

The unlucky winners

A comparative analysis of Swedish and Belgian non-elected popular candidates

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In flexible list systems, two parallel competitions take place: parties compete for the greatest share of seats while candidates run against their co-partisans to obtain their own seat. This paper investigates the intraparty competition pattern by building a four-category typology of electoral candidates according to both their electoral success and their popularity. The aim is to identify the profile of the “unlucky winners”, i.e. those who gathered more preference votes than some of their elected co-partisans but who did not obtain a seat because of a too low list position. These candidates reveal a tricky feature of the representative democracy and of flexible list systems where personalisation is encouraged but does not really pay off. The paper studies Sweden and Belgium, two countries whose electoral systems provide that the electoral popularity does not automatically lead to the election. On the basis of a database of Swedish and Belgian candidates running for the last legislative elections held in their respective countries (i.e. in 2014), the paper quantitatively assesses the profile of these candidates swimming against the tide and who would benefit from a more personalised system.

This is a rough draft, comments most welcome!

Paper prepared for the 6th edition of the conference

“Belgium: The State of the Federation”

Brussels, 21 December 2017

Introduction

Elections inevitably produce both winners and losers. Political parties win or lose in comparison to previous or predicted/hoped election results. But for candidates as well, this dichotomy works even more so. The winners gain the right to sit in the Parliament. The losers get back to what they did before the electoral campaign. A striking consideration, however, is that – in some electoral systems – the winners may not always be the most supported candidates from the voters' perspective. In the same vein, losers may not be the candidates for which voters casted the less their vote. Accordingly, some winners electorally speaking may lose in terms of access to the elected assembly. This paper studies candidates in flexible list systems, where two parallel competitions take place (Blais & Massicotte, 2002). On the one hand, political parties compete for the greatest share of seats in the elected assembly. The candidates, on the other hand, run against their co-partisans to become representatives in the Parliament. This paper investigates the second type of competition – the intraparty competition, which receives considerably less attention both from scholars and from the society at large than inter-party competition although its implications for the quality of our democracies may be far-reaching.

I compare two countries whose electoral systems share similar features – Sweden and Belgium. These systems provide that the electoral popularity does not automatically leads to the election. Accordingly, four types of candidates could be distinguished, as shown in table 1, based on two main dimensions: electoral popularity and electoral success. Among the elected candidates (i.e. electorally successful), I make the difference between candidates elected thanks to their preference votes (type 1) and candidates whose number of preference votes was too low and who benefited from their list position to obtain their seat in the assembly (type 2). The first ones were electorally popular while the second ones were not (enough) popular. Among the non-elected candidates (i.e. electorally *not* successful), a differentiation according to their electoral popularity could also be made. The focus of this research lies on the non-elected candidates who gathered more preference votes than some of their elected co-partisans (type 3). I label them the “unlucky winners”, because they won the electoral race for personal votes but were not “lucky” to benefit from a high list placement by their party “selectorates” (the body selecting the candidates, Hazan & Rahat, 2010). Despite this electoral popularity, they did not obtain a seat because of their too low list position. These candidates would have been elected if the electoral system had been an open list system where only preference votes matter. The fourth type of candidate refers to non-elected candidates with a lower number of preference votes than the elected candidate with the least preference votes. These candidates would not have been elected regardless of the electoral system.

Table 1 : Typology of candidates according to their electoral and success and popularity

	Electorally successful	Electorally not successful
Electorally more popular	(1) Candidates elected thanks to their preference votes	(3) Candidates not elected despite a higher number of preference votes than the least popular elected candidate
Electorally less popular	(2) Candidates elected (partly) thanks to their list position	(4) Candidates with a lower number of preference votes than the least popular elected candidate

This research draws on two basic assumptions (Karvonen, 2004). First, candidates, though in not fully open systems, seek to maximise their chances of election. If candidates are running for office, it is because they ambition to some extent to get elected. Second, voters seek to maximize their influence on the outcome of the election. If voters do express preference votes for candidates, it is because they ambition to some extent that these candidates get elected. Hence, candidates who attracted more preferential votes than their co-partisans but do not get elected constitute a tricky feature of democracy that deserves scholars' attention.

The goal of this paper is to identify the profile of the popular though not elected candidates. Who are these candidates supported by voters to a greater extent than some of their list counterparts but who did not manage to enter Parliament? Does a particular profile emerge in terms of socio-demographic and political characteristics? They won the preference votes' race but yet were not lucky enough to stand on a favourable list position, i.e. a list position on which they would be elected. The research investigates who are these "unlucky winners" and to what extent they differ from the candidates elected thanks to their preference votes or thanks to the list order, and the less popular non-elected candidates.

The paper is organised as follows. I first review the literature that forms the basis of this research. I then present the two cases to be compared: Sweden and Belgium, and the data collected to answer the research question. The findings' section is twofold: some explorative bivariate analyses are first run in order to distinguish the peculiarities of the unlucky winners compared to the other three types of candidates, and then multivariate analyses study the profile of the unlucky winners, per country. I conclude this paper with some avenues for further research.

Theoretical background

This research subscribes to the scholarly literature on the personalisation of politics. This phenomenon refers to a greater emphasis on the individuals at the expense of collective entities, observed at the institutional, media and behavioural level (Balmas et al., 2014). The political science literature states that there is an increasing trend towards more personalised politics in that politicians as individuals play a growing role in the political arena, notably in determining how citizens view politics, express their political preferences, and make political choices (Karvonen, 2010). This may be caused by some institutional incentives such as electoral rules stressing individuals rather than parties, or by the fact that political parties tend to present politics primarily through the lens of the individuals and that the media follow this trend by shifting the focus on politicians themselves (Balmas et al., 2014; Karvonen, 2010). The dealignment of voters and the dismantlement of the traditional cleavages of the society also concur to a situation where voters focus more and more on issues and individuals rather than parties (Franklin et al., 1992; Scarrow et al., 2000).

Research has been centred on the causes of personalisation but also on its consequences, inducing a vivid scholarly debate at the empirical level (which consequences?) and at the normative level (is it positive or negative for democracy?). The value of personalisation may be decisive to democracy (Arter, 2006). A more personalised political arena would revitalise the democracy through voters' strengthened interest in politics. Politics would become less anonymous (Johansson, 2008; Van Aelst, 2007). As a consequence, turnout at elections would be higher (Norris, 2004). Furthermore, the mechanisms of representation would be improved because voters could express their opinions directly on candidates rather than passing through the party (Blais & Massicotte, 2002). Personalised politics may ensure that candidates with the

greatest support are elected – although this research aims at shedding light on a drawback related to this assertion.

