	51,3%
associated lists	49,0%	42,9%	8,2%	70,0%	24,0%	6,0%	44,0%	56,0%
cartel lists	47,2%	34,7%	18,1%	42,3%	49,3%	8,5%	52,1%	47,9%
independent lists	28,8%	49,3%	21,9%	37,0%	38,4%	24,7%	48,6%	51,4%
Cramer's V	0,155			0.239***			0.063	

(N=193,194) (**p<.001; **p<.005; *p<.05)

These figures demonstrate that both formal and informal or none organizational structures are common. About 40% of the included non-national lists has a formalized and paying membership structure, while slightly more maintains an informal lists of sympathizers and a minority of 17% keeps no account of any members or sympathizers at all. The share of independent lists with a formal membership structure is substantially lower than for other list types, although this difference proved not significant. The lists with a formal paying membership structure averagely have 167

members, while non-national lists with informal accounts indicate an average of 92 sympathizers.

A similar general distribution is found for the formalized nature of the daily management of non-national lists. 47,4% of the lists have a formal elected board of governors, while 38,7% of the lists are led by an informal core group of activists and 13,9% has no daily management at all. However, these shares vary significantly between the different types of non-national lists (Cramers' $V=0.239^{***}$).. Associated lists more often have a formal board of governors to manage daily party life, while local cartel lists more often have an informal core group and independent lists more often indicate to have no daily management. Formal management boards averagely contain 13 board members, while informal core groups are smaller with an average of 9,5 members.

In about half of all (non-dormant) non-national lists the procedures for interaction between the organizational faces of the list are formalized by statutes. The other half of the included lists have no official rules and procedures for interaction and internal decision making. No significant differences were found on this aspect between the different types of non-national lists.

These figures can again be integrated allowing to distinguish between *bureaucratic lists* with a high organizational complexity (at least two formal party organs) and *informal lists* with no or only one formal party organ. Table 10.7 illustrates the shares of bureaucratic and informal organizations in the different types of non-national lists - in addition to the dormant lists which have been identified in the previous section. These figures indicate that only 34,7% of all non-national lists are characterized by bureaucratic party-like organizational structures. This share varies across the different types of non-national lists with scarcely over one out of four independent lists with a bureaucratic organization, amounting to one out of three for cartel lists and nearly one out of two for associated lists. These differences however are not statistically significant.

Table 10.7: Organizational complexity of non-national lists

	dormant	informal	bureaucratic
non-national lists	20,6%	44,8%	34,7%
associated lists	15,3%	37,3%	47,5%
cartel lists	18,2%	47,7%	34,1%
independent lists	25,7%	46,5%	27,7%
Cramer's V	0,123		

(N=248) (**p<.001; *p<.05)

We have established before that the organizational capacity of non-national lists strongly correlates with their position in council. Similarly, it can be assumed that non-national lists without representatives in council do not require a complex organizational structure and that organizational complexity equally correlates with the lists' position in council. Table 10.8 confirms this assumption, demonstrating that non-national lists which have not passed the representation threshold are significantly less often bureaucratically organized (Cramer's V= 0.172**).

Table 10.8: Organizational complexity and role in council of non-national lists

	dormant	informal	bureaucratic
Non-national lists	20,6%	44,8%	34,7
in government	13,5%	49,4%	37,1
in opposition	18,2%	42,7%	39,1
not represented	38,8%	40,8%	20,4
Cramer's V	0,172**		

(N=248) (**p<.001; *p<.05)

10.5 INTERIM CONCLUSIONS ON ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTH

We can conclude that the organizational strength of non-national lists varies considerably between but also within the different types of non-national lists. Independent lists more often concern dormant lists and less often have a bureaucratic organizational structure. Hence, independent lists least resemble the traditional organizational structure of local party branches. Nevertheless, still a substantial part of them does demonstrate a high activity rate and a high organizational complexity. Similarly, associated lists and cartel lists have varying levels of organizational capacity and organizational complexity. This variation can be partly clarified by the council position of the lists. Non-national lists with representatives in council are organizationally stronger than non-national lists without elected councillors. Yet a substantial part of the variation in organizational strength remains unclarified and the quantitative analysis leaves us somewhat mystified concerning the extent to which non-national lists actually differ or resemble local party branches.

Particularly the organizational complexity of non-national lists requires further qualitative analysis. Several authors have indicated that the de facto modus operandi of local parties can deviate significantly from the formal provisions and that formal and informal organizational procedures and arrangements can coexist within single local party organizations (Fabre, 2010; Reiser & Vetter, 2011). Associated lists and cartel lists originate from local party branches who engage in specific alliances with independent candidates or other local parties. Hence, we can expect these lists to also combine traditional party structures with customized organizational arrangements for these local alliances. Yet, the highly structured imperative of the quantitative research design does not allow for such nuance and the adopted operationalization of organizational strength is highly focused on traditional local party structures. Hence, in the following section I will turn to the organizational reality of non-national lists in Flanders and analyse the respective role of - and the relation between - traditional and alternative organizational arrangements non-national lists in Flanders.

10.6 THE INTERACTION BETWEEN TRADITIONAL AND ALTERNATIVE ORGANIZATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS WITHIN NON-NATIONAL LISTS

A qualitative analysis of the elite-interviews with list-headers of the 22 selected cases allows to refine the quantitative research findings on the organizational strength of non-national lists as discussed above. The interviews provide more detailed and contextual information on the organizational strength of the cases and allow for a more profound analysis of the co-occurrence of and interaction between formal and informal organizational arrangements. I will successively discuss the results of this qualitative analysis for associated lists, local cartel lists and independent lists in the sample.

10.6.1 Associated lists

This organizational analysis of associated lists is based on six cases. Associated lists are initiated by local party branches aiming to maximize their vote share by involving independent candidates and localizing their name. In the previous chapter it was established that these independent candidates not merely serve to fill up the lists but often get elected and hence are also involved in other (legislative) activities of the party. The interviews reveal that most of these cases combine traditional organizational party structures with informal organizational arrangements to integrate the independent candidates into the party organization.

Only one associated list in the sample (case 20) did not adapt its traditional party structures and maintained a clear and formal demarcation between the different organizational faces of the local party (the members, the board and the council group), each with their own tasks and settings: *'Council meetings take place every fourth Thursday of the month. We have a council group meeting on the preceding Monday and on Tuesday we present our plans to the board of governors which is composed of representatives of the local associations of the party. [...] The regular members are mainly involved through festivities'*.

The other five cases did adapt their original formal party structures to accommodate the independent candidates into the party operation. We have distinguished above

(chapter 2.5) between the two (divergent) roles of local party branches: one as agency of the national mother party and one as political actor in the local political arena. The interviews reveal that these two roles are organizationally disconnected to integrate independent candidates. These independent candidates have only engaged for the local political project of the party branch and do not affiliate with the national party or support the national party goals. Involving these candidates in the local activities of the party while excluding them from national party issues therefore requires the detachment of both local party roles. Two organizational strategies can be distinguished to disentangle these two local party faces: *assimilation* and *differentiation*.

Two cases in the sample (case 10 and case 13) have adopted the first strategy and assimilated the independent candidates of the associated list into the party by unlocking their formal local party organs. Both cases maintained a bureaucratic party structure with registered party members and a formal elected board of governors, but these traditional local party organs have been opened up to embrace people from outside the party (independent candidates but also other interested sympathizers): *'If people are interested, they can come by and join the board. But what's in a name, the board is just a group of people'* (case 10). Similarly, the local party-on-the-ground has been disconnected from the national party membership by unlocking local political activities to non-party members. In both cases, the main motivation for this assimilation strategy seems to be a general concern for openness and transparency in the local policy debate and the ambition to involve non-party members in the formulation of local policy preferences. Case 13 even set up a parallel membership structure in addition to the nationally registered party members, although with a less closed character: *'Everyone can come to our meetings and become member. Last meeting we realized that we forgot to ask a membership fee, but normally we have about 30 paying members and several non-paying members who regularly attend our meetings'* (case 13).

Supra-local party-political issues are rarely discussed within these parties, but the national party members in the municipality do remain involved in national party activities through direct communication from the national party centre without the

intermediation of the local party branch. Yet, the national party remains connected with the associated lists and supports their local political activities. Consequently, the national party is considered the '*rich aunt*' of the associated lists.

These two cases thus clearly prioritize their latter role as actors in the local political arena and they have put their role as national party agency on the backburner. The assimilation of non-party members in these cases resulted in an informal organizational structure, grafted upon the traditional party organs but discarding the clear distinction between the organizational faces of the party. The traditional party organs have been unlocked to coalesce into one single group of people with a joint political project for the locality: '*Our representatives do not meet separately. We are an open group, we hope that as many people are present to raise questions and hear our agenda and participate in the decisions*' (case 10).

The three other associated lists in the sample adopted a different strategy to accommodate independent candidates. They are not willing to neglect their role as party agencies for they have a considerable amount of party members and an extensive membership operation: '*We are a large party branch with more than 600 party members. We have a vast socio-cultural operation and that's why people affiliate: an excursion, a barbeque, political services, group purchases, information sessions*' (case 14). Instead of unlocking the traditional party structures and focusing on their role in local politics, these cases have split up the two party roles and assigned them to two separate structures. The respondents make a clear functional and organizational differentiation between the local *party* and the *list*, notwithstanding a substantial overlap in people. The local party concentrates on its role as agency of the national party with a focus on member activities and supra-local party issues, while the lists involves all candidates (party-members and independents) and is exclusively concerned with local policy issues as illustrated by the following quote:

Interviewer: So there is a difference between the work of the list and that of the party?

Respondent: Yes, and we try to keep that strictly separated [...]. The [local] party will never assume a party-political stance on local policy issues but gave its mandate to the

list [...].The [local] party rather considers strategic, long-term issues and organizes socio-cultural activities for the members' (case 14).'

At organizational level, the local party maintains its formal and closed bureaucratic structure with paying members, an elected board of governors and regular general meetings. The list on the other hand has a less complex organizational structure without members, nor board of governors, but simply containing all candidates on the list. Still a distinction can be made between the elected candidates (the council group) and the non-elected candidates. Two of these cases (case 19 and case 21) concerned successful mayoral lists which were able to deliver a single majority and hence all candidates on the list received some office function (mayor, aldermen, councillor, social welfare councillor). Hence the list coincides with the council group and interaction between the candidates occurs more or less formal in line with the council agenda. Case 21 has monthly meetings to prepare council work, while the candidates of case 19 hardly ever gathered formally, but frequently interacted through informal contacts: *'We rarely congregated outside the council meetings, but we regularly bumped into each other [...]. No week could pass without bumping into one another. There were so many activities from all sorts of organizations and you always meet people'* (case 19).

Case 14 was also part of local government but had less office functions to distribute and consequently an organizational distinction is made between the council group and the non-elected candidates. The council group of this case meets monthly in preparation of the council meetings, while the office holders also aim to keep the non-elected candidates politically engaged in light of future elections by inviting them on a regular basis to discuss past and future work and provide policy input.

Notwithstanding this clear organizational and functional distinction between the local party and the list, these two organizational entities are interlinked through considerable personal overlap as the management board of the party contains several candidates / office holders. Yet, on local policy issues, the list – and particularly the council group - seems to assume a dominant position over the party. The latter is mainly considered as a source of input and support for the council group: *'Some of the candidates on the list, like myself, are also part of the local party board, but there are*

also candidates who are not interested to join the party board [...]. If the local party perceives any problems, these are passed on to us. The party doesn't take any decisions. [...]. We (the list) take the decisions because we contain alderman and councillors' (case 21). Moreover, the autonomous position of the list seems enhanced by a separate budget. These three lists organize separate activities and have their own revenues, although the party provides a significant part of the campaign resources.

This functional and organizational separation of the 'party' and the 'list' seems to allow the council group to take local policy decisions without the formal checks and balances provided in traditional local party structures. Although the involvement of independent candidates is the main argument for this autonomous and dominant stance of the council group, the interviews also demonstrate that after a while, independent candidates often affiliate to the party: *'we started out with about 50% independent candidates on the list, but elected or appointed candidates soon become party members too and integrate in the local party organization, although we never urged for this'* (case 14). The pressure on independent candidates to eventually affiliate with the party is even clearer in case 21 where all candidates are explicitly expected to become a party member.

We can conclude that involving independent candidates impedes local party branches to combine their local political ambitions with their role as party agency within one single party organization. Therefore, the associated lists in the sample have adapted their organizational structure to meet the specific local needs resulting in a combination of formal and informal organizational arrangements. For some cases the organizational differentiation between the party and the list seems to provide the local council group with substantial autonomy in local policy issues.

