

Do candidate selection modes matter for the gender diversity within political elites? Evidence from the Belgian case in 2014

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Candidate selection is critical to politics (Hazan & Rahat 2010). While this statement has been widely shared in the academic literature, little empirical research actually tested the relationship between the selection methods and the outcome of the process, i.e. the type of political elites involved in electoral campaigns. This paper aims at showing how the modes of selection may impact the characteristics of the candidates selected by the parties. Gender as a critical personal trait of the candidates is scrutinised in particular. The research investigates the processes of candidate selection in eleven Belgian political parties in the run-up to the May 2014 ‘mother of all elections’ where European, federal and regional elections were organised on the same day. 143 selection processes are quantitatively examined. The paper highlights the differences regarding gender diversity at the level of the realistic positions resulting from procedures involving exclusive versus inclusive selectorates as well as centralised versus decentralised processes of selection. It also explores to what extent the characteristics of the selectorates may impact the individual features of the candidates they select and how the degree of institutionalisation of the procedures might be critical. By doing so, it suggests that party politics is definitely relevant to politics in general, and to the composition of the political leadership in particular.

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Introduction

To draft electoral lists, political parties have to select individuals who will run for the party. Some of them will later fill the party seats in the assembly. This so-called process of candidate selection is said to be critical to politics (Hazan & Rahat 2010). It may impact the political arena in several aspects. While this statement has been widely shared in the academic literature, little empirical research actually tested the relationship between the selection methods and the outcome of the process, i.e. the type of political elites involved in electoral campaigns. This paper aims at showing how the modes of selection may impact the characteristics of the candidates selected by the parties. It focuses in particular on the gender diversity on the lists, as one of the core characteristics of politicians.

So as to make this tough choice of candidate selection, political parties may base their decisions on some objective or subjective elements. There is a large multiplicity of criteria that selectorates may call upon. They may favour some socio-demographic profiles over others. They may also prefer candidates meeting some behavioural requirements or providing a certain type of background. Beyond conscious choices made by party selectors, unconscious dynamics may occur, or, in other words, latent consequences may ensue from the selection modes. This paper's purpose is to explore whether some features of the selection process do guide the selectorates' choices towards some types of candidates. Further than the willingness of individuals selecting other individuals, there may be underlying mechanisms that foster these choices towards specific directions.

This research takes the Belgian case as a case in point. Belgium is indeed labelled as a 'leader' in terms of gender balance in the political arena (Meier 2012). Gender quotas have indeed existed for about 20 years and this has led Belgian politics to be rather gender-balanced although men still hold a majority of political mandates, and often the most visible ones. Yet even in this country where parties are forced to respect strict quota rules, electoral lists still differ to an important extent regarding the balance between female and male candidates, on the most electable spots at least. We also observe that Belgian political parties use quite different modes of selection when they draft the electoral lists (Vandeleene 2016). This combination of diversities leads to the puzzle of this research paper: does candidate selection matter for the gender balance on the list? This question is answered with the case of eleven political parties' selection processes for the May 2014 'mother of all elections' in Belgium.

The paper is structured as follows. I first outline the theoretical assumptions related to the diversity in terms of gender on the electoral lists. The paper continues by presenting the research question and hypotheses, and then the details of case selection and operationalisation of the variables. I then draw on the empirical results of the quantitative analyses to examine whether the selection mode may impact the diversity on the lists. I conclude with the implications of these results for politics in general.

Gender diversity on the electoral lists

Diversity on the lists emanates from the very fact that candidates are different from one another. Candidates share some traditional skills that make them 'politicians'. These political skills cover for instance party experience, knowledge of policy issues, public appeal, communication skills, campaigning skills, representational and problem solving skills, interpersonal skills, language abilities, and so on and so forth (Ashiagbor 2008). These obviously constitute good selling points for a candidate, and will be valued by party selectorates. But these are also *subjective* characteristics of the candidates, on the contrary to *objective* characteristics (Put & Maddens 2013). These objective characteristics refer to the personal traits that differ from one candidate to the other, and for which there is no consensus among selectorates so as to which of them is more appealing. For instance, candidates' age, religion, race, ideology or family composition, are defining features of individuals but it is hazardous to state that one aspect of these will definitely be advantageous for a candidate.