Hence, studying the “unlucky winners” proves to be extremely relevant. If personalisation really reinforces the interest of voters in politics (and their participation) because they can support their preferred candidate(s), these voters might feel extremely disappointed to figure out that the candidate(s) they casted a personal vote for has/have not been elected despite a strong support. This could in turn weaken voters’ willingness to be interested and active in politics, and by doing so revoke the positive impact of a personalised electoral system. The very existence of unlucky winners may impede on the level of trust in the political institutions. We can expect voters not aware of the details of the electoral rules not to understand why their direct vote for a given candidate had no effect on her election as an MP.

Personalisation could, however, go with liabilities although scholars do not unanimously assess the negative character of these consequences. Renwick and Pilet (2016) stress the risk of superficiality and of a weakening of the weight of political parties on the functioning of democracy (Swanson & Mancini, 1996). An increased intraparty competition would be damageable for party cohesion because candidates/MPs do not anymore (or little) need the party to get elected (Bowler & Farrell, 1993; Karvonen, 2010; Katz, 1980; Rahat, 2007). Accordingly, the accountability principles shift from the collective accountability at the party level towards an individual accountability (Norris, 2004). This could be positive for democracy at large in that elected representatives would have to respond to citizens’ demand directly (André et al., 2015).

The existence of unlucky winners among a party’s candidates is but an example of the potential negative impact of personalisation of politics on intraparty cohesion. Candidates relying on personal votes liberate themselves from their party and construct a direct link with voters. The unlucky winners could however not rely on the sole individual accountability since they did not gather a sufficient number of votes. Yet they proved to be popular among the electorate. This ambiguous situation could harm party cohesion even more than the popular and elected candidates. We could expect the unlucky winners to be unsatisfied with the party selectorates’ choice regarding their placement on the list and jealous towards the less popular but elected candidates. Consequently, they may trigger dissension among the party if their popularity is not recognised (for the use of preference votes as a selection criterion, see André et al., 2015).

Previous research in electoral and party politics has studied losers, but the specific unlucky winners have not been studied so far, to the best of my knowledge. Scholars studied the consequences of voting for the winning party or the losing party, for instance in terms of the satisfaction with democracy of voters having casted their vote for the losers, in terms of support for the system or regarding political behaviour, e.g. turn out or protest potential. Cross and Pruyers (2017) recently investigated a similar topic, but at the pre-electoral stage, i.e. studying the losers of the candidate selection process. They surveyed how these losers respond to defeat and in particular the consequences that having voted for the loser have on the party cohesion, stability and strength. They found out significant difference between winners and losers of intra-party candidate selection processes in terms of both their attitudes and behaviour relating to party politics. The supporters of losing candidates are not likely to be satisfied and active in party politics in the wake of their defeat. This attests that intraparty competition might affect the party internal organisation.

Cross and Pruyers (2017) studied this for candidate nomination, but the same reasoning could be made for intraparty competition at the electoral level. Conflicts during the candidate selection process have major consequences, but similar conflicts might take place among candidates from the same party during the electoral campaign when candidates compete against each other to seduce voters in order to receive their personal vote. It is less obvious in semi-open list systems because one knows that preference voting is not the most common way to enter the Parliament. Yet, at each election, some candidates do manage to break the rank order and to win their seat thanks to the direct support from voters. Intraparty competition might thus occur among candidates even after the selection was made.

The “divisive” primary literature (Kernell, 2015; Wichowsky & Niebler, 2010) argues that opening the selection to a large electorate might undermine the party organisation in that open conflicts may arise and affect the party cohesion and image towards the electorate. Elections where candidates from a same party compete against each other for voters are similar to these selection methods. One may see an open primary-like competition taking place among candidates during the election, next to the competition occurring between parties for seats. The unlucky winners, i.e. those who lost this competition might affect the party cohesion – and so could the voters having casted a vote for these candidates.

Beyond the relevance of the study of the phenomenon of unlucky winners for its consequences on the interest and participation to politics and on intraparty cohesion, the fact that an electoral system produces unlucky winners may hold consequences for the mechanism of representation. The act of *political* representation is for the representative being the intermediary between citizens, on the one hand, and on the other, the political decision-making process (Celis et al., 2010). Regardless whether it goes about the ‘politics of presence’ or the ‘politics of ideas’ (Philipps, 1995), i.e. about descriptive or substantive representation (Pitkin, 1967), it may be problematic if the represented’s choice does not lead to the desired representatives. The focus of this paper lies here. **Do some kinds of candidates face higher chances to be unlucky winners than others?** As far as descriptive representation is concerned, it is indeed relevant to study if some categories of the population were to be penalised by the semi-open nature of the electoral system. Do men and women and do candidates from all age categories have the chance to enter the Parliament? In this paper, I put under scrutiny the potential discrepancy between the voters’ choice on some candidates and the consequences of the electoral system that may distort the electorate’s wish.

I focus in this paper on two central personal vote-earning attributes (PVEA, Shugart et al., 2005) that may be appealing for voters when casting a personal vote, and that at the same time relate to the mechanism of descriptive representation: the candidates’ gender and age. The PVEA are characteristics of the candidates that they may highlight to attract personal votes, and on which voters may rely when deciding on the candidates to support. These “information shortcuts” help making a decision among a candidates’ slate (Valdini, 2006). Voters are known to use “perceptions of candidates’ demographic characteristics as a way of predicting what policy actions the candidate will take in office” (Kam, 2007, p. 347). Stereotypes may guide selection and election decisions. Both variables under study in this research are objective (or ascriptive) attributes of the candidates, whom cannot lead to controversy, i.e. being a woman or being 30 years old. Indeed, candidates “can do little or nothing to modify their more objective attributes” (Shugart et al., 2005, p. 439). On the contrary to their behaviour or ideological preferences, candidates cannot modify their birth date or their gender. These attributes are quite obvious for voters who could easily find out which candidates fit their preferred profile on these two PVEA.