10.6.2 Local cartel list

The interviews reveal that the local cartel lists in the sample equally combine traditional local party structures with specific organizational arrangements to organize the local alliance between the different cartel partners. Again, a clear organizational distinction can be made between the individual parties and the joint list, although the functional differentiation is less clear as for associated lists. The individual cartel

partners maintain their own – often bureaucratic organizational structures with a formal board of governors, registered party members and formal, statutory procedures for interaction. These local party organizations are concerned with both their role as party agency and their role in local politics. In addition to the distinct organizational structures of the individual cartel partners, the cooperation between these partners is structured in an overarching cartel organization with a sole focus on local political issues. Most cartel lists also contain some independent candidates but these often have no separate formal organizational structure: *‘We actually consist of three parties in one cartel and two of them have a separate board, and mandatories, and members paying their membership fees, ... Only the independents are not organized like that’* (case 7). Only in case 15, the independent candidates also have a distinct – though less formal - organizational structure with frequent core group meetings: *‘We are a small group of about 8 people and we meet monthly. We have no formal board nor anything like that, only a president, a secretary and a treasurer, but that’s more an informal matter’* (case 15).

Moreover, the organizational features of these alliances alter with the electoral cycle. The terms and conditions of the alliances are negotiated by an ad-hoc group with representatives of the different (potential) cartel partners. Local party leaders and top candidates of the individual cartel partners play a prominent role in these temporary negotiating structures. In two cases, these working groups even involved representatives of the national party centre to strengthen the position of the unexperienced local party representatives: *‘The top candidate of our cartel partner was an incumbent councillor but with limited political experience. He was assisted in the cartel negotiations by a Flemish MP and the vice-president of his national party’* (case 11). These ad hoc structures have no formal structure nor formal procedures for interaction but convene intensively during a short period of time prior to the elections to agree on the cartel name and the composition of the list, a joint electoral program, the divisions of campaigning efforts and possible post-electoral collaboration... They also agree on the post-electoral cooperation as cartel lists can exceed a mere electoral alliance and obtain a more permanent character.

Only one cartel list in the sample merely concerned a joint candidate list with no engagements for further cooperation. The privileged relationship between the cartel partners ended after the elections and each party refocused on its own role in council. The other analysed cartel lists did sustain the cooperation, although the organizational structure to cooperate altered after the elections with a shift in both the focus and the locus of the alliance. Once the electoral dice was thrown and the elected and appointed officials of the list were identified, the respective party leaders took a step back and the joint council group became the centroid of the alliance which refocused on a joint council strategy – instead of a joint electoral strategy.

For cartel lists in local government however, this post-electoral collaboration closely resembles conventional coalition practices and becomes mainly concentrated in the group of executive officials in the College of Mayor and Aldermen. This is especially true for the two cartel lists with a single majority who have no other coalition partners to consider. The Mayor and Aldermen of these cases meet weekly to decide on local policy measures, while the other councillors of the cartel gather prior to the council meetings to take notice of the council agenda and receive '*voting instructions*'. The collaboration between the councillors from the different cartel partners is limited as they have little political levers and are mainly expected to support the decisions of the College. In one case the separate council group meetings have even been omitted during the course of the legislature and the cooperation between the cartel / coalition partners became exclusively located in the College.

Similarly, the post-electoral collaboration between cartel partners in larger coalitions – involving additional parties than only those of the cartel – differs little from conventional coalition work and is concentrated in the College. One respondent clearly states that his post-electoral relationship within the cartel does not differ from his relationship with the other coalition partner in his government because a coalition always decides '*in collegiality*': '*In a coalition government, all partners support the policy decisions. You only bring consensual issues on the council agenda and in the absence of consensus the agenda item is postponed*' (case 11). In another governing cartel however (case 7) the aldermen of the cartel partners do form a distinctive group and convene

separately to prepare the college meetings and align their position towards the other coalition partner.

Although the joint organization of governing cartel partners is mainly centred in the college, the local party organizations do keep a close eye on this collaboration. They generally attend the joint council group meetings and the local party presidents often consult informally if no consensus is found within the college on specific issues. In one case the cartel partners even organize occasional joint board meetings to discuss specific policy issues.

For local cartel list with a legislative role in council, the post-electoral cartel collaboration is concentrated in the council group and determined by the pace and the decisions of the local government: *'Council meetings take place every third Tuesday of the month and the agenda is made available 10 days before, so we [council group] meet on Wednesdays to determine our position and additional agenda items'* (case 22). Again, these council group meetings are attended by the respective party presidents and are accessible to the non-elected candidates of the lists, although these show limited interest (except in the prospect of upcoming elections when new people come forward).

We can conclude that local cartel lists contain a multilayered organizational structure with a clear organizational distinction between the cartel and the distinct cartel partners. The local party branches on these cartel lists maintain their own formal organizational structure to assume their twofold role as national party agency and as local political actor. Yet this latter role is shared with the other cartel partners in an umbrella structure with a more informal character. The cartel itself has no members, nor a formal board of governors, nor formal procedures for interaction. Before the elections, the operation of the alliance is focused on a joint electoral strategy with a prominent role for the local party organizations. After the elections, the focus of the collaboration shifts towards a joint council strategy and the joint council group assumes a more prominent position in the local policy issues dealt with by the alliance. Still, local party leaders also remains involved from the background. Hence, the council group in local cartel lists also has considerable autonomy, though less so as for

the associated lists as the functional distinction between the list and the party organizations is less clear.

10.6.3 Independent candidate lists

In contrast to the other list types discussed above, the independent lists in the sample⁵⁴ assume only one of the two roles generally ascribed to local parties. They participate in local political life but are not concerned with supra-local party politics. Independent lists have no links to any national party and hence, have no formal organizational template at their disposal to structure their local political activities. These lists need to develop their own organizational arrangements to organize their role in local politics. Most of the analysed independent lists have an informal structure with an open character and no clear organizational distinction between members, party leaders and councillors. Most respondents therefore do not conceive their independent lists as a 'party', but rather as a 'local political association' composed of an active core group of engaged citizens but open to other interested citizens: *We are not a party, we are a team, an anarchist collective and anyone interested can join us*' (case 18).

The size of these list and their position in council seems to influence their organizational complexity. The higher their political relevance, the higher the need for labour division and internal differentiation, though remaining largely informal. Three of the analysed independent lists did not cross the representation threshold and only contain about a handful of activists without elected representatives. These lists have no active council role but still sustain a constant limited activity level in between elections to monitor local policy and preserve some visibility in the municipality: *'You could say that we are a movement with four people in the core and then several sympathizers, readers of our pamphlets'*(case 8). The small scale of these cases makes any organizational arrangements to structure internal interaction redundant⁵⁵.

⁵⁴ The sample contains 9 independent lists, but for one of these insufficient information is available concerning its organizational features, which has therefore been omitted from the analysis.

⁵⁵ One case concerns a one man's list and involves only one person without any interaction.

Independent lists with elected representatives in council can assume a more comprehensive political role and engage in a broader range of political activities. They seem also able to generate more enthusiasm and involve a larger core group of activists. Several analysed independent lists have created certain formal positions to organize and structure their activities (chairman, treasurer, secretary), yet the allocation of these positions is not formalized and the councillors, party leaders and sympathizers form one single group with no distinct meetings or activities: *'We only have a governing board to take care of financial management and to implement actions, yet there is no elected board of governors for there are no party members (case 18).*

One independent list in the sample however, does resemble more closely to a traditional local party organization with a clear differentiation between the party in public office and the party in central office. It concerns a longstanding list with substantial governing experience which has led to a more formal division of labour: *'We do have an organigram, with a core group of seven people - the executive committee - which considers the general strategy of the list. This group contains a president and the two council group chairpersons and some external persons. Additionally we have a broader policy group involving all councillors and some other sympathizers which gathers monthly to prepare the council meetings'* (case 3). The first group can be considered as a closed party-in-central-office, while the latter group concerns an open party-in-public-office. A formal party-on-the-ground is lacking for the list has no members, but they can rely on a large informal rank and file.

We can conclude that independent lists in general are less complex and less formally structured than associated or cartel lists which are organized at multiple levels to combine their role as party agency with their role in local politics. Independent lists are only concerned with local politics and do not require any organizational arrangements to combine these two roles. Some independent lists have no organizational structure at all, while others have merely a simple informal structure and still others have adopted some traditional organizational characteristics. The organizational complexity of independent lists seems to vary according to their size and position in council.

10.7 CONCLUSIONS

Based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative data, this chapter has assessed the organizational strength of non-national lists in Flanders to contribute to our understanding of their partisan character and assess whether these lists should rather be considered as short-term, weakly structured political groups or as party-like durable and institutionalized local political organizations. The survey results demonstrated that both the organizational capacity and the organizational complexity of non-national lists varies substantially within and between the different types of non-national lists and confirmed that these lists represent a miscellaneous phenomenon in local politics with diverging organizational features.

The qualitative analysis clearly demonstrated that the organizational structure of non-national lists often contains a complex and multileveled mixture of formal and informal arrangements which is difficult to grasp with a standardized quantitative approach. Local cartel lists and associated lists can be considered as organizational derivatives of local party branches. Both types are based on traditional local party structures which have been excavated by or supplemented with informal customized organizational arrangements to combine their role as party agency with their role as participants in local politics. They often have a complex, multilayered organizational structure, with a less prominent organizational distinction between members, councillors and party leadership, while the distinction between local and supra-local competences on the other hand is strongly anchored in the adapted organizational structures. Supra-local and party political issues remain the exclusive competence of the traditional party organizations, while local policy issues are largely detached from the national party and assigned to additional (or adapted) - less formalized - organizational structures. These customized organizational structures seem to provide local party branches with substantial autonomy and attribute a dominant role to the council group. Hence, these findings seem to confirm the general evolution towards strataarchical party structures (Bolleyer, 2012). Moreover, these findings also confirm the concentration of local powers in the local council groups as established by Copus and Erlingsson as the local counterpart of the party crisis (Copus & Erlingsson, 2012).

Hence, at organizational level, associated lists and cartel lists can be considered as a local reflection of the cartelization tendency of political parties.

Independent local lists on the other hand proved weaker organizations. Their organizational structure is less formal and less complex and they demonstrate lower activity levels. Yet, a substantial part of the independent lists equally indicate a high organizational capacity and concern dynamic, party-like organizations. Their organizational strength seems strongly influenced by their electoral success and position in council. Without representatives in council, the commitment of activists to engage in political activities in between elections is confined and the limited scope of non-represented lists does not entail any (complex) organizational structures nor broad activity levels. Moreover, it was established above that independent lists in Flanders more often fail to surpass the electoral threshold and enter local council, while local cartel lists and associated lists have more electoral guarantees when entering the electoral arena. Hence, independent lists more often lack the political need to organize on a more stable basis.

11 PROGRAMMATIC PRIORITIES

11.1 INTRODUCTION: PARTY IDEOLOGY AND POSITIONAL COMPETITION

The general objective of this functional analysis is to establish the partisan character of non-national lists in Flanders by assessing the extent to which they implement the functions traditionally associated with political parties. The previous chapters dealt with candidate selection and organizational strength as key party functions. This chapter considers the programmatic priorities of non-national lists as part of their programmatic party functions. Political parties identify and prioritize public concerns and translate these into a coherent party program to mobilize the electorate and influence the political agenda. These programmatic party functions are generally inspired by a broader vision on society which is crystalized in the party ideology involving ‘a more or less coherent set of ideas that provides the basis for organized political action’ (Heywood, 2003). Party ideologies are relatively constant in time and place and represents the core identity of political parties. They contain a diagnosis of the present society with its prevailing problems, a vision on how society should be organized and political strategies to achieve this ‘good society’ (Heywood, 2003). Based on these shared views on how society is and should be organized a distinction can be made between several party families across nation states: liberal parties, conservative parties, socialist parties, social democratic parties, Christian democratic parties, green parties, right-wing parties, ... (Volkens & Klingemann, 2002; Ware, 1996).

Many party ideologies – and the associated party families – can be traced back to the central societal conflicts of the beginning of the 20th century. Lipset and Rokkan (1967) identified two revolutions associated with the modernization of society (state formation and industrialization) which have resulted in four main social cleavages from which political parties have developed. These cleavages concern the conflict between the centre and the periphery; the state and the church; agriculture and industry; and labour and capital. These conflicts from earlier times have been ‘frozen’ into the party systems and continued to structure political competition in modern societies (Lipset & Rokkan, 1967). Further modernization and social changes

(secularization, globalization, urbanization ...) however, have altered the relative salience of these traditional cleavages and brought about new social conflicts. These modern conflicts have developed in additional politicized cleavages such as the divide between universalism and particularism or between material and post-material values (Steyvers, 2014). Traditional parties did not (sufficiently) adopt these new cleavages and the emergence of new parties with novel party ideologies (left-libertarian, nationalist parties) indicated a partial 'defrost' of the traditional party systems.