Whereas the political skills are valued in all electoral systems, the personal traits are much more valued in multimember districts systems than in single-member districts. This situation finds its origin in the fact that selectorates in both electoral systems do not use the same kind of strategy. Selectorates in single-member district systems play the mainstream card while their counterparts in PR list systems play the card of diversity. In other words, when selectorates have to choose a sole individual for each constituency, the chances are high that, while meeting the requirements of the skills to be a good politician, all candidates will share the same kind of personal traits, namely the 'safe' traits. These candidates will resemble each other because selectorates do not dare to present candidates with a potentially not electorally appealing personal trait. They will as a consequence focus on the acknowledged winning traits such as masculinity, experience or ethnic majority (Krook & Zetterberg 2014). These personal traits would offer the party the quasi guarantee to present to voters an attractive candidate for which voters would like to vote. On the contrary, selectorates from list systems do have to present a group of candidates. Accordingly, safety for them will mean to seek a broad diversity of personal traits so as to have the most varied list. Diversity will be electorally appealing because the list will touch a larger public. It will "cheaply and easily broaden the appeal of the list to the voters" (Valdini 2012, p.741) What is more, it will satisfy more party factions, and therefore ensure greater party cohesion (e.g. by involving candidates from a diverse range of functional or territorial subgroups).

Both situations' electoral strategies noticeably contrast. The candidates' personal traits are thus valued differently depending on the system. In list PR, the aim is to be different. In SMD, the aim is to stay middle-of-the-road. "Qualities which selectors might feel, accurately or otherwise, could be electoral liabilities in a party's sole candidate, like being a woman or a member of an ethnic minority, are needed for purposes of balance when several are being picked." (Gallagher 1988a, p.260) Accordingly, the study of candidates' personal traits in list PR systems is obviously strikingly more pertinent than in single-member systems where diversity is rarer. As Gallagher (1988a, p.260) indeed puts, "PR systems carry with them a need for a balanced ticket with, perhaps, a greater emphasis on aspirants' objective personal characteristics". In particular, the balance on the list positions offering the greatest chances to be eligible might be considered with attention. As put by Matland and Montgomery (2003, p.27), "gatekeepers will divide winning slots on the party list among various internal party interests".

Diversity on electoral lists may be achieved or aimed for ideological reasons, first. The party selectorates may wish to gather a diverse group of candidates because they think it is noble as such. Notwithstanding, above ideology, rational actors may seek a balanced list in order to strengthen the party's public image, and consequently, "to attract votes from these particular groups" (Ashiagbor 2008, p.19). Balancing lists could yield positive results for the party in that voters who vote for people 'like them' are more likely to find a candidate that resembles them. Beyond this, electoral lists reflecting diversity may be appealing to voters who consider diversity as an important value.

Starting from this observation that diversity would be a prerequisite for successful electoral lists in proportional systems, this research expects these systems to produce balanced lists of candidates. Valdini (2012, p.741) argues that in list PR systems pursuing a strategy of "selecting candidates that have a variety of personal characteristics is a necessity". The concept of representation is central to these 'ticket-balancing' strategies. It is relevant to study candidates' profile because of the idea that lists have to be representative of the population as a whole. Descriptive representation, or 'mirror representation' (Krook 2009b; Lisi & Freire 2012), involves that the identities of the individuals determine the loyalties of voters (Siavelis & Morgenstern 2008). Voters will be prone to choose individuals that resemble them because they would feel represented by these persons. This perspective draws on the belief that in systems of representative democracy, elected representatives should mirror the population to a greater or lesser extent. The social background of candidates is thus critical.

Richard Katz (2001) refers to the concept of 'psychological constituency', according to which a group of individuals enjoys a two-way relationship with one (or several) representative(s). The representative feels that s/he has to represent these individuals who in turn feel represented by the representative. There could be functional or territorial psychological constituencies. The candidates' gender is an example of

a functional (or sectorial) psychological constituency. A candidate seeks to represent voters from his/her gender and voters from this gender feel represented by this person because of his/her gender.