Accordingly, if some candidates are found to be systematically disadvantaged, it will be more straightforward to assert that it is because of their very nature: their gender or their age.

The gender of an individual is obviously one of her core defining characteristics. Being a man or a woman is a critical aspect of the social background of the electoral candidates. Sex can hardly be changed nor be hidden to the voters. Historically, men have occupied most political positions and are still nowadays overrepresented in most electoral institutions (Bjarnegård, 2013). But, is it because of voters discriminating against women or is the explanation to be found at the level of the selection process? For this paper specifically, should we then expect more male or female candidates to be unlucky winners? The evidence in the literature indicates that women might be more numerous than men among unlucky winners.

The literature argues that women's access to politics is more limited because of parties not selecting them. "Once women manage to become selected as candidates, their electoral chances are roughly equal to those of their male counterparts." (Bjarnegård, 2013, p. 6) The main hurdle would be within the party, party selectorates depicted as the strongest gatekeepers preventing female participation in politics (Hazan, 2002). Murray (2010, p. 99) proved that "it is parties, and not the electorate, who discriminate against female candidates and prevent them from being elected in equal proportion to their candidate numbers". Selectorates would consider that women's profile is inadequate for a political career. "Part of the (male) political elite believes that women are less interested in and have less time for, a political mandate, which inhibits them from approaching women candidates" (Meier, 2008, p. 145; Meier & Deschouwer, 2004). It is also believed that women are less strong and decisive (Norris and Lovenduski 1995). Conversely, "men are viewed as more competent, decisive, and stronger leaders, and possessing a greater ability to handle a crisis" (Dolan 2014, 97). Accordingly, we would expect women to be less supported by parties. But what about voters? To counterbalance a weaker representation, female candidates would play on this "minority status" to make themselves more attractive in the voters' eyes (Górecki & Kukołowicz, 2014). Their minority status would be converted into an electoral advantage by taking the advantage of being different from the other politicians. Voters cherishing the principle of equality among the political elite might choose women over men when casting a preference vote (Valdini, 2012). Yet not all voters would do so, what would imply that women would not receive enough to be directly elected.

Based on previous works, we expect political parties not to facilitate women's access to politics, hence not to select them on realistic positions (i.e. on list positions where no personal support from voters is needed to enter the Parliament (Hazan & Rahat, 2010; Vandeleene, 2016)) unless quotas force them to do so (Krook & Zetterberg, 2014; Vandeleene, 2014). Concurrently, we expect voters to favour women to some extent in order to establish the balance again. As a consequence, female candidates might be those that do not benefit from an attractive list position but that convinced a decent share of voters.

H1: The unlucky winners are more likely to be women.

Another key variable used to describe politicians is their age. Like gender, age does not tell a lot about a person but nourishes tons of stereotypes. There would be an ideal age to be a good politician: people aged between 35 and 65 would face better at the ballot box than other candidates (Piliavin, 1987). Some research argues that voters may judge candidates either too young or too old to take office (Kenski & Jamieson, 2010). The younger candidates as well as the older candidates would have to rely only on voters from their own age cohort to get elected. Thanks to the similarity hypothesis according to which people appreciate much more people

like themselves, young and old candidates would be favored only by young or old voters – who also vote for middle-aged candidates that gather the most votes at the end of the day (Piliavin, 1987; Sigelman & Sigelman, 1982). It is therefore hazardous to formulate a clear expectation so as to the relative age of the unlucky winners compared to the other candidates. They might not be the middle-aged candidates that gather the greatest part of the votes but not too young or too old candidates either because these do not usually convince enough voters to cast a personal vote for them.

Further than the mere number of years of life, age might be a good predictor of another key variable, namely the political experience. Older candidates might be more experienced in politics and hence able to attract more personal votes and receive a better placement on the list. This is called “the incumbency advantage”, i.e. candidates with prior political experience are more valued than candidates with no political experience (Ansolabehere et al., 2007; Gelman & King, 1990; Shair-Rosenfield & Hinojosa, 2014). Incumbents – or experienced politicians – would have a facilitated access to resources and to the media (Cox & Katz, 1996). They could more easily rely on human resources (e.g. staff), and their visibility in the media may indeed be more significant than the remaining candidates. In this era of personalization of politics, name recognition is also a major advantage for experienced candidates in comparison to newcomers (Mayhew, 1974). Politically experienced aspirants stand for safety in the selectorates’ eyes – the party knows what to expect and can rely on voters’ past support for these candidates. If we state that age is correlated to the extent of political experience of the candidates, we may expect the unlucky winners not to be as experienced as the elected candidates are. They might be newcomers to the political arena, that voters may value if they want some “fresh new blood” in politics (Celis & Erzeel, 2017; Indrithason & Kristinsson, 2015). Yet this hypothesis is rather explorative given the difficulty to find strong theoretical explanations for the profile of these candidates.

H2: The unlucky winners are more likely to be younger.

The next section details the data gathered in order to answer the research question, and justifies the selection of the two cases: Belgium and Sweden.

Data and case selection

This research project aims at uncovering the profile of the four types of candidates of the typology detailed in the introduction. A comprehensive database is built in order to grasp the singularity of the unlucky winners *vis-à-vis* their list counterparts. Next to their category within the typology of candidates (see table 1), first-hand data is compiled, i.e. party, list position, number of preference votes earned and total number of votes for the party in the given constituency¹. In addition, data on their socio-demographic profile is gathered, i.e. the candidates’ gender and age. Two elections are under scrutiny for this preliminary paper: the Riksdag elections of September 14, 2014 and the elections for the Belgian Chamber of Representatives of May 25, 2014.

Two quite similar cases – Sweden and Belgium – are simultaneously analysed in order to grasp commonalities regarding the phenomenon of unlucky winners. Both countries have analogous electoral systems (Karvonen, 2010). The Swedish and Belgian electoral systems are PR list

¹ Part of the Belgian dataset was built on the basis of the Belgian Longitudinal Candidate Data (BLCD) kindly provided by Maximilien Cogels.

systems with multimember districts. Seats are allocated to political parties according to a two-tiers system. Electoral thresholds to access Parliament apply to both systems, while the percentages of votes that small parties have to obtain do differ. Yet, a more decisive similarity lies in the nature of the ballot. Both countries have a flexible system with preferential voting. Swedish and Belgian voters can cast preference votes for the candidate(s) they prefer on one party list. The Swedish voters have the right to cast only one preference vote while Belgian voters could tick all the candidates on the list if they wished so. Interestingly, it is not only the number of preference votes earned by each candidate that determines who gets access to the Parliament. The rank order of the party list prevails unless some candidates manage to attract a sufficient number of votes to bypass candidates higher ranked on the list. Sweden applies a threshold of 5% of the party votes (list and preference votes altogether) while in Belgium there is an eligibility figure to be reached that corresponds to the total of votes earned by this party in the constituency (i.e. the electoral figure) divided by the number of seats to be distributed for the given list plus one.