Of these different, interwoven societal cleavages in Western democracies, the socio-economic conflict between labour and capital is generally considered as the most prominent one (Bouteca, 2011; Dalton, 1996; Lijphart, 1999). The versatile ideological space in which party competition occurs is often translated into one single left-right dimension to reflect this dominant traditional class-based conflict. This one-dimensional left-right divide is a recognizable and widely applied scale which helps the electorate to locate parties vis-à-vis each other and to select the party that comes closest to the individual preferences. Moreover, it allows party elites to relate to each other on substantive grounds and much comparative party research equally relies on the ideological classification of parties on this left-right scale. Yet, the emergence of post-modern social cleavages has complicated the interpretation and application of 'left' and 'right' and calls the relevance of these ideological references into question. Several authors advocate to complement the socio-economic dimension of the left-right scale with a socio-cultural dimension to include non-economic, non-class based concerns (Inglehart, 1990; Kitschelt, 1994; Kriesi, 1998).

The salience of this left-right dimension is also called into question by contemporary party theories indicating the fading out of ideological differences between political parties. Centrifugal party competition has been replaced by more centripetal competition for the median voter as a result of social and political modernization and corresponding changes in the electorate (diminishing class-based identities, secularization, dealignment...). The ideological convergence of political parties was one of the main characteristics of the catch-all party model described by Kirchheimer (1966) in succession to the traditional mass-party model. The catch-all party is characterized by reduced attention for ideological issues in favour of more technical issues and

personalities. This ideological convergence is equally ascribed to the ensuing cartel party with a further decrease of the political competition as parties increasingly form power cartels (Katz & Mair, 1995). Other scholars however have countered this assumed ideological convergence and argue that moments of convergence and divergence alternate (Bouteca, 2011; Budge & Klingemann, 2001).

Party programs represent the operational component of party ideologies. The party ideology serves as a political compass to interpret topical political issues and determine policy proposals and party programs. These general ideas on society provide the party leaders, but also voters and activists with a conceptual map to understand political situations and reduce the information costs associated with sorting out party positions on a multitude of concrete issues (Vassallo & Wilcox, 2006). In a traditional rational choice perspective, party competition has been studied from a confrontational approach in which parties defend different standpoints and assume diverging positions in the policy space (proximity model). However, several authors have argued that parties not only compete on positional issues, but also on valence issue (Budge & Klingemann, 2001). These valence issues concern political subjects that strongly move the electorate but for which no alternative policy positions occur across different parties. Still, these issues are positively or negatively linked to certain parties and consequently parties compete by emphasizing those themes that belong to their core-business and benefit their competitive position (saliency model of party competition). Consequently, party programs can be studied based on the direction or the intensity of policy preferences (Bouteca, 2011).

Local parties assume similar programmatic party functions and equally take position in societal conflicts to formulate local policy proposals and demands based on their view of a 'good' society. The role of national ideological cleavages in the articulation and prioritization of local interests is less clear however. In most Western democracies, the local political arena is dominated by national party branches and thus national party ideologies trickle down to the local level. Yet, local politics largely concerns specific local issues which are difficult to interpret from a national ideological perspective and Copus et al. (2008) even assume that national party ideologies prevent local party branches to develop a distinct programmatic profile on specific local controversies:

'mainstream [local] parties increasingly fail to reflect the diverse range of views and interests that make up the local political dynamic' (Copus, Clark, & Bottom, 2008). The dominant ideological predispositions of local party branches would thus prevent them to focus on specific local cleavages in the electorate which are more relevant to local politics.

Non-national lists on the other hand could be less constrained by this ideological bias as several authors have argued that these lists enrich local politics with a specific local discourse and a locally oriented programmatic profile (Boogers & Voerman, 2010; Breux & Bherer, 2013; Elmendorf & Schleicher, 2012). By invoking specific local cleavages, non-national lists could thus respond more closely to the interests of the local electorate. Boogers and Voerman (2010) have analysed the programmatic profile of independent local candidate lists in the Netherlands and identified three types of independent lists, based on the local cleavages they introduce in local politics: 1) *localist parties* emphasize the contrast between municipal interests and regional / national interests. These parties assume a non-political profile with a general focus on the quality of the local administration and local democracy. Moreover, these localist parties stress that traditional party branches are influenced by supra-local political pressures distracting them from a pure local focus; 2) *protest parties* are driven by the opposition to a municipal plan or a more general dissatisfaction with municipal administration. They expose a dividing line between establishment and anti-establishment by accentuating the poor responsiveness of party branches in local office; 3) *interest parties* stress geographical and demographic divisions and promote the interests of specific groups of residents.

In the following sections, I will analyse the programmatic priorities of non-national lists in Flemish municipalities and the role of national and local cleavages. After discussing existing, but outdated insights on the programmatic priorities of local party branches, I will analyse the survey results from list headers of non-national lists to assess the role of national party ideology in the prioritization of local policy issues. Different from the previous chapters, this quantitative section not only implicates primary data collected from list headers of non-national lists, but also secondary data made available by the PARTIREP consortium concerning the policy preferences of

local party branches. An additional empirical section based on a nominal analysis of the list names adopted by non-national lists, aims to provide a more general picture of the local cleavages introduced by non-national lists. Subsequently, the results from these quantitative analyses are complemented with a qualitative analysis of the interviews with list headers of non-national lists to develop a more detailed understanding of the role of specific local cleavages in the programmatic priorities of non-national lists.

11.2 COMPARING THE PROGRAMMATIC PRIORITIES OF LOCAL PARTY BRANCHES AND NON-NATIONAL LISTS IN FLANDERS

11.2.1 Previous research findings

The most recent and rather confined research findings on the programmatic priorities of local party branches in Belgium date from 2008. Based on a survey among local party presidents, Buelens, Dumont, Rihoux, and Heyndels (2008) have demonstrated that local party branches can be considered as highly policy-seeking for they are highly committed to their programmatic party functions. Realizing the party manifesto is considered of prior importance by all party families, although different accents have been established in the preferred path towards policy influence. The traditional party families (CD&V, VLD and to a lesser degree SPA) demonstrate a more pragmatic approach to local policy making, with higher office-seeking ambitions, while more recent political formations (Green, extreme right and regionalist parties) proved more idealist in their pursuit of policy goals and assess participation in government as less essential.

Additionally, the authors established that the programmatic priorities of local party branches are strongly guided by national ideological cleavages. Local party branches situate themselves practically on the same position on the left-right scale as their mother party and hence they unambiguously adopt the ideological profile of the national party. Moreover, the local programmatic priorities are found to be highly similar to the thematic priorities of the respective national parties and the authors conclude that local party branches first and foremost belong to their mother party and

only in the margins apply some local accents (Buelens, Dumont, et al., 2008). Comparing the programmatic priorities of non-national lists and local party branches.

11.2.2 Relating two data sources

This section aims to establish similarities and differences in the programmatic priorities of different types of non-national lists in Flanders and local party branches based on a combined analysis of two distinct data sources. The survey among list headers of non-national lists contained several questions concerning the ideological position and programmatic priorities of non-national list. The resulting data are comparable with survey-data gathered from presidents of local party branches by the Belgian Interuniversity Attraction Pole PARTIREP⁵⁶. This survey contained similar questions concerning the ideological profile and programmatic priorities of local party branches⁵⁷ and hence allows to compare the policy preferences of non-national lists and local party branches. It should be noted however that both surveys were conducted in a different stage of the electoral cycle. The Partirep questionnaire was distributed in full local campaign period, just prior to the municipal elections of 2012, while the survey among non-national lists headers was conducted in 2014, also in a campaign period but for supra-local elections (just prior to the coinciding regional, federal and European elections of 2014). However, the questions concerning the programmatic priorities in both surveys referred to the situation during the electoral campaign of 2012 and hence it can be assumed that distortions caused by the time lapse are limited.

In order to allow comparison between the two data-sources, the Partirep-data have been confined to Flemish party branches and required some additional data-cleaning to avoid distortions⁵⁸. Moreover, the individual local party branches were linked to the data concerning the decisional autonomy of local candidate lists to distinguish

⁵⁶ More information concerning the research design of this survey can be found on the website of the consortium (www.partirep.eu) or in the result of their joint research effort on local party branches in Belgium (K. Deschouwer et al., 2013)

⁵⁷ The specific data concerning the ideological position and policy priorities of local party branches have not (yet) been analyzed by the Partirep research team.

⁵⁸ Several party branches occurred more than once in the data-file. In that case, one was selected based on the completeness of the questionnaire. Moreover, Antwerp is overrepresented in the PARTIREP-data for district-parties are included. These have been omitted from the file.

between party branches which have participated in the 2012 municipal elections with a national party lists and those with a non-national list to avoid overlap with the data from the non-national list headers. Table 11.1 demonstrates the distribution of the relevant Partirep-data across the different party families and the different types of lists. The socialist and Green party family are less represented in the group of national party lists as these more often engaged in local cartel lists.

Table 11.1 Distribution of PARTIREP data across the different party families and different list types

	N	type of list in 2012			
		party list	cartel list	associated list	no list
CD&V	155	81,3%	11,5%	7,1%	0,0%
N-VA	200	89,0%	9,5%	0,5%	1,0%
Open VLD	127	69,3%	15,0%	14,9%	0,8%
Groen	112	47,3%	44,7%	1,8%	6,3%
Vlaams Belang	75	90,7%	0,0%	2,7%	6,7%
SP.A	144	53,5%	38,9%	7,7%	0,0%
Total	813	72,6%	20,0%	5,7%	1,8%

To avoid overlap between the two datasets, the following analysis of the programmatic priorities of local party branches will be confined to the 587 (72,6%) party branches with a pure national party lists, as non-national lists are addresses by the survey among list headers.

These two available data sources will be analysed separately and the results are related afterwards. I will first assess the ideological profile of local party branches and non-national lists and then consider differences in programmatic priorities.

11.2.3 Ideological profile

The presidents of the local party branches were asked to situate both their local party branch and their national party on a left-right scale between 0 (left) and 10 (right). Table 11.2 summarizes the average scores on this ideological scale both for the local party branch (own position) and for the national party.

Table 11.2: Ideological position of local party branches and their national party on left-right scale

	own position		national party	
	\bar{x}	σ	\bar{x}	σ
Groen	2,3	1,240	2,3	1,203
SP.A	2,7	1,649	3,1	1,680
CD&V	5,4	0,851	5,4	0,843
Open VLD	6,5	1,248	6,3	1,215
N-VA	6,8	1,246	7,0	1,058
Vlaams Belang	9,4	1,027	9,5	0,851
Eta²	0.74***		0.76***	

(N=472) (**p<.001; **p<.005; *p<.05)

The small discrepancies between the ideological profile of the local party branches and the perceived ideological position of the national mother party – in combination with the small standard deviations – confirm earlier findings that local party branches easily transpose the national ideological policy space to the local political context and adopt the ideological profile of their mother party (Buelens, Dumont, et al., 2008). Local party branches of Groen can be situated most to the left with an average position of 2,3, closely followed by SP.A branches with an average of 2,7. Vlaams Belang is situated at the extreme right of this ideological scale with an average close to ten and the other party families fluctuate in between closer to the center. Hence, the national cleavage between leftwing and rightwing parties is transposed to the local political context and it can be assumed that this ideological affiliation of local party branches strongly affects their local programmatic priorities.

A similar analysis of the ideological position of non-national lists on this ideological ten-point scale reveals that associated lists and independent lists situate themselves right in the middle of this divide with an average score of five, while local cartel lists are located more to the left with an average score of 3,9 (table 11.3). The latter score can again be attributed to the overrepresentation of local cartel lists involving Groen and/or SP.A-branches. The high standard deviations - especially for associated lists and cartel lists - further indicate quite some variation along the ideological spectrum within the different categories of non-national lists.

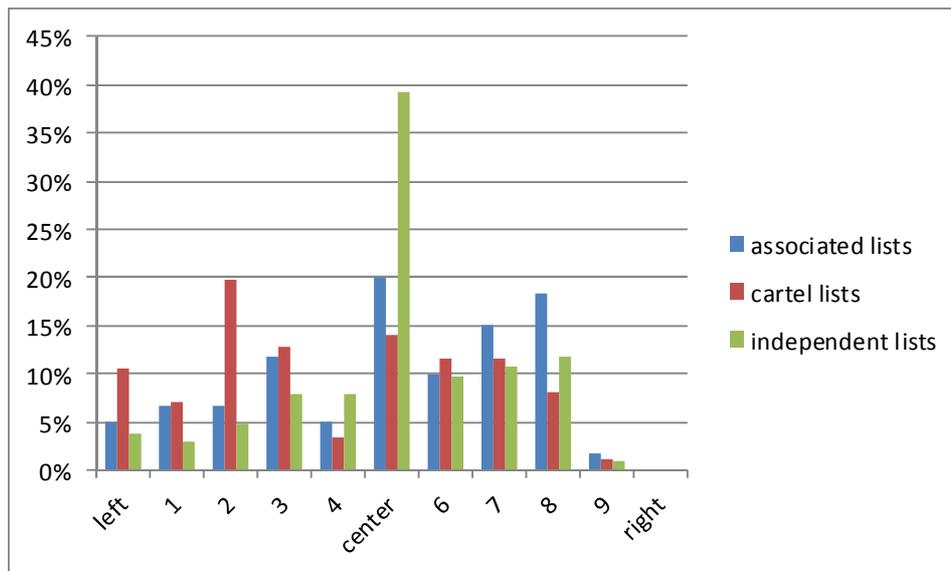
Table 11.3: Average ideological position of non-national lists

	\bar{x}	σ
associated lists	5,0	2,480
cartel lists	3,9	2,557
independent local lists	5,0	2,017
Total	4,7	2,375
Eta²	0.045**	

(N=248) (***)p<.001; **p<.005; *p<.05)

Figure 11.1 illustrates that independent lists are more closely distributed around the center of the left-right divide with a substantial share of them (nearly 40%) right in the center of the left-right divide. Local cartel lists and associated lists are more widely distributed along this scale, with a skewness towards the left side for local cartel scale.