The gender of an individual is obviously one of her core defining characteristics and could be a criterion on which selectorates base their choice when selecting candidates. Being a man or a woman is a critical aspect of the social background of the candidates. Historically, men have occupied political positions. This is due to the fact that politics was restrained to the male citizens, both to be entitled to run for elections as to be authorised to vote for elections. The twentieth century has witnessed an increased empowerment of women as citizens, and as political representatives. Women have obtained the right to vote in a great number of countries, as well as the right to stand for election. Yet, the intensified participation of women to politics has until now not led to an equal gender balance in political institutions. Men still hold most political mandates in a great majority of polities.

The weaker involvement of female individuals to politics is a multifaceted issue. Since the opening of the political arena to women, both women themselves and political parties as gatekeepers to the political sphere have played a role. The 'supply and demand' model of Norris and Lovenduski (1995) makes the distinction between supply explanations for the lesser involvement of women, associated with the female candidates themselves and the demand explanations related to the role of party selectorates. "Certainly women must play an active role in creating opportunities for themselves, but in addition, as the gatekeepers to elected office, parties can facilitate or impede women's participation in parliament." (Caul Kittilson 2006, p.2) Both sides hold thus some responsibilities in the underrepresentation of women in the political arena.

Supply-side justifications concern women who would be less willing to come forward as candidates because of fewer (financial) resources (Murray 2010; Norris & Lovenduski 1995) and of the 'burdens of domestic life' (Murray 2010, p.11) or, in other words, lifestyle constraints of women (Meier 2008). This lack of resources would play a role in the lack of political ambition and self-confidence of women. Women are less likely than men to consider themselves qualified for the political career (Fox & Lawless 2004). Hence, the causes for women underrepresentation are also to be found on the demand-side. Party selectors would be reluctant to select women because of electoral considerations. Increasing the number of female candidates would "threaten to decrease the party's electoral fortunes" (Bruhn 2003; Krook 2009b, p.30). Especially in case of intense interparty competition, selectorates would opt for the traditional, i.e. secure, choice of a man rather than the insecure female choice (Krook 2009b). Further than electoral considerations and reproduction effects, selectorates would consider that women's profile is inadequate for a political career (Meier & Deschouwer 2004; Meier 2008, p.145). It is also believed that women are less strong and decisive (Norris & Lovenduski 1995). Conversely, "men are viewed as more competent, decisive, and stronger leaders, and possessing a greater ability to handle a crisis" (Dolan 2014, p.97). In sum, these issues generalise about a group within the population that may or not reflect the reality. "The female applicant is being judged on the basis of characteristics assumed about women as a group which may have no bearing on her personality and abilities" (Norris & Lovenduski 1995, p.134).

Yet the active presence of women in the political arena is essential for the quality of democracy. According to the principles of representative democracy, the political elite should reflect the population. Scholars, inspired by Philipps (1995) in particular, distinguish the concept of the 'politics of idea' according to which representatives may represent the viewpoints of citizens and the 'politics of presence', "an assertion that the personal features of representatives are crucial because they influence the substance of public policies" (Krook 2009b, p.46). The combination of both perspectives allows for an enhancement of the quality of democracy (Caul Kittilson 2006). In the case of gender balance, the presence of men and women in politics in numerical terms is thus essential, as well as the defence of issues specific to men or women. Since women form more than half the population worldwide (Krook 2009b), gender is in the forefront of the personal traits of the population. The fact that political institutions are gender balanced would play a positive role in increasing their legitimacy and authority while at the same time enhancing the legitimacy of women as political actors (Norris & Lovenduski

1995; Mansbridge 1999; Tremblay & Pelletier 2001; Caul Kittilson 2006). The equality of access of all citizens is a must for democracy. "If the democratic process is to be truly democratic, then all groups, including women, should have an equal chance of running for office." (Caul Kittilson 2006, p.16)

The substantive representation of citizens could also benefit from the inclusion of more women into the political circles. It has been shown that the arrival of traditionally excluded groups in the political arena implicates that new issues are raised. Descriptive representation would induce its substantive counterpart (Mansbridge 1999). This new group will shape the issue agenda and alter the salience of specific issues, and accordingly influence the debates surrounding them (Caul Kittilson 2006). Furthermore, the positive consequences of more women in politics could also result in a spill over effect from the political sphere to the population, where women in politics could have a role model for other women (High-Pippert & Comer 1998; Tremblay & Pelletier 2001). As put by Mansbridge (1999, p.649), "the presence or absence in the ruling assembly (and other ruling bodies, such as the executive and judiciary) of a proportional number of individuals carrying the group's ascriptive characteristics shapes the social meaning of those characteristics in a way that affects most bearers of those characteristics in the polity".