The only noticeable difference between the two systems lies in the substitute candidates, i.e. those who are aimed at replacing the MPs if these were to resign. In Sweden, the next-in-line candidate would take up the vacant seat. In Belgium, two lists are presented next to each other: the effective and the substitute lists. The substitute candidates are ranked in a similar fashion as the effective candidates and in a way, wait line for a seat to be vacant to enter the Parliament. Unlike the Swedish candidates, there is no possibility for the Belgian substitute candidates to be directly elected, one MP has to resign for them to become an MP.

Sweden and Belgium have also known quite recently a personalising reform of their electoral system (Arter, 2006; Pilet, 2007). In both countries, voters previously did not have the chance to influence the individual election of candidates. Since the reform, preference votes weight more on the final outcome. In Belgium the ‘devolutive effect’ of the party vote has been halved (André et al., 2012). As a consequence, high-ranked candidates could now benefit from fewer votes to compensate a number of preference votes lower than their co-partisans. While Belgian voters were already used to preferential voting, Sweden has changed from a closed-list to a flexible system. This reform entailed the new opportunity for voters to select a maximum of one candidate on one list, unless they still opt for the party vote. If a candidate obtains a minimum of 5% of the party vote in the constituency (8% before 2014), s/he could overtake the candidates ranked above on the list (Arter, 1999; Hermansson, 2015). These reforms were implemented from the 1998 elections onwards in Sweden and from the 2003 elections onwards in Belgium. Almost two decades and respectively four and five elections after the reform, voters are supposed to be familiar with their reinforced weight on the intra-party seat allocation and are expected to value this opportunity (André et al., 2012).

Yet, the rank order remains the dominant way to get elected in both countries (Karvonen, 2010), as a limited number of candidates succeed in bypassing the list order thanks to their preference votes (André et al., 2015; Sainsbury, 2005; Vandeleene et al., 2016). The relevance of the study of these candidates who do not succeed in bypassing the parties’ grip is thus even more striking. This leads to a paradox. On the one hand, electoral rules have been altered in order to give voters greater opportunities to express their preferences in terms of individual politicians (Hagevi, 2003; Pilet, 2012). But on the other hand, these two cases do not dramatically follow the current trend of personalisation, and one could even assert that politics, through preference votes, is not extremely personalised in Belgium and Sweden. This paper studies then the candidates swimming against the tide, i.e. who would benefit from a more personalised system.

Another crucial electoral rule relates to the gender diversity in the candidates' slate. Belgian political parties have to field equal numbers of men and women candidates in the elections (Meier, 2012). Both men and women enjoy therefore the equality of opportunities regarding access to the list. Some more specific regulations even force parties in Belgium to present a male and a female candidate on the first two list positions, what provides the equality of results for men and women. The output has greater chances to be gender balanced of the party magnitude outreaches one in a sufficient number of cases. Yet, the equality is still not reflected in the assemblies in Belgium where there are about one third of female representatives. Some female candidates get lost between the candidate stage where they form the half of the cohort and the MP stage where the percentage of women is lower. This may be related to the fact that the placement mandate only concerns the first two positions, and that either much more candidates are elected per list or only one candidate (i.e. the first and often male candidate).

In Sweden, women constitute almost half the *Riksdag*, but parity is not reached, with 43.6% of female MPs. Some – but not all – parties do apply quotas with the aim of enhancing women's participation to politics (Freidenvall, 2003). The presence of a legislative quota in Belgium, and especially the 50/50 rule, may impact on the gender of the unlucky winners since half the candidates have to be female candidates. The chances are thus a little higher in Belgium to find female unlucky winners than in Sweden where the gender equality rule is not as strict. Yet, one may expect to find a decent number of female candidates among the Swedish lists, given the strong presence of women in the elected assembly.

Findings: exploring the profile of the unlucky winners

Bivariate analyses

This paper seeks to determine to what extent the so-called unlucky winners differ from the other categories of candidates on the electoral lists. Does a particular profile emerge in terms of socio-demographics? Are women or younger candidates disadvantaged, as expected from the literature?

The candidates are not equally distributed among the four categories of the candidates' typology developed in this research. As demonstrated in table 2, the largest share of the candidates is not elected but these candidates do not fit within the unlucky winners' category. Both in the Swedish and Belgian datasets, between 3 and 4% of the candidates are considered to be these unlucky winners, i.e. not elected but yet more popular than some other – elected – candidates.

About the same number of candidates belongs to the first category which gathers candidates who were elected thanks to their personal votes. These elected candidates are also amongst the most popular candidates based on the voters' choice, but they managed to attract enough votes to sit in the Parliament. The Swedish candidates of this category have received at least 5% of the party votes in the constituency, what allowed them a direct access to the *Riksdag*. The Belgian candidates of this first category cover two kinds of candidates: some reached the so-called eligibility figure, which corresponds to the number of votes to gather in order for the candidate to be elected regardless of her/his list position, which is quite similar to the 5% threshold in force in the Swedish system. Some other candidates did not reach this figure but were yet elected because of their higher number of personal votes than the other candidates on the list – again regardless of the list rank order.