11.1: Ideological position of non-national lists



We can conclude from these figures that most political actors in the local political arena have no problems to relate themselves to the national ideological divide between left and right which is straightforwardly translated to the local political context, although this ideological perspective is assumed to be less relevant in local politics (Boogers & Voerman, 2010; Breux & Bherer, 2013; Elmendorf & Schleicher, 2012). Only independent lists seem more reluctant to associate with this national cleavage as a substantial share are situated right in the middle. This might indicate that independent lists are less influenced by national ideological considerations to identify programmatic priorities for local politics.

11.2.4 Programmatic priorities

Both local party presidents and list headers of non-national lists were asked to rate the importance of a range of local policy fields in their party manifestos. Local party presidents did so on a scale of importance from 0 to 10, while list headers of non-national lists applied a scale from 1 to 5. Based on the average scores of importance, the different policy matters have been ranked in order of priority for the different party families and for the different types of non-national lists. These rankings allow to compare the programmatic priorities of local party branches and non-national lists.

Table 11.4 summarizes the order of importance of the different policy fields for the local party branches, categorized by party family. Table 11.5 below does the same for the different types of non-national lists. In each table, the three top priorities are marked in grey and the Pearson's correlation coefficient in the last column specifies how the indicated importance of the policy fields correlate with the indicated ideological position on the left-right scale to assess the influence of national party ideology on the policy preferences. Only the bold coefficients signify a significant (positive or negative) correlation.

Table 11.4: Ranking of programmatic priorities of local party branches and correlation with ideological position

	all local party branches	CD&V	N-VA	Open VLD	Groen	Vlaams Belang	SP.A	Pearson's correlation with ideology
Transport	1	1	2	1	1	5	1	-0,051
Road safety	2	2	1	2	3	3	2	0,017
Decent political conduct	3	8	3	5	7	2	7	,203**
Spatial Planning	4	4	5	11	4	10	9	0,018
Public participation	5	10	4	7	5	8	8	0,042
Social policy	6	5	10	15	6	13	3	-,175**
Trade and Economy	7	9	6	3	14	7	15	,353**
Ageing	8	7	11	8	10	9	4	,096*
Local associations	9	3	7	12	12	14	10	,145**
Employment	10	13	9	9	11	4	5	,185**
Environment	11	11	13	14	2	16	6	-,172**
Taxes	12	14	8	4	17	12	14	,339**
Sports	13	6	14	10	16	15	11	,169**
Criminality	14	15	12	6	18	1	16	,447**
Language use	18	20	17	19	20	6	19	,429**
Development cooperation	19	17	19	18	8	20	18	-,339**
Religion	20	19	20	20	19	18	20	,207**

The figures above indicate that the top priorities for local party branches are quasi similar across the different party families. Transport and road safety are generally indicated as the most important local policy fields irrespective of the ideological position on the local parties. Only Vlaams Belang has other local priorities, with a prime concern for criminality, while environment is also a top priority for Green party branches. In addition to the two common top priorities of transport and road safety, the relative importance of other local policy fields strongly varies across the party families. Most other priorities of local party branches correspond with the programmatic priorities of their national mother party. The last column in the table (Pearson's correlation with ideology) indicates how these local policy fields correlate with the ideological position of the party branch on the left-right scale. Leftish party branches attach significantly more importance to social policy, environment and development cooperation, while decent political conduct, trade and economy, taxes, criminality and language are considered more important by party branches at the right side of the ideological scale. This confirms that local party branches adhere to the

thematic priorities of their national mother parties (Buelens, Dumont, et al., 2008), although the main local programmatic priorities of transport and road safety are shared across party borders, irrespective of ideological cleavages.

Table 11.5 below summarizes a similar analysis of the relative importance of different programmatic policy fields for non-national lists, though with a slightly more limited number of policy fields. As for local party branches, road safety and transport are generally indicated as the two most important policy fields, though with some difference between the three categories of non-national lists. Associated lists and cartel lists follow a similar pattern as established for local party branches with road safety and transport as two main priorities, while independent lists deviate from this general party-pattern. These lists have indicated decent political conduct and public participation as top programmatic priorities, closely followed however by the shared concern for road safety and transport.

Table 11.5: Ranking of programmatic priorities of non-national lists and correlation with ideological position

	non-national lists	associated lists	cartel lists	independent lists	Pearson's correlation with ideology
Road safety	1	1	2	3	-0,107
Transport	2	2	1	4	-0,122
Public participation	3	3	3	2	-0,035
Decent political conduct	4	5	6	1	-0,007
Spatial Planning	5	6	5	5	-,172**
Taxes	6	4	8	6	,235**
Environment	7	7	4	8	-,386**
Local associations	8	9	7	7	-0,074
Trade and Economy	9	8	10	9	,143*
Ageing	10	11	9	12	-0,074
Employment	11	10	11	13	-0,072
Sports	12	12	12	11	-0,021
Criminality	13	13	13	10	,284**

The top four of programmatic priorities of non-national lists is not influenced by the ideological position of the lists on the left-right scale as indicated by the insignificance of Pearson's correlation with ideology. Yet the ideological position on the left-right scale does influence the relative importance of the secondary policy fields, as has also

been established for local party branches. Crimality, taxes and trade/economy are more important to non-national lists situated on the right side of the ideological spectrum, while environment and spatial planning are more important to those on the left side. This correlation between ideological profile and indicated importance of policy fields however disappears if we only consider the group of independent lists. These lists are less influenced by national ideological considerations as they show less variation on the left-right scale and are more closely concentrated in the center.

These figures thus reveal that the programmatic priorities of local party branches and the role of national ideological considerations show strong similarities with those of associated lists and cartel lists. They share a principal concern for road safety and transport, irrespective of the ideological position on the left-right scale while secondary programmatic priorities are determined by national party ideology. Independent local candidate lists show a slightly different order of policy priorities with a prior concern for decent political conduct and public participation in local policy. Furthermore, these lists are less influenced by party ideology in determining the relative importance of local policy fields in their manifestos, also for policy fields of secondary importance.

11.2.5 Interim conclusions

This section has focussed on differences in the programmatic priorities of local party branches and non-national lists in Flemish municipalities and the influence of national ideological cleavages on these priorities. The results indicate that local party branches and derivative non-national lists are guided by a combination of local and national concerns in the prioritization of local policy fields. Party ideology does influence their local programmatic priorities, but only for secondary issues, while transport and road safety are considered as prior local policy concerns across the ideological party families. Hence, the assumption that national ideological considerations would distract local party branches from the general interests of the municipality seems only valid to a limited degree. Local party branches (and derivative non-national lists) emphasize the positional issues associated with the core business of their mother party only in secondary instance, while they share their prior concern for specific local policy issues.

Independent local candidate lists deviate somewhat from this general pattern. These lists have a prime concern for decent political conduct and public participation in the municipality and thereby seem to invoke additional local cleavages in local politics with a greater concern for local democratic values. As the survey data do not allow to further investigate the specific nature of these additional local cleavages introduced by independent lists (or other non-national lists), the following section turns to the electoral database of the Agency of Internal Affairs⁵⁹ as an additional source of data to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the programmatic priorities of non-national lists and the role of local cleavages. Based on an analysis of nominal clues in the lists names adopted by non-national lists in Flanders, I will try to establish the prominence of different local profiles within the different types of non-national lists.

11.3 LOCAL PROFILES OF NON-NATIONAL LISTS IN FLANDERS

Several authors have argued that party names can provide useful informational clues concerning the political values and programmatic priorities of political parties (Boogers, 2008; Kam, 2005; Lau & Redlawsk, 2001). Hence, I will analyze the names of all non-national lists in Flanders that have participated in the municipal elections of 2012 to identify different local programmatic profiles and establish the prevalence of these local profiles among non-national lists in Flemish municipalities. Based on the nominal clues in the list names, non-national lists were clustered into six local profiles, partly inspired by the programmatic profiles distinguished by Boogers and Voerman (2010)⁶⁰.

- 1) Candidate lists with a *localist* profile use nominal references to stress their exclusive⁶¹ concern for the general interests of the municipality and its inhabitants without the interference of national or ideological concerns. The most common list name to indicate this priority of municipal interests is 'Gemeentebelangen'. Other list names in this cluster refer to the specific

⁵⁹ www.vlaanderenkiest.be/verkiezingen2012

⁶⁰ One single list can be assigned to different clusters as a list name might combine different nominal clues.

⁶¹ Several non-national lists combine references to national ideological cleavages with the concern for the local level. Yet, these lists are not included in the cluster of localist profiles, which concerns lists with an exclusive focus for local issues.

municipality concerned – often combined with a prefix or a qualifier such as ‘Voerbelangen’, ‘Pro Bilzen’, ‘Volut Zonhoven’, Also the inhabitants of the municipality are often mentioned in the names of localist lists (‘Brasschatenaren’, ‘Burgerbelangen’).

- 2) *Personal lists* aim to mobilize the electorate based on the personal characteristics of individual candidates. It often concerns mayoral lists (‘Lijst van de burgemeester / LVB’) or lists which have adopted the first name or surname of a prominent candidate.
- 3) *Consensual lists* emphasize the group aspect of the list and refer to the local political practice of collaboration beyond party borders. Nominal clues such as such as ‘samen’, ‘open’ ‘plus’ and ‘eendracht’ indicate a consensual approach to local politics. Also the combination of different party labels in cartel lists refer to this practice of cross-party cooperation.
- 4) Candidate lists with a *protest profile* explicitly distance themselves from traditional party practices by using terms like ‘anders’, ‘beter’, ‘alternatief’, ‘onafhankelijk’. These lists present themselves as democratic alternatives for the poor democratic performance of traditional local parties and assume a clear anti-establishment stance.
- 5) *Political conduct lists* can equally be situated on the establishment/anti-establishment cleavage, yet with a less explicit opposition to conventional political practices. They focus on local political conduct and use nominal references to specific political practices which are considered as beneficial to the functioning of local democracy. They advocate a specific way of conducting local politics as reflected in terms like ‘visie’, ‘participatie’, ‘respect’, ‘bewust’.
- 6) *Issue lists* to conclude refer to specific geographical, demographic or issue cleavages in the municipality by using terms as ‘jong’ or by adopting a French name to refer to the interests of linguistic groups in the municipality (‘Partie/Union francophone’).

The results of this nominal analysis are summarized in table 11.6 indicating the pertinence of these local programmatic profiles for the different types of non-national lists across Flanders in 2012.

Table 11.6: Occurrence of different local programmatic profiles among non-national lists in Flanders

	consensual profile	localist profile	personal profile	protest profile	conduct profile	issue profile
associated lists	38,2%	28,2%	10,7%	4,6%	10,7%	0,8%
cartel lists	79,5%	11,9%	4,0%	4,5%	5,1%	5,7%
independent local lists	10,5%	52,6%	7,7%	17,2%	21,1%	3,8%
total	41,1%	32,6%	7,2%	9,7%	13,0%	3,7%

(n=516)

These figures demonstrate that a consensual profile is most prevalent among non-national lists in Flanders. While the traditional partisan interpretation of local politics generally focuses on the expression, competition and reconciliation of partisan interests as key to local politics, the prominence of the consensual profile indicates that these lists rather emphasize the need for consensual politics instead of ideological polarization. As cartel lists have implemented this idea of consensual politics in their practices, this group of non-national lists contains the largest share of consensual profiles (79,5%). Yet, also a substantial part of the associated lists (38,2%) and a minority of one out of ten independent lists clearly profile themselves as consensual local partnerships.

Secondly, a substantial part of 32,6% of the non-national lists in Flanders have adopted a localist profile emphasizing their exclusive focus on the interests of the municipality. Independent lists contain the highest share of localist profiles (52,6%) but also associated lists often stress their exclusive concern for local concerns (28,2%). This is less the case for local cartel lists with only 11,9% localists profiles.