From the political parties' point of view, the fact that women may encourage other women leads to the argument that they may benefit in electoral terms from the involvement of female candidates. On the one hand, women as candidates could attract votes from female voters (Lovenduski & Norris 1993; Krook 2009b). On the other, women as politicians would bring new blood to the political arena. Some scholars argue that women act differently in politics than men, i.e. they are seen as more honest, caring and less aggressive. They would bring "fresh perspectives to politics as usual" (Norris & Lovenduski 1995, p.134).

Political parties are the key actor to ensure equal representation of men and women in politics. They hold the legitimacy to intervene to guarantee the balance and they also hold the means to do so as principal player in the candidate selection process (Krook 2009b). "The level of candidate selection could prove to be the most crucial gatekeeper for getting women into elected office" as Hazan (2002, p.117) stressed. 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". As a consequence, the *momentum* occurs during the selection process organised by the parties. To fight inequalities of representation, many parties (or polities) set up quota mechanisms meant to offer some institutionalised guarantees to both sexes.

Quotas are "a means for guaranteeing the representation of traditionally underprivileged groups" (Krook 2006, p.309). They are considered as the 'fast track' solution to achieve equal representation, as opposed to the 'incremental track' of a societal change according to which equality becomes natural without any need to enforce it with regulations (Dahlerup & Freidenvall 2005). Equality could indeed be attained through constitutions, electoral laws and party statutes, but also more smoothly via public speeches, political ideologies, and voter opinions (Krook 2009a). The implementation of quotas is stricter than a mind change but by proving a willingness to fix the problem, it is symbolically strong (Caul 1999). Despite their increasing presence worldwide, quotas remain controversial. If many consider that they are simply means to guarantee equality and fair access to all groups (Krook 2007) and that they may constitute an opportunity for women because parties are obliged to look for (many) women (Norris & Lovenduski 1995), other argue that quotas are un-meritocratic and even a perversion of the democratic process (Murray 2010). With quotas, parties run the risk of being forced to select inexperienced women who would not be well-prepared for the political office (Bruhn 2003). Quotas would also be essentialist and patronising, and would undermine female candidates' credibility and authority (Murray 2010). As put by Dahlerup (2007, p.84), "women are elected 'just because they are women' and not on their merits".

This paper studies the Belgian case where strict quotas are in force. Belgian political parties have to field equal numbers of men and women candidates in the elections, on each list. Aspirants 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 if the party magnitude outreaches one in a sufficient number of cases. Yet, the strict equality is still not reflected in the assemblies in Belgium where there are about one third of female representatives. Hence, this paper aims at investigating why women do get lost between the candidate stage where they form the half the cohort and the MP stage where the percentage of women is lower. It questions whether this discrepancy may be due to some dimensions of the candidate selection processes organised within political parties.

Research question

The influence of candidate selection on candidates' profile has already been recognised (Gallagher 1988b; Field & Siavelis 2008; Smith & Tsutsumi 2016) even though research that empirically tests the impact of one on the other is still rare. Yet, "[candidate selection] is a central aspect of the recruitment process influencing the type of legislators elected" (Hazan & Rahat 2010, p.12). As Katz (2001, p.280) recognizes, "different procedures are likely to be to the advantages of different candidates or types of candidates". This paper's research question is thus: **"To what extent do candidate selection processes matter for the gender diversity on electoral lists?"**

This paper means to connect studies on political parties and studies focusing on the sociology of political elites. The outcome of the selection process, i.e. the final candidates' lists, was so far much more explored than the process itself. Moreover, when research really tackles the process, the link is hardly made with the characteristics of candidates. Norris and Lovenduski (1995, p.11) emphasize that "[w]e need to understand *who* are members of the legislative elite, but, more importantly, *why* and *how* they got there. Just as studies of party organisation tended to neglect the outcome, so studies of the outcome have tended to neglect the process." This paper intends to grasp whether *who* obtains which spots on the list is a consequence of *how* they are selected. Both sides of the coin are therefore scrutinised and connected.