Table 2 : Distribution of candidates among the four categories of the typology

	N	%	Cumulative %
Sweden – Riksdag 2014			
(1) Elected thanks to personal votes	98	2.5	2.5
(2) Elected thanks to list position	254	6.4	8.8
<i>elected as a substitute</i>	3	.1	
(3) Unlucky winners	146	3.7	12.5
(4) Not elected	3485	87.5	100.0
Total	3983	100.0	
Belgium – Chamber of Repr. 2014			
(1) Elected thanks to personal votes	48	3.9	3.9
<i>reached the eligibility figure</i>	28	2.3	
<i>did not reach the eligibility figure</i>	20	1.6	
(2) Elected thanks to list position	154	12.4	16.2
<i>first substitute candidate</i>	52	4.2	
(3) Unlucky winners	41	3.3	19.5
(4) Not elected	1001	80.5	100.0
Total	1244	100.0	

The third category is specific to the list systems. 6.4% of the Swedish candidates and 12.5% of the Belgian candidates were elected thanks to their list position. Some of them attained quite a high number of personal votes, some did not have much of them – but all of them owe their parliamentary seat to their party, and to the selectorates in particular, who allocated them to their specific list position. In the Swedish system, these are appointed as MPs to fill the seats won by the party in the constituency when all candidates having reached the 5% threshold have received a seat. In the Belgian system, all candidates elected thanks to their list position managed to reach the eligibility figure with the help of the so-called list votes, allocated to the candidates in the order of the list until half the votes are distributed. These list votes are summed with the personal votes of the candidates: the more popular the list counterparts ranked above, the more chances for the candidates below on the list to be able to use some of these votes. In both systems, some substitute candidates were added to this group. Three Swedish candidates were elected as MPs soon after the elections as substitutes of elected candidates who resigned e.g. to take up a parliamentary seat in the European Parliament. The Belgian first candidates on the substitute list were all taken on board of the third category given the high probability that these may sit in the Chamber of Representatives during the legislative term.

These candidates have not all attracted fewer votes than the unlucky winners. Some may have succeeded in convincing a decent share of the voters but yet not enough to reach the threshold or the eligibility figure. It is also among this group that one finds candidates who became MPs with fewer personal votes than the unlucky winners. These would not have been elected if the system had been an open list system, on the contrary to the unlucky winners.

The typology is based on the preference votes gathered by the candidates compared to their list counterparts. Table 3 presents the candidates according to the share of votes that were casted for them personally out of the total number of votes casted for the party in the constituency (party votes and personal votes altogether). As could be expected because of the design of the typology, the unlucky winners attract on average fewer votes than the elected candidates but

more than the non-elected candidates. The differences are statistically significant in the two cases under study. Voters support unlucky winners to a lesser extent on average than the candidates elected thanks to their list position. This indicates that, despite the fact that their share of personal votes was lower than the threshold to be directly elected, these candidates still managed to convince more voters than the unlucky winners. Of course, this research considers a candidate to be an unlucky winner if at least one candidate was elected with fewer preference votes than her/him. The second group does not discriminate between the candidates having won more or less personal votes than the unlucky winners. These results indicate that it is likely that more candidates are more popular than the unlucky winners among this group than less popular candidates. This thus lessens the sharp difference between the first and the second group of the typology and opens new ways for further research, differentiating between these two sub-types.

Table 3 : Candidates by share of votes and by category of the typology

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error
Sweden – Riksdag 2014				
(1) Elected thanks to personal votes	98	9.62% ^a	5.25%	0.53%
(2) Elected thanks to list position	254	1.63% ^a	1.43%	0.09%
(3) Unlucky winners	146	1.12%	1.14%	0.09%
(4) Not elected	3485	0.45% ^a	0.77%	0.01%
Total	3983	0.77%	1.85%	0.03%
F (3,3979) = 2009.719, p = .000				
Belgium – Chamber of Repr. 2014				
(1) Elected thanks to personal votes	46	27.34% ^a	20.73%	3.06%
(2) Elected thanks to list position	156	10.80% ^a	7.50%	0.60%
(3) Unlucky winners	41	7.74%	4.71%	0.74%
(4) Not elected	1001	3.78% ^a	2.71%	0.09%
Total	1244	5.66%	7.27%	0.21%
F (3,1240) = 335.747, p = .000				

^a = The mean difference with the unlucky winners' group is significant at the 0.05 level.

The second dimension of the typology takes into account the list position. The unlucky winners are situated lower on the list than a candidate who could benefit from the list placement to get elected despite a smaller number of votes. Table 4 goes into the details of the list positions of the unlucky winners. Where is it likely to find these candidates: in the upper part of the list – yet not high enough to be elected through this placement – or down with the candidates who “fill the lists”? Two patterns emerge. The Swedish unlucky winners are clearly positioned among the first candidates on the list, but not at the very top of it, like the candidates from the second group who have on average only 12% of the candidates of the list ranked at a higher position. The unlucky winners have about 40% of their lists counterparts above them and a little more than half the candidates below them². This places them in the first half of the list. The Belgian unlucky winners on the contrary would be most likely found lower on the list, with about 50% of the candidates above them and 39% below their position.

² The analyses have also been run without the Sweden Democrats given that they function as outliers regarding the list length, which is extremely long compared to the other parties. The same statistically significant pattern arises, and is even stronger: the unlucky winners have on average 26.8% of the candidates above them and 69.8% ranked at a lower position.

When comparing the unlucky winners and the other popular (but elected) candidates, this difference in patterns makes sense. The popular candidates in Sweden are on the top of the list. It is highly unlikely to find a candidate reaching the 5% threshold not ranked in the top candidates. There is an average of less than 2% of the candidates above them, which means one or zero candidate if we take into account that lists with these candidates are about 28 candidates long. Like the elected popular candidates, the Swedish unlucky winners are also among the first candidates of the list. On the opposite, the Belgian non-elected popular candidates are similar to the popular elected candidates (with on average 17% of the candidates above them, i.e. 2 or 3 candidates out of 17) and are ranked at any place in the list, i.e. including lower positions. The popularity of candidates at low list positions might be explained by the multiple personal votes available in the Belgian electoral system, against the unique personal vote to be casted by Swedish voters. With several personal votes, Belgian voters can indeed afford boosting low-ranked candidates while Swedish voters might be more careful and strategic and cast their vote for a candidate with some chances to enter the Parliament, i.e. high up on the electoral list.