The other distinct local profiles are less widespread among non-national lists in Flanders. 13% nominally emphasize their vision on appropriate political conduct, though occurring more frequently by independent lists with a share of one out of five. 17,2% of these independent lists can be identified as protest lists for they explicitly advocate a different political behaviour. This protest profile is again less widespread in the category of cartel lists and associated lists. Personal lists and issue lists are rare among non-national lists in Flanders with general shares far beneath 10%. Yet personal lists occur more frequently in the group of associated lists.

This nominal analysis thus demonstrates that the different types of non-national lists profile themselves on specific local cleavages in addition to the national ideological cleavage invoked by local party branches. We could therefore conclude that non-national lists indeed enrich local politics with a specific local discourse as argued by Boogers and Voerman (2010). Non-national lists often emphasize their focus on the local level without interference of national ideological considerations and stress the need for consensual decision-making and alternative political conduct as opposed to the party polarization and established conduct of traditional party politics.

Yet, it can be questioned if these local profiles actually reflect positional differences and represent a different conception of local politics or merely concerne valence issues claimed by non-national lists as a unique selling proposition. These local profiles might be merely emphasized to appeal to the local electorate without much further difference in programmatic priorities. In the subsequent qualitative section, I will examine the rationales behind these local profiles and interpret the meaning of the invoked local cleavages.

11.4 LOCAL CLEAVAGES IN LOCAL POLITICS

The interviews with the top candidates of the 22 selected non-national lists amply dealt with programmatic issues and political priorities and allow to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of the local profiles adopted by non-national lists in Flanders. A qualitative analysis of these interview data allowed for a more profound examination – beyond the mere nominal clues in the list names - of the local cleavages on which the selected cases profile themselves and their meaning in local politics.

The respondents focussed on four main cleavages on which their list competes with other political actors in local politics. In addition to the local cleavages between municipal and national interests, and between establishment versus anti-establishment as also identified by Boogers and Voerman (2010) for independent parties in the Netherlands, the case analysis provides evidence for an additional cleavage between consensual politics and party polarization and for personal rivalries to structure local political competition. In contrast to the Netherlands however, the interviews provided no evidence for any geographical or demographic cleavages.

Table 11.7 summarizes for each analysed case which of these four local antagonisms are emphasized and demonstrates that different local cleavages are often combined.

Table 11.7: Local cleavages invoked by the analysed cases

	municipal interests (vs. national interests)	consensual character (vs. polarization)	democratic quality (vs. undemocratic establishment)	personal rivalries
case 1	x			x
case 2	x			x
case 3	x		x	
case 4		x		
case 5	x		x	
case 6			x	
case 7		x		
case 8			x	
case 9				x
case 10	x	x		
case 11		x		
case 12		x		
case 13			x	
case 14	x	x		
case 15	x		x	
case 16	x		x	x
case 17			x	
case 18		x	x	
case 19	x	x		
case 20		x		
case 21		x		
case 22		x	x	

I will successively discuss the meaning of and the rationale behind these different local antagonisms and their potential to enrich local politics with a distinctive political conduct.

11.4.1 Municipal versus national interests

The interviews demonstrate the pronounced relevance of the opposition between municipal and national interest for the programmatic profile of the analysed cases. Most cases in the sample stress the fundamental difference between local and national

politics and argue that local policymaking is mainly about managing the locality and pursuing the general interests of the municipality. Across the different list types, national ideological sensitivities are considered of limited relevance in local politics and several respondents argue that party programs merely differ in ‘comma’s and accents’: *‘Whatever is left or right about a speed limit in the streets, or a zebra crossing, or about constructing a sports hall. I mean, that has relatively little to do with traditional conflicts between left and right or between religious and secular’* (case 17). National party ideological cleavages are thus considered of little relevance to identify the common interests of the municipality.

Some respondents though nuance this general observation by adding that ideological preferences do come into play when considering some specific local policy issues, especially those involving financial matters. Moreover, the role of party ideology is assumed to increase with the size of the municipality as central cities are considered a different category in this respect: *‘I don’t really believe in ideological differences at municipal level. I am not talking about cities, but in municipalities, local politics concern a venue for festivities, childcare, road infrastructure... Of course, ideological differences will enter the discussions now that we are starting the financial analysis of the municipality’* (case 22). These findings confirm that party-ideology only moderately influences the programmatic priorities in local politics.

While most respondents agree on this fundamentally different scope of local and national politics and the confined role of party ideology at local level, there is more dissidence concerning the potential detrimental effect of party ideology in local policy preferences. Some respondents argue that national ideological considerations distract the political focus from local priorities and obstruct the pursuit of municipal interests. Local political commitment is considered most effective without any national or ideological concerns. Especially independent lists in the sample assume this outmost position, but also some associated lists support an exclusive focus on municipal concerns, as demonstrated by the following quote stemming from an associated lists: *‘True commitment to the community does not require any party name. You can achieve much more at local level without a national party’* (case 6).

Other respondents on the other hand stress that national ideological considerations do not inhibit a true commitment to the interests of the local community: *'Party ideology does have its repercussions at local level, but local politics is completely different from national politics [...] We all defend the interest of our city'* (case 7). These respondents content that local party branches with national party ideologies can as well pursue the general interests of the municipality. Moreover - although the relevance of party ideology in the formulation of local policy preferences is doubted - several respondents consider their (implicit or explicit) party affiliation as essential to structure the electoral competition as it offers informational shortcuts to the voters. The local electorate is not always familiar with local policy issues or prepared to sift and compare all party programs and the ideological clues offered by a national party label might help them to interpret the local party system and situate different candidate lists in a familiar ideological policy space. Hence, ideological considerations are rather considered important to guide the electoral choice of the voter than to guide the policy preferences of local party elites.

These findings suggest that the local cleavage between national and local concerns is a rather artificial opposition and not the prerogative of localist list or non-national lists in general. Indeed nothing indicates that local party branches would be less concerned with the general interest of the municipality.

11.4.2 Consensual politics versus ideological polarization

Several analysed cases across the different list types emphasize the need for consensual politics as opposed to ideological polarization. This cleavage is closely related to the opposition between municipal and national concerns, but rather focuses on the right people in local politics instead of any ideological predispositions. Personal skills and cooperation are considered more important than the ideological affiliation of local politicians and it is argued that local policymaking requires harmonic collaboration beyond party borders. This is clearly illustrated by case 22 (an extended party cartel), who presents her list as a cross-party team of politicians with the right skills to jointly prioritize local needs and manage the community: *'Our shared project transcended the party borders. We worked together to achieve a common goal'* (case 22).

Again this cleavage between consensual politics and ideological polarization seems no prerogative for non-national lists. Cross-party cooperation is an inherent feature of the proportional representation system of (local) politics in Flanders and cannot be considered as a distinctive character of non-national lists. Most local political actors with office-seeking ambitions need political partners to acquire local power. Only those who are capable of attracting an absolute majority of the votes might govern alone. Local cartel formation is but one sign of this consensual approach. Research has shown that pre-electoral coalition agreements are equally a common feature of local politics in Belgium. Local party branches often engage in negotiations on potential coalitions long before the elections to reduce risks (J. Ackaert, Dumont, & De Winter, 2008; Wille & Deschouwer, 2012).

11.4.3 Establishment versus non-establishment

Several cases in the sample also invoke a cleavage between establishment and anti-establishment. These lists reproach conventional local parties to be locked in a perverse logic of power, which is detrimental to local democracy. Local politics is associated with ‘profiteers’, ‘favouritism’ or ‘fake democracy’ and established office holders are deemed little responsive to the needs of the electorate once they are elected. Local policy decisions are considered unsubstantiated and based on inadequate personal estimations: *‘Council decisions were based on power and not on competence or issue knowledge [...]. Power corrupts, becomes so self-evident that they take decisions without properly listening to the arguments’* (case 6). These cases emphasize the need for more citizen participation and more transparency in the local policy making process and position themselves as a democratic alternative to established local parties. They advocate a fundamentally different way of ‘doing politics’, with more responsiveness to the needs of the citizens. Moreover, several anti-establishment lists in the sample refuse to think of themselves as a local party, but explicitly profile themselves as ‘local political associations’ for establishment is equated with party politics. Other cases though assume a less extreme position on this local cleavage, conceiving themselves as ‘parties’ but still with a specific concern for the quality of the local democratic process and providing a democratic alternative to the established local powers.

However, this anti-establishment cleavage is not necessarily new to (local) politics in Flanders and it can neither be claimed that this local cleavage is the prerogative of non-national protest lists. Dissatisfaction with traditional party mechanisms and the unresponsiveness of their leaders was an important element in the programmatic profile of national 'New Politics Parties' which have emerged since the 1980's in Western democracies (Ignazi, 1996; Müller-Rommel, 1989; Poguntke, 1989). These New Politics Parties are considered a reaction to the cartel-like tendencies in European parties and the waning capacity of traditional parties to exert their expressive function and to canalize the demands of the citizenry into policy programs.

Moreover, the local cleavage between establishment and anti-establishment seems often to coincide with a traditional dividing line between the opposition and the governing majority in local politics. Parties in an opposition role more often assume an anti-establishment profile, although the following citation illustrates that traditional opposition parties can equally be considered as part of this establishment: *'The other parties were only concerned with party interests. Those in opposition aimed to acquire power and those in government to maintaining power. This is detrimental at local level and resulted in complete political inertia'* (case 17).

Additionally, case 6 demonstrates the unsustainable character of an anti-establishment profile. This case started out as an independent list with a clear anti-establishment discourse opposing the perceived arbitrary (ill-founded) and undemocratic nature of mainstream politics in the municipality. However, this anti-party profile was attenuated once they got invited to join a governing majority: *'Political success also urges you to modify your political ideas somewhat, to make room for new things more in the direction of the centre'* (case 6). Other cases have equally mitigated their anti-establishment discourse as their office-seeking ambitions grew. This indicates that the anti-establishment cleavage is a relevant dividing line to introduce new non-national lists into local party systems, but afterwards entails a difficult balance between opposing traditional party conduct and aiming to fit in and become part of the party political game. This seems to confirm the idea of anticipatory adaptation. Several authors have indicated that new parties increasingly adopt office-seeking goals, notwithstanding the costs of governing. In order to be perceived as credible potential

coalition partners, they gradually renounce their initial outsider status and establish rhetoric, programmatic and organisational modifications (Bolleyer, 2008; Poguntke & Scarrow, 1996).

11.4.4 Personal rivalries

In addition to the three discussed local cleavages introduced by non-national lists in local politics, the interviews reveal that non-national lists also introduce personal rivalries in local politics. This can hardly be considered as an additional local cleavage, but still signifies an additional local dimension to structure local political competition. Several respondents indicate that they attach little importance to substantial programmatic issues, but build a local profile on the central role of prominent individuals in local politics. They stress that local politicians need specific personal skills to reconcile different needs and demands and decide what is best for the municipality. They emphasize the importance of the right person in the right place and hence introduce personal rivalries by promoting individual characteristics and the esteemed governing capacity of the leading candidate(s): *'You need people who can listen, think and decide on the greatest common divisor'* (case 19). Such personal rivalries are especially evident in the competition between candidate mayors. Case 1 for example concerns a constituency list in support of the incumbent mayor to whom the list was named after and who was profiled as a *'burgomaster'* with a natural sense for the common good. The campaign slogan of this list was *'Mayor with heart and soul'* referring to his personal capacities to decide on what is good for the community.

However, it can again be assumed that this personal dimension in local politics is no prerogative of non-national lists. As for the first two local cleavages discussed above (municipal versus national interests and consensual versus ideological policy making), personal rivalries represent a common feature of local politics rather than a new dimension of party competition introduced by non-national lists. Local politics in general is highly personalized and local political competition is often structured around personal dividing lines between political opponents. Especially mayors assume a key 'presidential' role in local politics, but also other top candidates are often pushed forward in local campaigns and assume a dominant position in several aspects of local

political life (Rodenbach, Wouters, & Steyvers, 2015). Hence, these personal profiles are an extension of the candidate-centred character of local politics, especially in small municipalities where voting behaviour is largely guided by individual politicians and less by substantive policy programs: *'the people were appealed by the person who said and did the things here'* (case 1).

11.5 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has considered if and how non-national lists differ from traditional party branches in their programmatic priorities as a third part of the functional analysis to establish the partisan character of non-national lists in Flanders. A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods allowed to assess and compare the role of national ideological cleavages and specific locally-oriented cleavages in determining the programmatic priorities of non-national lists and traditional local party branches. The analysis revealed that national ideological cleavages only partially influence the programmatic priorities of local party branches and derivative non-national lists (associated lists and cartel lists). Local party branches share a principal concern for local transport and road safety, irrespective of their party family or ideological position on the left-right scale. Party ideology however does influence the relative importance of secondary local priorities which largely correspondent with the policy issues 'owned' by the national party. We can therefore conclude that the influence of national party ideologies does not imply a distraction from the general interests of the municipality. Independent lists are not influenced by these national ideological considerations. They are more reluctant to associate with the traditional ideological cleavage between left and right and situate themselves right in the centre. Their local programmatic priorities differ slightly from the other lists with a greater concern for decent political conduct and public participation, though closely followed by a similar concern for road safety and transport.