This paper focuses on gender as one crucial personal trait of the candidates. It examines whether candidate selection may drive selectorates towards the drafting of balanced electoral lists – what could result in more diverse assemblies. As diversity in Parliament is beneficial to the quality of democracy (Lijphart 1999; Caul Kittilson 2006; Franceschet et al. 2009), this paper investigates how intraparty democracy might enhance the quality of representation. The closeness of the list to a balanced representation compared to the characteristics of the population would indeed imply that candidates who campaign would look like the population as a whole, and in the long run that every gender could get the opportunity to be at least descriptively represented in Parliament. Given the large variation regarding candidate selection processes within Belgian political parties and the quite substantial variations in terms of gender balance on the most electable positions on the lists, the puzzling question that this paper addresses is whether both are linked and, in particular, according to which patterns the selection processes influence the allocation of list positions among fe(male) candidates.

Hypotheses: how candidate selection methods relate to gender diversity

Belgium is expected to be a favourable ground for equal gender representation given the multimember nature of the constituencies (Matland & Studlar 1996; Reynolds et al. 2005). Female candidates would be perceived as 'electorally less risky' because they belong to a group and do not run as single candidates (Lovenduski & Norris 1993; Kunovich & Paxton 2005; Caul Kittilson 2006; Cheng & Tavits 2011). Yet, despite the favourable electoral system, equality is not achieved in Parliament. The key for this achievement would lie in political parties' hands.

Scholars have underpinned the centrality of political parties in the success or failure of equal gender representation in politics. As put by Kunovich and Paxton (2005, p.541), “through the candidate selection process, political parties limit the choices available to voters. By differentially supporting candidates, parties also influence the election process.” This confers to the mechanisms and actors of candidate selection considerable importance for the equal representation of men and women in the elected assemblies. By recruiting and nominating women, “parties can make or break women’s efforts to run for office” (Caul Kittilson 2006, p.10). In the literature, the relationship between the type of selection method and the selection of a representative sample of candidates in terms of gender has much more focused on some specific features of the selection process without studying all at the same time. The goal of this paper is to identify the characteristics of the selection mode that lead to more gender diversity.

The degree of centralisation of the selectorates appears to be one of the core variables that prove significant in numerous studies with regard to the influence of selection method on the gender balance on lists. The major trend argues that centralised selectorates would be favourable for a more equal gender balance on the lists (Norris 1997; Rahat 2007). This would be due to the very fact that centralised selectorates are situated at the top of the party hierarchy and sees the party from only one point of view. Accountability mechanisms would also play a role to a greater extent for centralised selectorates.

Control over the selection process from above ensures that the party selectorates have a broad overview of who is running for election. Centralised selectorates can coordinate the various selection processes more easily than decentralised selectorates could do without a central leadership (Murray 2010). Centralisation indeed facilitates the implementation of a ‘gender equality’ policy regarding electoral candidates, by for instance ensuring that a sufficient number of women are nominated in realistic positions across constituencies. Decentralised selectorates would follow narrower interests and select candidates without thinking beyond their own constituencies, which may lead to fewer women being put forward (Vandeleene 2014b). Decision-making processes at the decentralised level face the risk of the ‘collective action problem’. This problem entails that “each constituency selects a man in the hope that another constituency somewhere else will select a woman to balance them out” (Murray 2010, p.48). In the case of multimember systems, all selectorates at the decentralised level would be tempted to select more male candidates on the realistic positions, resulting in a situation where there are few elected women at the level of the party (i.e. in the future parliamentary group). A centralised selectorate would realise this situation more easily than several decentralised selectorates altogether.