Table 4 : Candidates by list rank order and by category of the typology

		N	Mean	Std.	Std. Error
Sweden – Riksdag 2014					
(1) Elected thanks to pers. votes	Above	98	1.79% ^a	4.29%	0.43%
	Below	98	94.20% ^a	4.95%	0.50%
(2) Elected thanks to list position	Above	254	12.00% ^a	15.66%	0.98%
	Below	254	84.89% ^a	15.01%	0.94%
(3) Unlucky winners	Above	146	40.83%	29.98%	2.48%
	Below	146	56.25%	29.35%	2.43%
(4) Not elected	Above	3485	52.90% ^a	26.69%	0.45%
	Below	3485	43.55% ^a	26.70%	0.45%
Total	Above	3983	48.59%	28.81%	0.46%
	Below	3983	47.90%	28.79%	0.46%
F (3,3979) = 311.281, p = .000	Above				
F (3,3979) = 315.060, p = .000	Below				
Belgium – Chamber of Repr. 2014					
(1) Elected thanks to pers. votes	Above	46	17.75% ^a	30.00%	4.42%
	Below	46	75.80% ^a	29.57%	4.36%
(2) Elected thanks to list position	Above	156	6.57% ^a	8.33%	0.67%
	Below	156	84.38% ^a	8.67%	0.69%
(3) Unlucky winners	Above	41	49.99%	32.38%	5.06%
	Below	41	39.18%	34.17%	5.34%
(4) Not elected	Above	1001	53.05%	24.70%	0.78%
	Below	1001	38.71%	24.68%	0.78%
Total	Above	1244	45.82%	28.82%	0.82%
	Below	1244	45.82%	28.82%	0.82%
F (3,1240) = 193.786, p = .000	Above				
F (3,1240) = 190.471, p = .000	Below				

^a = The mean difference with the unlucky winners' group is significant at the 0.05 level.

The following analyses focus on the unlucky winners and aim at comparing this group to the three other groups of candidates. Although some relevant observations could be made on the differences between the other groups, this paper keeps its original point of view and investigates

the unlucky winners only. I explore based on bivariate analyses whether the unlucky winners differ from the other candidates in terms of socio-demographic profile. Two variables are under scrutiny: the candidates' gender and age.

This research intends to uncover whether women are more likely to be found among unlucky winners. Table 5 shows that no statistically significant difference among groups regarding gender is observed in the Swedish dataset. Both male and female candidates are likely to be found in the unlucky winners' group. Regarding Belgium however, a much clearer trend is identified. The statistically significant analysis discloses that there are more women than men belonging to the unlucky winners. The results show that there are more male than female candidates among the elected candidates. Yet what is more relevant for this research is the striking difference among the popular candidates. 5.8% of the male candidates won a seat in the Parliament against 1.8% of the women. When looking at the distribution among the popular candidates who did not reach the elected office, the balance is reversed: 2.5% of the men are labelled as unlucky winners for 4.1% of the women running for office.

This suggests that among the popular candidates, women tend not to be elected while men are likely to be elected. The female unlucky winners did not reach the Parliament not because of their electoral support but because of the list position that they received from their party selectorates. This result reveals political parties are indeed the gatekeepers to elected office and that list placement by political parties is critical. By not allocating high-ranked positions to some popular female candidates, the selectorates let the responsibility to the voters to elected these candidates (Luhiste, 2015). If not enough voters support the candidacy, this (female) candidate is not likely to be elected on the contrary to the (male) counterpart ranked above on the list and who will benefit from this placement.

Table 5 : Candidates by gender and by category of the typology

	Men		Women	
	N	%	N	%
Sweden – Riksdag 2014				
(1) Elected thanks to personal votes	64	3.0%	34	1.8%
(2) Elected thanks to list position	134	6.3%	120	6.5%
(3) Unlucky winners	83	3.9%	63	3.4%
(4) Not elected	1856	86.9%	1629	88.2%
Total	2137	100.0%	1846	100.0%
$\chi(3) = 6.254, p = .100$				
Belgium – Chamber of Repr. 2014				
(1) Elected thanks to personal votes	37	5.8%	11	1.8%
(2) Elected thanks to list position	87	13.7%	67	11.0%
(3) Unlucky winners	16	2.5%	25	4.1%
(4) Not elected	493	77.9%	508	83.1%
Total	633	100.0%	611	100.0%
$\chi(3) = 19.077, p = .000$				

The second hypothesis relates to the age of the candidates. The analysis of the Swedish candidates for the Riksdag elections in 2014 does again not deliver the same results than the analysis of the Belgian candidates for the Chamber elections in 2014. As shown in table 6, the

unlucky winners in Sweden are noticeably younger than the other candidates while the Belgian unlucky winners even tend to be older. Yet if the ANOVA is significant for the Swedish case, the results are less significant for Belgium. As presented in table 3, the unlucky winners in Sweden are on average 40 years old while the other non-elected candidates are much older, with a mean age of 46 years. The unlucky winners also statistically significantly differ from the candidates elected thanks to their list position, who also tend to be older. There is a five-year age difference between these groups. No statistically significant difference was found with the popular and elected candidates, but the figures yet indicate that these would also be older than the popular non-elected candidates³. This would suggest that the unlucky winners could be at an earlier stage in their career than the elected candidates, but a more fine-tuned research would have to confirm that their younger age is linked to a yet shorter political career.

The Post Hoc tests of the ANOVA for the Belgian candidates do not deliver statistically significant results. However, the figures show that the unlucky winners do not seem to be younger than the other candidates as their Swedish counterparts are. With a mean age of 47 years old, they would even be older than the two groups of less popular candidates. These results do not confirm the trend observed for Sweden.

Table 6 : Candidates by age and by category of the typology

	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error
Sweden – Riksdag 2014				
(1) Elected thanks to personal votes	98	44.40	10.649	1.076
(2) Elected thanks to list position	254	45.41 ^a	11.572	.726
(3) Unlucky winners	146	40.79	13.536	1.120
(4) Not elected	3485	46.66 ^a	14.098	.239
Total	3983	46.31	13.900	.220
F (3,3979) = 9.418, p = .000				
Belgium – Chamber of Repr. 2014				
(1) Elected thanks to personal votes	48	47.74	8.67	1.25
(2) Elected thanks to list position	154	45.51	9.30	.74
(3) Unlucky winners	41	47.71	12.54	1.96
(4) Not elected	999	44.09	12.36	.39
Total	1242	44.52	11.94	.34
F (3,1238) = 2.948, p = .032				

^a = The mean difference with the unlucky winners' group is significant at the 0.05 level.