In addition to these traditional ideological cleavages, non-national lists introduce some specific local cleavages to structure the political competition in local politics. They adopt specific local profiles to differentiate themselves from traditional party politics. These local profiles emphasize their principal focus on local interests, their concern for

democratic values and consensual approach to local politics and the persons involved in these lists. Yet, it was argued that these specific local profiles of non-national lists are no prerogatives of these lists and do not necessarily diverge much from the priorities of traditional party branches. Although these specific local priorities are claimed by non-national lists, they can be identified as valence issues (in contrast to positional issues) as they are largely shared by all local political actors. Consequently, these local cleavages invoked by non-national lists rather reflect a common local political paradigm in which local concerns prevail, democratic post-material political values compete with traditional socio-economic values and cross-party cooperation between individuals is stimulated. Although these local cleavages do not reflect fundamentally different programmatic priorities, they seem to confirm Saward's (2008) argument that the decline of political parties is associated with a changing nature of political representation (cfr. Chapter 2.3). As the legitimacy of political parties is challenged and representative democracy has increasingly depoliticized, he argues that parties increasingly switch from a partisan representative claim to a more reflexive representative claim. Parties would increasingly present themselves as open and flexible political actors who emphasize procedural values and aim for local alliances around specific value-driven goals to connect with diverse communities. Our findings concerning the programmatic priorities of non-national lists fit closely with this observation and indicate that non-national lists in Flemish municipalities reflect this change in the representative claims made by political parties in reaction to the decline of parties. With this reflexive representative claims non-national lists might appeal to dealigned voters and potentially (re)integrate them in the local political system.

Part 3

Conclusions and Discussion

12 FINAL CONCLUSIONS

Non-national candidate lists are an omnipresent phenomenon in Western local democracies, but still academic interest in these lists remains confined. Only few scholars have engaged in this subject, generally adopting a dichotomous approach to distinguish local from national lists in municipal elections (Reiser & Holtmann, 2008). This simplified binary distinction however is flawed as it ignores the large heterogeneity of non-national lists as well as the substantial grey zone in between local and national lists. This unwarranted generalization of local versus national lists inhibits a comprehensive understanding of the role non-national play in local politics and hampers academic knowledge building of local party systems in general. As a result, current academic insights on non-national lists are often superficial or even contradictory. Some authors consider these lists as relics of a political past (Back, 2003; Rokkan, 1966), while others regard them as prolocutors of a new, depoliticized future as they can be linked to recent party evolutions indicating the alleged decline of political parties (Aars & Ringkjøb, 2005; Boogers & Voerman, 2010). Yet, both assumptions remain largely hypothetical as empirical research is scant and distorted by the conceptual vagueness of local candidate lists.

With this dissertation I hope to have contributed to this underdeveloped research field by refining the concept of non-national lists and exposing the variation within this variegated group of candidate lists in Flanders to assess their differentiated role in local politics. More specifically I have focused on the variation in actual independence of non-national lists and in the degree to which they behave like political parties. These two dimensions have been identified in literature as crucial differentiation dimensions to examine local candidate lists (Reiser, 2008; Steyvers et al., 2008). Moreover, I have related the established variation within and between non-national lists in Flanders to existing insights on party change, thereby offering a captivating and innovative perspective on the local component of system-level party evolutions and the stake of non-national lists herein.

A pragmatic research paradigm was adopted combining qualitative and quantitative methods to develop a multi-faceted perspective on the differentiated role of non-national lists in Flanders' local politics. Primary data (survey-data and interview-data collected from list headers of non-national lists) and secondary data (election database, press-database, survey-data from Partirep consortium) have been analysed with different analytical methods each providing specific and complementary insights on the role of non-national lists in Flanders. This mixed methods approach allowed to formulate substantiated answers to the four research questions formulated at the outset of this book:

- *What is a relevant classification model to differentiate non-national lists?*
- *How independent are non-national lists in Flanders?*
- *How partisan are non-national lists in Flanders?*
- *How are non-national lists related to party change?*

1) WHAT IS A RELEVANT CLASSIFICATION MODEL TO DIFFERENTIATE NON-NATIONAL LISTS?

A thorough understanding of non-national lists' role in local politics requires empirically founded knowledge-building based on practicable and relevant classification tools. I have followed Reiser's (2008) suggestion to differentiate non-national lists based on their actual independence or decisional autonomy. As the occurrence of non-national lists in Belgium is partly attributed to the success of local cartel lists⁶², a distinction was made between the vertical autonomy (influence from national party centres) and the horizontal autonomy (influence from other local parties) of local candidate lists. Combining these two dimensions generated an innovative and contingent typology for local candidate lists, differentiating four ideal-types of solitary lists (party lists, extended party lists, supported lists, independent lists) and four ideal-types of cartel lists (party cartel, extended party cartel, localized cartel, independent cartel) all varying in their level of autonomy regarding the national

⁶² pre-electoral alliances between two or more local parties in the form of joint candidate list

party level. The systematic application of this compound model to the local political reality in Flemish municipalities is unique in local political science research and yielded a significant source of original and comprehensive data, enabling further analysis of the differentiated role of these distinct sub-types of non-national lists. This classification model proved especially valuable for a cross-sectional analysis of the occurrence and the political relevance of the different types of non-national lists. Moreover, the vertical dimension of the model proved highly relevant to refine existing academic insights on local party system nationalization allowing for a more fine-grained assessment and clarification of the place-bound partisan assemblage of local party systems in the electoral and parliamentary arena.

A simplified version of the initial DA (Decisional Autonomy)-typology has been applied for the further analysis of the partisan character of non-national lists. Some related ideal types were merged, resulting in a more practicable classification model distinguishing between the four most relevant categories of local candidate lists: party lists, cartel lists, associated lists and independent lists. These four categories still contain a very heterogeneous load but they substantially differ from each other on some crucial aspects concerning origin and composition. Both classification models based on the horizontal and vertical decisional autonomy of local candidate lists have been developed in a Belgian context, yet it can be assumed that they are equally relevant to discern different types of local candidate lists in other institutional settings with a comparable list system (proportional representation system, low threshold for candidacy ...), .

Other differentiation dimensions have been suggested in literature in addition to the actual independence of non-national lists. Steyvers et al. (2008) proposed to differentiate non-national lists based on the degree to which they behave like political parties and fulfil the functions generally accorded to them. As the partisan character of non-national lists is a miscellaneous theoretical concept with various sub dimensions, it would be problematic to use this dimension as basis for categorization. Therefore, it was considered more relevant to scrutinize the partisanship of non-national lists as dependent variable rather than reducing it to a classification dimension.

2) HOW INDEPENDENT ARE NON-NATIONAL LISTS IN FLANDERS

In the traditional dichotomy between local and national lists it is assumed that local lists are independent from national parties, although scholars acknowledge the occurrence of border cases referred to as hidden party lists or pseudo-local lists (Dudzinska, 2008; Göhlert et al., 2008; Steyvers et al., 2008). The DA-typology allowed to differentiate local candidate lists based on their actual independence. Applying this typology to all local candidate lists in Flanders that have participated in the municipal elections of 2006 and 2012 revealed that over one out of four candidate lists can be identified as non-national lists. About half of these non-national lists are actually independent from national party politics, while the other half maintains implicit or explicit links to the national party level (pseudo-local or pseudo-national lists).

Moreover, it was established that the different types of non-national lists significantly differ in political relevance. While independent lists are most relevant in the pre-electoral phase of municipal elections, they obtain significantly lower vote shares and significantly less seats in council. Hence, they easily enter the local electoral competition, but have more difficulties to cross the representation threshold and establish themselves in the local legislative arena. Once passed this representation threshold however, the differences in political relevance between independent lists and other local candidate lists fade out. A substantial part of the independent lists equally manage to play along in the highest echelons of local politics, indicating that the gap between political relevance and political irrelevance is harder to bridge for independent local lists than for the other types of local candidate lists.

A qualitative analysis of the rationales of these different types of non-national lists revealed that pseudo-local and pseudo-national lists reflect the electoral strategies of local party elites who aim to maximize the vote share of the list by engaging in specific local partnerships with independent candidates or with other local parties and (partly) conceal the links to national parties. Several internal factors (organizational constraints, leadership style and preferences) and external factors (local and national competitive position, local party system fractionalization, dealignment of the electorate, Imperialy system) have been identified to clarify specific strategic decisions

resulting in changes in the decisional autonomy and the occurrence of the different types of non-national lists.

Moreover, a more close-knit measure of local party system nationalization was proposed based on the actual independence of local candidate lists. The proposed electoral and parliamentary indexes of local party system nationalization in Flanders reflect the weighted ratio between local, pseudo-local, pseudo-national and national lists in the electoral and the parliamentary arena. These indexes were calculated for all Flemish municipalities and confirm a tendency of relative local party system nationalization, which is even more outspoken in the parliamentary arena. However, the analysis also confirms that the party politicization process remains incomplete as also established by other authors (Aars & Ringkjøb, 2005) and allows to refine current explanations for this incomplete politicization. We have argued that exclusive nationalization is not only inhibited by the presence of independent local lists as commonly presumed, but also by the presence of pseudo-local and pseudo-national lists who deliberately distance themselves from the national party by (partly) concealing party links. In contrast to the traditional image of a nationally driven and almost teleological process of local party politicization, a more dynamic image arises. Incomplete nationalization rather reflects the dynamic nature of local political actors instead of indicating the lagging behind of local party system where national parties will eventually yet catch up.

3) HOW PARTISAN ARE NON-NATIONAL LISTS IN FLANDERS?

To assess the partisan character of non-national lists, I have examined differences and similarities in the functional behaviour of the different types of non-national lists and local party branches. Inspired by the functional approaches of several reputable party theorists and the conception of parties as tripartite systems of interaction engaging in the electorate, in government, and as organizations, I have focussed on three defining party functions: candidate selection, organizational strength and policy preferences. (Fiers, 1998; Key, 1964; King, 1969; Sorauf, 1972; White, 2006):

This functional analysis of non-national lists revealed substantial differences in the extent to which - but also the way in which - these different party functions are assumed both within and between the different types of non-national lists. The list composition process of local political actors proved largely determined by collective vote-seeking ambitions. Both party selectors and independent selectors value similar recruitment criteria related to the electoral potential of the candidates. In a local context, the supply of eligible candidates is confined and selectors often face difficulties to attract adequate candidates. To cope with these common recruitment problems, selection demands are modified and party selectors can decide to involve independent candidates while independent selectors also involve party affiliated candidates. These modified selection demands results in significantly varying shares of independent and party candidates.

Yet, the notion of independent candidates needs some further qualification as the interviews revealed that the independent character of individual candidates can change over time. Independent candidates frequently have a party background but have seceded this party because of specific circumstances - often related to party-internal conflicts and thwarted personal ambitions. Hence, independence not always refers to a nonpartisan background, but often indicates the mere fact that these candidates no longer belong to a party. Consequently, independent candidates should not be equated with nonpartisan candidates. As eligible candidates (with the right skills and ambitions) are scarce and highly coveted in local politics, their (party-)background seems no decisive factor in the selection process, while inflammation with the '*political microbe*' is pivotal.

Independent candidate lists differ most from traditional party branches in the selection of candidates. They not only contain the largest share of independent candidates, but also more often submit incomplete candidate lists and are less able to recruit candidates from the local associations which function as main recruitment source for other list types. The lower recruitment ability of independent candidate lists could signify that these lists have most difficulties to overcome the encountered recruitment problems, but could also indicate lower vote-seeking ambitions.

The organizational strength of non-national lists equally diverges substantially between and within the different categories confirming that non-national lists represent a miscellaneous phenomenon in local politics with diverging organizational features. While local party branches are generally considered as bureaucratic organizations, the different types of non-national lists deviate substantially from this traditional partisan picture. Local cartel lists and associated lists can be considered as organizational derivatives of local party branches demonstrating a complex, multi-layered structure. They adopt specific organizational arrangements to combine their role as local agencies of national parties with their role as actors in the local political arena and to accommodate independent candidates and other parties. Different from the traditional partisan counterparts, these organizational derivatives distinguish less between members, councillors and party leadership, but clearly discriminate between local and supra-local party functions. Local policy issues are largely detached from the national party and assigned to additional (or adapted) - less formalized - organizational structures, while supra-local and party political issues remain the exclusive competence of the traditional party organizations. Independent lists again deviate most from traditional party organizations with less formal and less complex organizational structures and more often demonstrating low activity levels. This limited organizational capacity can be attributed to their lower political relevance. As they more often fail to cross the representation threshold, they also more often lack the political need to organize on a stable basis and develop any active party life.