The fact that selection is decided at the central level is also likely to be positive for women representation because pressures for a better balancing of men and women on the lists can be directed towards a single body rather than several selectorates distributed across the polity. Caul (1999) hypothesised that centralised parties are more likely to offer women more opportunities because the party leadership can be held more directly accountable for a lack of women-friendliness than decentralised selectorates that have to be individually convinced. “Groups seeking increased representation have a central target for their demands.” (Caul 1999, p.81). Luhiste (2015) demonstrated that party selectorates tend to select more women in realistic positions when the process is centralised because of the same reasons. Yet Caul’s results did not confirm her hypothesis: she demonstrated that centralised control over candidate selection was not conducive to women’s representation.

The reasons put forward to defend the need for centralised selectorates rely, however, all on the premise that the party is in favour of more women in politics. Of course, if the centralised selectorates is not convinced to involve more female candidates, the power of coordination, control and even enforcement will not be used in order to put more women on the lists. Accountability mechanisms will likewise have no effect if the centralised selectorate is not receptive to equal gender representation demands. Centralised selection processes would then be a necessary condition, but not sufficient (Murray 2010).

H1: Centralised selectorates will induce more gender diversity on the lists.

Next to centralisation, the degree of inclusiveness (i.e. the size) of the selectorates may play a role in determining the probability of having a more gender-balanced slate of candidates. Field and Siavelis (2008) contend that the inclusiveness dimension is the most influential feature of the selection process with regard to the consequences for the political system. Regarding gender representation, the literature argues that exclusivity of the selectorates is more favourable to the equal representation of sexes than inclusivity (Rahat 2007). A large assembly of delegates or a decision made by party members provides fewer guarantees than a smaller selectorate made of a limited number of individuals. Again, as for the reasoning on centralisation, this still depends on the willingness of the small group to ensure gender representation. Exclusiveness facilitates but does not oblige equal representation of sexes (Lovenduski & Norris 1993).

Enhancing the inclusiveness of the selectorates is often seen a sign of democratisation of the party internal functioning (Bille 2001). Yet, opening the participation to more individuals seems to reduce the chances that the 'chosen ones' will be representative of the society, in particular in terms of gender. Rahat (2007) argues that maximizing participation in selection procedures may impinge upon the guarantee of a comprehensive representation on the list unless the process provides strict quotas ensuring that some social groups, such as women, get on the list. As highlighted by Rahat and Hazan (2001), the only way to ensure representativeness – if the selectorate is rather inclusive, is indeed to provide some corrective mechanisms such as filtering mechanisms managed by more exclusive selectorates before a decision is taken by a large assembly. Quotas or reserved positions for some types of candidates could also be an option. Michels (1915) evokes the so-called 'pathology of the crowd': decisions made by the crowd are usually less weighed than choices made by a little group. Priorities cannot be fixed because the final choice is the result of the aggregation of a large number of individual votes. Selectors are not able to coordinate their votes so as to guarantee a balanced representation (Rahat 2007).

H2: Exclusive selectorates will induce more gender diversity on the lists.

The composition of the selectorate in terms of gender may have an impact on the propensity towards equal gender representation. Factors playing both at the demand side and at the supply side may be relevant. Scholars argue that female selectors would encourage the selection of female candidates. Nevertheless, some contend that not all women are in favour of women, and concurrently that not all men are anti-women by definition.

At the demand-side, the characteristics of the selectorates would influence their decision towards more or less equal gender representation. Selectors cannot know all aspirants' pros and cons in detail. Instead of a choice based uniquely on merit, they would extrapolate from the background characteristics of aspirants to assess their ability to be a good candidate. The selection would be based on 'information shortcuts' which evaluate candidates on the basis of their group characteristics (Norris & Lovenduski 1995), thus on stereotypes (Tremblay & Pelletier 2001). "Qualities associated with the group are associated with all the individual members of that group." (Niven 1998, p.61) This mechanism of direct discrimination would be at play as a remedy to the minimal information whose selectors possess on aspirant candidates. Discrimination could, furthermore, be imputed, i.e. directed towards specific types of candidates. Selectors may not choose some aspirants because they evaluate their characteristics as not appealing to the electorate (Norris & Lovenduski 1995). Some aspirants may then be overlooked by selectors on purpose (Krook 2010).