Multivariate analyses

To wrap-up the bivariate analyses presented above, a multivariate analysis is done for each of the two cases in order to test which socio-demographic variable would help predict the fact that a candidate belongs to the unlucky winners or not.

A binomial logistic regression model is run for the Swedish candidates with the aim of uncovering to what extent the characteristics of the candidate and of the list are a good predictor of her/his status as unlucky winner. Results are reported in table 7. The goodness-of-fit of the

³ Besides, one could assert that, since this study encompasses the entire population, i.e. all candidates running for this election, the significance figures might be disregarded. Mere differences in proportions could be enough to attest for a real difference between groups.

model is very satisfactory, with a value for the area under the curve of 0.864 (considered as “good”). This attests that randomly selected candidates have high chances to be rightly allocated either in or out the unlucky winners’ group. Everything taken into account, the age of the candidate remains a good predictor of being or not an unlucky winner. Younger candidates are more likely to be part of this group. Political and institutional characteristics also play a role. The unlucky winners tend to have attracted more personal votes than the other candidates (this of course takes into account the large number of non-elected candidates). Their electoral lists are longer and they have fewer candidates above them on the list than the not-unlucky winners, i.e. they are ranked above on the list. Some party binaries have also been included (parties with more than 3% unlucky winners on their lists). These are all significant. In this preliminary model, only gender does not work. Knowing that the candidate is a man or a woman does not help predicting whether or not the candidate will be an unlucky winner.

Table 7 : Logistic regression (Unlucky winners Sweden)

Variables	B (SE)	Exp(B)
Age	-.022 (.007) **	.978
Gender (ref.: men)	-.019 (.183)	.981
% pers. votes/party votes in the constituency	.075 (.038) *	1.077
List length	.023 (.007) ***	1.024
% candidates above on the list	-.010 (.003) **	.990
Arbetarepartiet-Socialdemokraterna (binary)	2.637 (.347) ***	13.973
Miljöpartiet de gröna (binary)	1.729 (.409) ***	5.633
Moderaterna (binary)	1.761 (.381) ***	5.817
Sverigedemokraterna (binary)	3.946 8.472) ***	51.754
Constant	-4.613 (.530) ***	.010
-2 Log likelihood	991.902	
Nagelkerke R ²	.234	
AUC	.864	
N	3983	

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.
*Sign.: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$*
 Dependent variable: Unlucky winners (binary)

A similar binomial logistic regression model is run on the basis of the Belgian data. As presented in table 8, the goodness-of-fit of the model is satisfactory but slightly less than in the Swedish case (area under the curve of 0.799, which falls into the “fair” category). As in the bivariate analyses, the socio-demographic variables produce a reversed pattern. The age of the candidate is only significant if we consider the cutoff value of .10 (.088). The older candidates thus slightly face more chances to be unlucky winners in Belgium, everything else taken into account. The gender of the candidate plays a role in this model. Women are much more likely than men to be unlucky winners. The proportion of personal votes earned by the candidate is also a good predictor: unlucky winners usually win more votes. As already detailed in the bivariate analysis, the list is likely to be shorter if unlucky winners are on it. The rank order of the candidate on the list, however, does not seem to be critical. The proportion of candidates

above the candidate (and it holds for below as well) does not help knowing whether s/he is an unlucky winner. As for the Swedish case, party binaries have been included (for parties with a share of unlucky winners above 3%) and are significant. Belonging to these parties is thus a good predictor of being an unlucky winner.

Table 8 : Logistic regression (Unlucky winners Belgium)

Variables	B (SE)	Exp(B)
Age	.025 (.015) #	1.025
Gender (ref.: men)	-.708 (.346) *	.492
% pers. votes/party votes in the constituency	.045 (.019) *	1.046
List length	-.112 (.037) **	.894
% candidates above on the list	-.008 (.006)	.992
Ecolo (binary)	2.150 (.535) ***	8.588
MR (binary)	1.692 (.544) **	5.429
Groen (binary)	1.860 (.622) **	6.426
sp.a (binary)	1.576 (.609) **	4.838
N-VA (binary)	1.935 (.562) ***	6.927
Constant	-3.952 (.945) ***	.019
-2 Log likelihood	309.226	
Nagelkerke R ²	.160	
AUC	.799	
N	1242	

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.
*Sign.: # $p < 0.1$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$*
 Dependent variable: Unlucky winners (binary)

In short, the socio-demographic characteristics might help explain, but not always, why a candidate is an unlucky winner or not. The age of the candidates plays a role but in diverging directions, and gender is significant only in the Belgian case. Adding some control variables such as features of their lists or the number of personal votes help uncovering whether they are likely to be popular but not elected as candidates. Yet these are preliminary models that should be further fine-tuned. The pseudo R² (Nagelkerke) are still rather low, which means that a more sophisticated model could explain better why some candidates fall within this group or not.

Concluding comments

Sweden and Belgium have set up reforms personalising their respective electoral system (since 1998 in Sweden and 2003 in Belgium). Some decades after this reform, still most candidates remain elected thanks to their list position. 72% and 76% of the elected candidates in both countries owe their seat to the list placement decided by party selectorates rather than to voters casting personal votes for them. Less than 4% of the candidates become MP thanks to the voters' personal support. Next to these elected candidates, there are of course non-elected candidates among which some have also attracted a decent personal support. Yet, these candidates were ranked lower on the list, and sometimes even among the last list positions.

With this weaker support from the party selectorates, they could not enter the Parliament. The goal of this paper was to investigate who belongs to this group of candidates.

The statistical analyses on the Swedish and Belgian cases in 2014 reveal that they differ from the other candidates. One can sketch the following general profile, although the two countries' datasets did not perfectly give the same findings. These candidates would earn more personal votes than the other non-elected candidates but still less than the elected candidates, on average. The unlucky winners are thus not extremely big winners since they did not manage to attract an extensive popular support, even in comparison to the elected candidates who did not reach the threshold to enter the Parliament. These candidates could be anywhere on the list, meaning that it is not only the next-in-line candidates who gather large numbers of preference votes. Out of order candidates might also be popular. Regarding the two hypotheses, the unlucky winner is likely to be a female candidate and this candidate would be younger than the other candidates. This could indicate that the unlucky winners do not fit the "middle-aged men" stereotype of the politician (Norris, 1997), and would rather be outsiders to the political arena. These outsiders did not receive the formal support from the party (yet), understood as a position high up on the list. If this pattern was to be confirmed, it highlights the relevance of making the selectorates aware of the importance of having a diverse set of candidates up on the list – in order to guarantee a diverse parliamentary group. Newcomers to politics and female candidates do not alone manage to enter the Parliament, they would need a boost from their party.