The third component of the functional analysis of non-national lists concerned their programmatic priorities. Comparing the programmatic priorities of non-national lists with local party branches revealed that local party branches and derivative non-national lists (associated lists and cartel lists) are guided by a combination of national and local concerns in determining the saliency of local policy fields. Irrespective of ideological preferences, local party branches share a similar concern for transport and road safety. National party ideology only comes into play to determine the relative importance of secondary priorities. This indicates that ideological considerations do not distract local party branches from pursuing the general interests of the municipality.

Additionally, non-national lists adopt specific local programmatic profiles to structure the local political competition. They invoke four local cleavages: 1) between a municipal focus and a national focus; 2) between consensual cross-party cooperation and polarizing party politics, 3) between established parties and anti-establishment and 4) they introduce factional personal rivalries in local politics. Notwithstanding this emphasis on alleged local antagonisms, these local profiles of non-national lists can be mainly considered as electoral discourse on valence issues as these issues do not represent new or alternative policy priorities. These local cleavages rather emphasize a common local political paradigm with a shared concern for municipal interests, and personalised, consensual politics. There are no indications that local party branches would care less for these local concerns, are less candidate-centred or less compelled to cooperate beyond party borders. Although the anti-establishment cleavage has more potential to enrich local politics with different programmatic priorities, this cleavage can neither be considered as a new local dividing line introduced by non-national lists. The opposition between establishment and anti-establishment is grafted on the familiar post-materialist ideological cleavage, commonly represented by left libertarian or new politics parties. Moreover, this local anti-establishment cleavage is found to largely follow the traditional divide between the opposition and the governing majority in local politics. As for national new politics parties, a local anti-establishment profile seems prone to the concept of anticipatory adaptation as the data suggest that protest lists increasingly adopt office-holding ambitions and gradually renounce their initial outsider status to become part of the party political game. Although non-national lists emphasize specific local valence issues, the programmatic priorities of non-national lists and local party branches strongly are found to be similar.

4) HOW ARE NON-NATIONAL LISTS RELATED TO PARTY CHANGE?

Since several decades, national parties are under increasing pressure in a rapidly transforming society and their role in representative democracies has altered fundamentally. Contemporary partisan politics is increasingly characterized by the erosion of partisan loyalties both in attitudes (partisan dealignment, low confidence in parties) and behaviour (turnout decline, electoral volatility, decreasing membership) of

the electorate. In a reaction to this flexible electoral environment, parties have become more candidate centred and more flexible in their issues program. They increasingly adopted vote-maximizing strategies aiming for the median voter with centrist politics (Dalton & Wattenberg, 2000). An often cited blueprint for this contemporary political party is the cartel party model as described by Katz and Mair (1995). The cartel party is characterized by a centralized and professionalized party organization with a weak party-on-the-ground and a dominant party-in-central-office. The dominant party leadership is counterbalanced with democratic organizational impulses and with increased interdependence and mutual autonomy of the different party subunits (Bolleyer, 2012; Carty, 2004). Moreover, cartel parties engage state resources as alternative source of funding and are argued to jointly form a 'cartel' to enhance their autonomy and power position in the legislative process. Newcomers in the party system are fended off by institutional barriers (Katz & Mair, 1995). In many European and non-European party systems cartel-like tendencies have been observed (Bolleyer, 2009). This transformation of traditional mass parties to contemporary cartelized parties which increasingly act as agencies of the state than as agencies of society has been indicated as a decline of parties. Cartel parties would no longer be able to perform some traditional representative functions and consequently questions arose concerning the responsiveness of political parties and their legitimacy in the democratic process (Dalton & Wattenberg, 2000).

Local party competition is equally affected by these changing societal circumstances and the changing role of parties. Non-national lists have been associated with these system-level party evolutions as they have been depicted as prolocutors of a new, depoliticized future (Boogers & Voerman, 2010). Traditionally however, independent local lists have long been considered as relics of old-style political system. This polygonal analysis of the differentiated role of non-national lists in Flanders indicates that non-national lists are not the alleged independent relics of an ancient nonpartisan political logic which persist in peripheral localities. They are strongly intertwined with local parties as they have similar goals and face similar challenges and contextual paradigms. They form an undeniable part of the highly politicized local party systems across Flemish municipalities and have more or less adopted a partisan logic. In many

aspects non-national lists behave similar to traditional local parties and a substantial part of them maintains implicit or explicit links to national parties.

Yet, they can be linked to the party crisis as the erosion of partisan loyalties has increased the difficulties to attract adequate candidates. Local cartel lists and associated lists result from local party strategies to cope with the dealignment of the electorate. By engaging in specific local partnerships with independent candidates or with other political actors these non-national lists extend the supply of eligible candidates beyond the party supporters or reduce the required recruitment efforts to compose a complete list. Moreover, by assuming a non-national profile they dissociate themselves from traditional party politics and appeal to candidates and voters who have turned their back to conventional (local) party politics. Hence, they can (re-)mobilize a disaffected electorate and as such increase the legitimacy of the local party system.

Moreover, the different categories of non-national lists adopt specific local profiles to dissociate themselves from traditional party politics. These local profiles seem to correspond to the traditional conception of non-national lists as a-political, consensual political actors. Yet, the analysis suggests that these specific local programmatic concerns reflect a changing nature of political representation which has been associated with the party crisis. Non-national lists emphasize local and issue-based positions and cross-party cooperation based on pragmatic and flexible policy programs and often stress their concern for procedural values such as openness and responsiveness. Their programmatic claims correspond with the observation that traditional partisan modes of representation - based on ex ante bottom-up mandates - are gradually transforming into a reflexive mode of party representation (Saward, 2008; Van Biezen & Poguntke, 2014). Saward (2008) argues that representative democracy has increasingly depoliticized with a more explicit focus on the general or public interest and the integration of non-party actors. This transformation would be reflected in decentralized party organizations with substantial autonomy for local figures, who include stakeholders and citizens in governmental decision-making.

We can conclude that the locally-oriented programmatic profiles of non-national lists and the local cleavages they invoke highly correspond to this reflexive mode of party representation. Non-national lists can therefore be considered as reflections of the changing representative claims which is associated with the party crisis. Yet this seems not to imply that non-national lists herald a party decline as the analysis clearly demonstrates the adaptive character of partisan politics. Non-national lists first and foremost are the contingent result of strategic decisions made by political entrepreneurs who pursue the path of least resistance to realize their political goals. A range of external and internal factors at local and national level are considered, including the dealignment of the electorate and national party change.

Also at organizational level, non-national lists reflect some features of cartel-like parties. The prevalence of local cartel lists and associated lists indicates that local party branches enjoy a substantial degree of autonomy to interact with the local context and respond to local pressures by engaging in specific local alliances with independent candidates or other local parties. This confirms the mutual autonomy and interdependence between the organizational subunits of contemporary parties and reflects a stratarchical imperative (Bolleyer, 2012; Carty, 2004; Katz & Mair, 1995). Moreover, these derivative lists seem to encourage the concentration of local powers in the council group. Their organizational structure contains a complex and multileveled mixture of formal and informal arrangements to combine their role as party agency with their role as participants in local politics. These customized organizational structures provide substantial autonomy to the group of candidates – often reduced to the office-holding candidates - in local policy decisions. These findings confirm Copus and Eringsson's (2013) in their concern for elitism and power concentration in the council group of local parties as a local counterpart of the national party crisis.

5) SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Traditionally, a simplified distinction is made between local and national components in municipal elections. This research project was ambitious in its aim to conceptualize local candidate lists beyond this traditional dichotomy and assess the differentiated role of non-national lists in the multi-partisan context of local politics in Flanders. This

differentiated approach is highly innovative in political science for nowhere before non-national lists have been studied this meticulously, distinguishing between different types of non-national lists. The research results clearly demonstrate the added value of such a differentiated approach and it would be very interesting to apply the elaborated analytical tools to study non-national lists also in other national contexts and develop a comparative perspective on the differentiated role of these lists across different institutional settings.

It was demonstrated that the occurrence of the different types of non-national lists in Flanders cannot be dissociated from national party evolutions. The occurrence of specific non-national lists in Flanders designate the adaptive character of local parties and their autonomy from national party centres. Moreover the reflexive claims made by non-national lists seem to indicate a change in the representative role of (local) parties. These research findings call for a more focused investigation into the local dimensions of the national party crisis. Party change/decline is generally considered from a national perspective but the repercussions of these national party evolutions on local party branches need further scrutiny. More research is needed to assess how local party branches are affected by the declining membership figures and the changing power relations within the national party and how these local party branches cope with these changes. Moreover, further analysis is required to expose the different dimensions of the versatile relationship between local and national party levels in multilevel parties and how this relationship is influenced by national party changes.

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**APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR LIST
HEADERS OF NON-NATIONAL LISTS IN
FLANDERS**



Enquête

Lokale kandidatenlijsten in Vlaanderen

Promotor:
Prof. Dr. Kristof Steyvers

Onderzoeker:
An Heyerick

Deze vragenlijst heeft betrekking op de lokale kandidatenlijst waarmee u bij de gemeenteraadsverkiezingen van 2012 naar de kiezer trok. De vragen handelen zowel over de doelstellingen en inhoudelijke voorkeuren van deze lijst als over de praktische organisatie en het concrete functioneren ervan. Alle resultaten worden volstrekt vertrouwelijk en anoniem behandeld. De postcode van uw gemeente wordt enkel gevraagd om de respons te kunnen opvolgen en de antwoorden te kunnen linken aan socio-economische kenmerken van de gemeente.

I. DOELSTELLINGEN EN ONTWIKKELING VAN DE LIJST

1. Postcode
2. U nam deel aan de gemeenteraadsverkiezingen van 2012 met een lokale kandidatenlijst (een lijst met een lokale naam of een lokaal element in de naam). Kruis aan welke van de volgende omschrijvingen het beste past bij deze lijst.
- Een lokale kandidatenlijst ondersteund door een nationale partij of lokale afdeling van een nationale partij (bv. ondersteuning bij lijstsamenstelling, campagne, ...) (Ga verder naar vraag 5)
- Een lokaal kartel (electoraal samenwerkingsverband tussen twee of meer partijen) (Ga verder naar vraag 3)
- Een samenwerkingsverband tussen individuele kandidaten met verschillende politieke achtergronden en onafhankelijken (Ga verder naar vraag 5)
- Een onafhankelijke kandidatenlijst zonder link met een nationale partij of nationale partijafdeling (Ga verder naar vraag 4)
- Andere (specificeer en ga verder naar vraag 5):
3. U gaf hierboven aan dat uw lijst een lokaal kartel betreft. Op welke manier werken de respectievelijke kartelpartners ook buiten de verkiezingstijd nog samen?
- De samenwerking had enkel betrekking op de gemeenteraadsverkiezingen. Nadien werd het kartel ontbonden en was er geen verdere samenwerking (Ga verder naar vraag 5)
- Het kartel werd na de verkiezingen ontbonden, maar af en toe vindt overleg plaats tussen de kartelpartners (Ga verder naar vraag 5)
- De kartelpartners vormen een gemeenschappelijke fractie in de gemeenteraad (Ga verder naar vraag 5)
- De kartelpartners vormen een gemeenschappelijke fractie in de gemeenteraad en hebben ook een gezamenlijke werking/overleg buiten de gemeenteraad (Ga verder naar vraag 5)
- De kartelpartners blijven op een andere manier samenwerken (specificeer en ga verder naar vraag 5):

4. U gaf hierboven aan dat uw lijst een onafhankelijke lijst betreft. Kan u aangeven waarom deze lijst werd opgericht? Hoe belangrijk waren de onderstaande redenen daarvoor?

	helemaal niet belangrijk	Niet belangrijk	neutraal	belangrijk	Heel erg belangrijk
Onvrede over het gemeentelijk beleid in het algemeen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Onvrede over het functioneren van de lokale democratie	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Voeren van actie voor een concreet lokaal dossier	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
De zorg om het behoud van het eigen karakter van de gemeente	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Opkomen voor de belangen van een deelgemeente	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Opkomen voor de belangen van een bepaalde groep burgers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ondersteunen van één of enkele lokale politici	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Afscheuring als gevolg van een conflict binnen een bestaande politieke partij	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. In welk jaar nam de lijst voor het eerst deel aan gemeenteraadsverkiezingen onder de huidige naam?
- In 2012
- In 2000 of 2006
- Tussen 1976 en 1994
- Vóór 1976
6. Nam een voorloper van de huidige lijst (hiermee bedoelen we een kandidatenlijst die op een gelijkaardige manier werd samengesteld) reeds eerder deel aan gemeenteraadsverkiezingen onder een andere naam?
- Ja (Ga verder naar vraag 7)
- Nee (Ga verder naar vraag 8)
7. Wanneer nam deze voorloper van de huidige lijst voor het eerst deel aan de gemeenteraadsverkiezingen?
- In 2006
- In 2000
- Tussen 1976 en 1994
- Vóór 1976