Why selection is influenced by the characteristics of the individuals who are part of the selectorates might be explained by the 'outgroup effect theory'. Niven (1998) states that members of the selectorates consider themselves as part of the ingroup and that they evaluate outgroup members negatively, judging good candidates to be those who share their own characteristics. In other words, "gatekeepers are more likely to directly recruit and promote people like themselves" (Cheng & Tavits 2011, p.461). Regarding gender, "the outgroup effect predicts the behaviour of male and female [selectors] should vary dramatically as male [selectors] react negatively towards potential women candidates, but female [selectors] (for whom women candidates are not in an outgroup) react much more positively towards

potential women candidates” (Niven 1998, p.64). The outgroup members aspiring to office may therefore benefit from having people like them as part of the selectorate in order to increase their chances of being selected. As a consequence, the outgroup effect theory entails that, if selectorates are constituted by more men than women, female aspirants would be unlikely to be selected in comparison to male aspirants. The reasons why the outgroup effect would exist are twofold: they are based on assumptions of competences based on the *homo politicus* model, and on the anticipation of future relations between selectorates and candidates.

The *homo politicus* model (Norris & Lovenduski 1989) provides that the definition of the good politician has been constructed from the characteristics of the dominant gender in politics at that time. The ‘standard model candidate’ shares mostly the features of a man, i.e. his experience and attributes (Tremblay 2008). “Men who dominate [the political elite] have been in a position of defining the model of *homo politicus* according to their own traits” (Tremblay & Pelletier 2001, p.162). Male selectors would tend to be more likely to select male aspirants because they estimate that they meet the requirements of the standard model candidate. These features entail the selectors’ attitudes but also values and personality (Klahr 1969; Piliavin 1987). The ingroup members assume that other ingroup members are competent. Moreover, the distribution effect asserts that selection criteria would be influenced by the characteristics of the existing elected representatives. “According to the logic of the distribution effect, women have difficulty gaining the confidence of political elites because they do not resemble the profile of the average officeholder.” (Niven 1998, p.63) The shortage of women in top political positions would not help female aspirant in getting selected. The incongruity of the presence of women in a male-dominated world would raise doubts about the adequacy of the selection choice (Eagly et al. 1992).

Choices influenced by the outgroup effect could also be substantiated by the fact that selectors, in anticipating on the future relations that they will have with the selected candidates, would favour the candidates who share their characteristics because they have the perception that relations with ingroup members will be better than with outgroup members. “Similarity is used as a means of testing how the candidate will relate to the group in the future.” (Hunt & Pendley 1972; Niven 1998, p.62)

Scholars having tested the outgroup effect deliver contrasted results. Niven (1998) establishes that discrimination well exists in the recruitment process. On the contrary, Tremblay and Pelletier found out that “it is the ungendered traits that women and men constituency party presidents favour, not personality traits specifically associated with one gender or the other” (Tremblay & Pelletier 2001, p.169). These negative results lead to the assertion that not all women may be feminist and not all men would be anti-feminists. It is misleading to expect that having a gender-balanced selectorate would be a sufficient condition for equal gender representation. Women are not a homogeneous group (Tremblay & Pelletier 2001). Kunovich and Paxton (2005, p.521) contend that women “may feel the need to follow party rules, wish to avoid seeming to play favourites, or simply have concerns that outweigh their gender identity”. Cheng and Tavits (2011) also conclude that there is no clear-cut evidence that women may be more women-friendly than men. In sum, having women as part of the selectorates would not constitute a guarantee for gender-balanced lists even though it has not been proved that it is a disadvantage.