The nature of this paper is still exploratory and preliminary. Several next steps are foreseen. First, I will extend the database in order to include all Swedish and Belgian candidates running for the legislative elections held after the reform personalising their respective electoral system (i.e. ideally since 1998 in Sweden and 2003 in Belgium). Increasing the number of candidates and of elections will give more robustness to the results and avoid case-specific findings. Another way of improving this paper as such would be to go beyond the mere socio-demographic characteristics of candidates, for which robust hypotheses are tricky to find, and look rather for behaviour traits. For doing this, I plan to relate this database to the CCS dataset which contains answers from candidates to the candidate surveys from the Comparative Candidate Survey network, i.e. the Swedish Candidate Survey and the Belgian Candidate Survey.

The long-term objective of this research is to explore, in a second stage, the strategies aimed by the unlucky winners in the run-up to the next elections, i.e. in September 2018 in Sweden and in May/June 2019 in Belgium. What's next? Do they ambition to run again? Do they try to play the card of their electoral popularity in order to obtain a safer list position? Which measures do they envisage to take for the next elections? By meeting some of these unlucky winners face-to-face, further research might draw new lines of analysis in a particularly unexplored research field. I want to investigate party cohesion and personalisation of politics as main topics of analysis. An inductive and qualitative approach would therefore be required.

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Appendix

Table 9 : Candidates by party and by category of the typology

	(1) Elected thanks to personal votes	(2) Elected thanks to list position	(3) Unlucky winners	(4) Not elected
Sweden – Riksdag 2014				
Vänsterpartiet (<i>Left</i>)	2.6%	2.4%	1.2%	93.8%
Arbetarep.-Socialdem. (<i>Social Democrats</i>)	2.2%	12.2%	7.9%	77.8%
Miljöpartiet de gröna (<i>Greens</i>)	2.0%	3.0%	3.2%	91.9%
Centerpartiet (<i>Center</i>)	2.7%	0.8%	0.5%	96.0%
Folkpartiet liberalerna (<i>Liberals</i>)	3.1%	1.4%	0.0%	95.5%
Kristdemokraterna (<i>Christian Democrats</i>)	2.8%	1.7%	0.6%	94.9%
Moderaterna (<i>Moderates</i>)	2.4%	8.2%	3.0%	86.4%
Sverigedemokraterna (<i>Extreme right</i>)	1.2%	59.3%	39.5%	0.0%
Total	2.5%	6.4%	3.7%	87.5%
$\chi(21) = 990.556, p = .000$				
	(1) Elected thanks to personal votes	(2) Elected thanks to list position	(3) Unlucky winners	(4) Not elected
Belgium – Chamber of Repr. 2014				
PTB-GO ! (<i>Far left</i>)	0.0%	7.7%	0.0%	92.3%
Ecolo (<i>Greens</i>)	0.0%	11.1%	9.1%	79.8%
PS (<i>Socialists</i>)	9.2%	17.4%	2.8%	70.6%
cdH (<i>Christian Democrats</i>)	2.0%	12.2%	2.0%	83.7%
MR (<i>Liberals</i>)	4.6%	19.3%	7.3%	68.8%
FDF (<i>Regionalists</i>)	4.2%	8.3%	0.0%	87.5%
Parti Populaire (<i>Extreme right</i>)	0.0%	8.7%	0.0%	91.3%
Groen (<i>Greens</i>)	0.9%	7.7%	4.3%	87.2%
sp.a (<i>Socialists</i>)	2.2%	11.0%	3.7%	83.1%
CD&V (<i>Christian Democrats</i>)	3.7%	13.2%	0.7%	82.4%
OpenVld (<i>Liberals</i>)	3.7%	10.3%	0.7%	85.3%
N-VA (<i>Regionalists</i>)	9.6%	18.4%	5.1%	66.9%
Vlaams Belang (<i>Extreme right</i>)	1.5%	5.9%	0.0%	92.6%
Total	3.7%	12.6%	3.3%	80.5%
$\chi(36) = 89.063, p = .000$				

It is clear from table 9 that some parties are more likely than the others to have unlucky winners on board. In both countries, a share of parties does not have a single unlucky winner on their lists while some other parties tend to produce this type of candidate. In Sweden, the far-right party accumulates the unlucky winners. This is due to a particular feature of the electoral

strategy of the Sweden Democrats. Unlike the other parties, this party presented in 2014 the same two lists all over the 28 constituencies. This resulted in candidates being elected in a constituency where they did not *per se* won a large share of personal votes – with the consequence of putting almost all not-elected candidates on the list in the category of the unlucky winners. Besides, this party revolves around one leader for which most voters cast their unique preference vote. Jimmie Åkesson gathered on average 17.6% of the votes against 0.04% for the other candidates of his party. There is thus a large imbalance in this party regarding personal votes, what leads to a large number of unlucky winners. The Social Democrats have the second largest number of unlucky winners, with about 8% of his candidates falling in this category. To a lower extent, the Greens and the Moderates also have some unlucky winners. Interestingly, the parties with the more “unlucky winners” are also those with larger numbers of candidates elected thanks to the list rank order. An explanation for this phenomenon could be that these lists are lists with no (or only one for the SD) big name. The number of personal votes of the elected candidates would be low enough to make it easier for non-elected candidates to overtake them.

In Belgium, four parties tend to have unlucky winners. The francophone Greens and Liberals have respectively 9.1% and 7.3% of unlucky winners on their lists, and to a more moderate extent, the Flemish Regionalists and Greens have 5.1% and 4.3% of non-elected but popular candidates. The Greens let apart, the two other parties with the greatest share of unlucky winners also have the greatest numbers of candidates elected thanks to the list placement of selectorates. In the case of the regionalist party N-VA at least, this can be explained by a similar reason as the Sweden Democrats: this party had few big names and voters casted votes for this party mainly because of the party leader and of the party programmatic stances. As a consequence, the elected candidates were not extremely popular, what let room for other candidates to attract sufficient amounts of personal votes to pass them.