8. Bij deelname aan gemeenteraadsverkiezingen kunnen lokale lijsten verschillende doelstellingen nastreven. Geef aan in welke mate de onderstaande doelstellingen belangrijk waren voor uw lijst bij de gemeenteraadsverkiezingen van 2012.

	helemaal niet belangrijk	Niet belangrijk	neutraal	belangrijk	Heel erg belangrijk
Deel uitmaken van de meerderheid	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
De burgemeesterssjerp veroveren / behouden	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vertegenwoordigd geraken in de gemeenteraad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Een specifieke groep burgers vertegenwoordigen in de gemeenteraad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Een inhoudelijk project voor de gemeente uitvoeren	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Zoveel mogelijk stemmen behalen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Andere:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. Was er bij de lokale verkiezingen van 2012 een nationale partij (of provinciale / regionale geleding van die partij) betrokken bij:

	ja	nee	verschillende partijen
Het uitwerken van het kiesprogramma voor uw lokale lijst	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Het uitwerken of uitvoeren van uw kiescampagne (vb campagnemateriaal)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
De samenstelling van de lijst	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
De coalitievorming en de verdeling van bestuursmandaten na de gemeenteraadsverkiezingen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Afspraken over het bestuursprogramma van de coalitie	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

II. SAMENSTELLING VAN DE LIJST.

10. Uit hoeveel kandidaten bestond uw lijst in 2012?
11. Hoeveel onafhankelijke kandidaten stonden er op de lijst in 2012 (kandidaten die niet aan een lokale partijafdeling gelinkt zijn)?
12. Duid aan in welke mate de volgende instanties belangrijk waren bij de samenstelling van de lijst.

	helemaal niet belangrijk	Niet belangrijk	neutraal	belangrijk	Heel erg belangrijk	n.v.t.
Burgemeester en/of schepenen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Uittreedende gemeenteraadsleden	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kandidaten zelf	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Leden	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Plaatselijk bestuur (kerngroep)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ad hoc comité voor lijstvorming	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nationale partij-instanties	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Andere:.....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. Lokale lijsten kunnen verschillende problemen ondervinden bij het aantrekken van kandidaten. Kruis aan welke van onderstaande problemen voor uw lijst van toepassing waren in 2012 (meerdere antwoorden mogelijk).

- Onze lijst ondervindt geen problemen om geschikte kandidaten aan te trekken
- Er is een gebrek aan interesse in lokale politiek
- De politiek heeft een slechte naam
- Kandidaten willen zich niet tot een bepaalde lijst of politieke partij bekennen.
- Er zijn te weinig geschikte kandidaten beschikbaar
- Kandidaten vrezen echt te moeten zetelen
- Andere:

14. Hoe belangrijk waren de volgende eigenschappen van kandidaten bij het samenstellen van de lijst in 2012?

	helemaal niet belangrijk	Niet belangrijk	neutraal	belangrijk	Heel erg belangrijk
Inzet en bekendheid in de gemeente	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ideologisch profiel	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dossierkennis, bestuursbekwaamheid	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inzet, werkracht en beschikbare tijd voor politiek	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Communicatie- en campagnevaardigheden	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Politieke ervaring als gemeentemandataris	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Andere:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15. Uit welk van de onderstaande organisaties werden kandidaten gerekruteerd voor de lijst? (meerdere antwoorden mogelijk)

- Milieubewegingen
- Jeugdverenigingen
- Culturele organisaties
- Sportverenigingen
- Vrijtijdsorganisaties
- Vrouwenorganisaties
- Gezinsverenigingen
- Middenstands- of patroonsorganisaties
- Andere:

III. INHOUD EN STIJL

16. Men gebruikt in de politiek vaak de termen 'links' en 'rechts' om de ideologische positie van partijen te beschrijven. Op welk punt zou u uw lijst plaatsen (van 0 'links' tot 10 'rechts')

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
links										rechts
<input type="radio"/>										

17. Hoe belangrijk was een uitgewerkt verkiezingsprogramma voor uw lijst bij de gemeenteraadsverkiezingen van 2012

absoluut niet belangrijk	niet belangrijk	neutraal	belangrijk	Heel erg belangrijk
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

18. Hoe belangrijk waren onderstaande lokale beleidsthema's in het verkiezingsprogramma van uw lijst?

	helemaal niet belangrijk	niet belangrijk	neutraal	belangrijk	Heel erg belangrijk
Mobiliteit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Verkeersveiligheid	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Politiek met propere handen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ruimtelijke ordening	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Participatie en inspraak van burgers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vergrijzing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Steun aan het lokale verenigingsleven	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Leefmilieu	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Werkgelegenheid	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Handel en economie	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Criminaliteit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sport	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Belastingen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Andere:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

19. Duid aan hoe belangrijk de volgende instanties waren bij de samenstelling van dit verkiezingsprogramma.

	helemaal niet belangrijk	Niet belangrijk	neutraal	belangrijk	Heel erg belangrijk	n.v.t.
Burgemeester en/of uittredende schepenen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Uittredende gemeenteraadsleden	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Kandidaten	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Leden	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lokaal bestuur van de lijst (kerngroep)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ad hoc comité / denkgroep	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bovenlokale mandatarissen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nationale partij-instanties	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Andere:	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

20. Over inspraak en participatie van burgers bestaan verschillende meningen. Sommigen vinden dat politieke participatie een efficiënte besluitvorming belemmert, terwijl anderen vinden dat participatie bijdraagt tot het democratisch besturen van de gemeente. Duid aan op de volgende schaal van 0 tot 10 waar u zichzelf zou plaatsen waarbij '0' staat voor 'participatie belemmert sterk de besluitvorming' en '10' voor 'participatie draagt sterk bij tot besluitvorming'

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<input type="radio"/>										

21. Hoe wenselijk acht u lijst de onderstaande instrumenten om de burgers te betrekken bij lokale beleidsbeslissingen in uw gemeente?

	absoluut niet wenselijk	niet wenselijk	neutraal	wenselijk	Heel erg wenselijk
Lokale adviesraden	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Publieke hoorzittingen over lokale beleidsbeslissingen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bevragingen van de burgers om hun opinies te kennen (bv. Survey, burgerpanel)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Adviserend (niet-bindend) referendum	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Beslissend (bindend) referendum	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Medebeslissingsprocedures waarbij burgers kunnen discussiëren en bindende beslissingen kunnen nemen over bepaalde lokale dossiers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Afstaan van verantwoordelijkheden over bepaalde lokale projecten aan wijkorganisaties	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

IV. Interne organisatie van de lijst

22. Sommige lokale kandidatenlijsten zijn louter een instrument om deel te nemen aan gemeenteraadsverkiezingen, terwijl andere kandidatenlijsten ook buiten verkiezingstijden een politieke werking hebben. Heeft uw lokale kandidatenlijst een politieke werking buiten verkiezingstijden?

- Ja (ga verder naar vraag 23)
 Nee (ga verder naar het einde van de vragenlijst)

23. In welke mate zijn de onderstaande functies belangrijk in de politieke werking van uw lijst buiten verkiezingstijden?

	helemaal niet belangrijk	Niet belangrijk	neutraal	belangrijk	Heel erg belangrijk
De algemene doelstellingen voor het gemeentebestuur bepalen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Specifieke strijdpunten op de politieke agenda plaatsen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Controleren van het gemeentebestuur	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
De belangen van de lokale gemeenschap behartigen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
De standpunten van minderheden in de lokale gemeenschap op de politieke agenda plaatsen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
De lokale gemeenschap informeren over lokale politieke onderwerpen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
De lokale gemeenschap betrekken in het debat over het lokale beleid	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mensen aantrekken met de juiste capaciteiten om de gemeente te besturen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Verkozen kandidaten bijstaan en ondersteunen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
De lokale gemeenschap mobiliseren om politiek actief te zijn	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Individuele problemen van de burgers behandelen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

24. Beschikt de partij/lijst over officiële statuten?

- ja nee

25. Hoe gebeurt het dagelijks bestuur van de lijst?

- Door een formeel verkozen bestuur
 Door een informele kerngroep van actieve leden
 Er is geen dagelijks bestuur (ga verder naar vraag 30)

26. Uit hoeveel leden bestaat dit bestuur / de kerngroep?

27. In welke mate bestaat het bestuur / de kerngroep uit lokale mandatarissen (gemeente- of OCMW-raadsleden, schepenen, burgemeester)?

- Volledig
 Grotendeels
 Gedeeltelijk
 Niet

28. Hoe vaak vergadert het bestuur / de kerngroep (in periodes buiten de kiescampagne en coalitievorming)?

- Wekelijks
 Verschillende keren per maand
 Maandelijks
 Verschillende keren per jaar
 Bijna nooit

29. Zijn de vergaderingen van het bestuur / de kerngroep toegankelijk voor leden / sympathisanten?

- Altijd
 Meestal
 Uitzonderlijk
 Nooit

30. In welke mate bent u het eens met volgende uitspraken?

	volledig oneens	oneens	neutraal	eens	volledig eens	n.v.t.
In geval van conflicten binnen de lijst wordt altijd gezocht naar een consensus	<input type="radio"/>					
In geval van conflicten binnen de lijst wordt met een meerderheid van de stemmen beslist	<input type="radio"/>					
In geval van conflicten binnen de lijst heeft één persoon (bv. lijsttrekker, burgemeester, voorzitter) de autoriteit om beslissingen te nemen	<input type="radio"/>					
Er wordt veel belang gehecht aan een open debatacultuur binnen de lijst	<input type="radio"/>					
Er wordt veel belang gehecht aan een goede sfeer binnen de lijst	<input type="radio"/>					
Buiten de verkiezingsperiode is er weinig dat de kandidaten met elkaar verbindt	<input type="radio"/>					

31. Hoe is de achterban van uw lokale lijst georganiseerd?

- De lijst heeft een formele betalende ledenstructuur
Hoeveel betalende leden heeft de lijst?
- De lijst heeft geen betalende leden, maar houdt wel de contactgegevens van sympathisanten bij:
Hoeveel niet-betalende leden heeft de lijst?
- De lijst houdt geen gegevens bij van sympathisanten
(Ga verder naar vraag 35)

32. Hoe vaak worden de leden/sympathisanten samengebracht in een algemene vergadering?

- Nooit
- Bij uitzonderlijke omstandigheden
- Minstens eenmaal per jaar
- Enkele malen per jaar
- Maandelijks

33. Kruis aan welke van onderstaande activiteiten in de voorbij 12 maanden werden georganiseerd door uw lijst voor leden en sympathisanten.

- Een discussieavond over een actueel thema
- Politiek debat
- Een bal
- Een uitstap
- Een eetfestijn
- Zitdagen waar mensen individuele problemen met het lokaal beleid kunnen aankaarten
- Andere (vul in):

34. Hoe vaak worden onderstaande manieren gebruikt om met de leden / sympathisanten te communiceren (buiten de periode van verkiezingscampagne)?

	enkele keren per maand	maandelijks	enkele keren per jaar	jaarlijks	nooit
Een lokaal ledenblad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Informatie per e-mail	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

35. Kruis aan welke middelen uw lijst gebruikt om met de bevolking te communiceren (buiten de periode van de verkiezingscampagne)?

- Eigen website
- Sociale media (facebook, twitter, ...)
- Deur aan deur bezoeken
- Lokale media
- Aanwezigheid op lokale activiteiten, evenementen
- Andere:

36. Kan uw lijst indien nodig beroep doen op ondersteuning van een nationale partij (of provinciale / regionale geleiding van die partij)?

	ja	nee
Op inhoudelijk/programmatorisch vlak?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Op financieel vlak?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Op logistiek/organisatorisch vlak?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Op bemiddeling in geval van interne conflicten?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

37. In welke mate kan uw lijst zich vinden in de volgende uitspraken?

	volledig oneens	oneens	neutraal	eens	volledig eens
Nationale politiek is irrelevant voor lokale politiek	<input type="radio"/>				
De persoonlijkheid van lokale bestuurders is belangrijker dan hun partijpolitieke overtuiging	<input type="radio"/>				
Nationale partijafdelingen hebben evenveel voeling met de burger als lokale kandidatenlijsten	<input type="radio"/>				
Op lokaal niveau dient feitelijke politiek voorrang te hebben op partijpolitiek	<input type="radio"/>				

38. Hoeveel bedraagt (bij benadering) het jaarlijks werkingsbudget van de lijst?

.....€

39. Kan u aangeven welk aandeel (in %) de onderstaande inkomstenbronnen hebben in het werkingsbudget van de lokale lijst:

%	lidgelden
%	afdrachten van mandatarissen
%	bijdragen van bovenlokale partijorganen (dotatie en sponsoring)
%	giften
%	inkomsten uit eigen activiteiten
%	Andere:

40. Indien u nog opmerkingen of suggesties heeft betreffende de vragenlijst of het onderwerp, aarzel niet om deze hier te noteren.

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Hartelijk dank voor uw medewerking!



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