Beyond the outgroup effect, the informal social networks form another argument in favour of gender-balanced selectorates. Cheng and Tavits (2011) expect female gatekeepers to recruit more women because informal networks would be gendered. On the basis of the study of Dow and Wood (2006), the scholars argue that “women gatekeepers are more likely to know other qualified women who would be suitable parliamentary candidates and are thus more likely to recruit them into the electoral process” (Cheng & Tavits 2011, p.462). ‘Sex-based alliances’ (O’Brien 2012) may give better chances to female aspirants from the point of view of female selectors. Women selectorates would be more likely to encourage women to apply, and in the same vein, female aspirants would be stimulated to submit their candidacy if there were women in the selectorate. Supply-side explanations would also contribute to the ‘gender-balanced selectorate’ argument. The mere presence of female selectors sends an encouraging

signal to potential aspirants. It suggests that women are welcome and that the selection process is not an old boys' club (Cheng & Tavits 2011). This would create a virtuous circle of participation.

H3: Gender-balanced selectorates will induce more gender diversity on the lists.

Finally, the institutionalisation of the procedure would also favour gender-balanced lists. First of all, parties with institutionalised selection procedures would be more likely to implement rules regarding equal gender representation. As there are already a number of rules which actors – the selectorates in the first place – have to respect, additional rules would be more acceptable in these organisations than in political parties where it is not usual to follow strict rules. As put by Norris and Lovenduski (1995, p.204), “positive discrimination quotas are taken seriously in a rule-bound and bureaucratic culture”. However, Caul (1999) finds that it is parties with low levels of institutionalisation that tend to have gender-related rules, and conversely. “Rule-orientated parties are less flexible and more focused upon the party's program and thus reluctant to adopt measures to promote women”, she concludes (Caul 1999, 93). These studies provide thus contradicting results.

Institutionalised candidate selection processes are also more likely to be transparent. From the supply-side perspective, transparency means that outsiders may easily access the process because they are able to understand how it works even though they do not have close ties with the decision-makers (Davidson-Schmich 2006). Many scholars consider women as outsiders to the political arena due to their ‘historical disadvantage’ (Dovi 2002) and the underlying consequence that politics is considered as a gentlemen's club (Tremblay 2008; Krook & Mackay 2010; Krook & Norris 2014). A too formal process could, however, also play against women in that it forces candidates to be proactive in the selection procedures. For instance, if all aspirants have to fill out an application file, only self-recruited candidates will come forward. Candidates convinced by selectorates through informal contacts could miss the candidacy step and lose the opportunity to enter the process (Vandeleene 2014b).

H4: Institutionalised processes will induce more gender diversity on the lists.

Several factors are highlighted in the literature as likely to lead to gender-balanced slates of candidates. The dominant factor is the degree of centralisation. The more centralised the selection process, the easier it will be to guarantee equal gender representation. Smaller selectorates, as opposed to inclusive selectorates, are also more likely to draft gender-balanced lists. In addition, if the bodies selecting candidates are gender-balanced, the chances are greater that the outcome of the process will be balanced in terms of gender. Finally, more institutionalised procedures would favour women, so could lead to lists respecting an equal gender representation. Yet, for almost all variables, results provided by scholars are not homogeneous. Some do diverge from the others. Hence, what emerges from the literature is that gender representation is best achieved if there is the political will to do so. The representation of both sexes should be perceived as a priority in the eyes of selectorates (Krook 2007; Childs et al. 2008; Murray 2010). This is a variable that could, however, not be quantitatively tested in this paper.

Case selection, data and methods

The cases under study are all nested within the Belgian case. Belgium is a highly relevant country to research candidate selection since the selection (almost) makes the election (Cross 2008). In other words, voters can hardly impact on the names of who will sit in the parliaments since almost everything is predetermined within the party spheres, at the time of candidate selection. Voters do influence the number of seats per party but it is the selectorates who overwhelmingly determine who will be the MPs, given the semi-open (or often called ‘semi-closed’ (Vandeleene et al. 2016)) electoral system. A very small number of candidates usually manage, and actually managed in 2014, to alter the list order, and so to bypass an upper candidate (André et al. 2015).

The unit of analysis is the selection process at the list level. Although Belgian political parties usually draft all their lists according to a rather similar process (Vandeleene 2014a), variations still exist at the

list level, mainly because of some constituencies' specificities. What's more, the composition of the selectorates may differ from one selection process to the other, even within a same party. Accordingly, the relevant unit of analysis is the electoral list' selection process. The paper studies eleven political parties that competed for the regional, federal and European elections of May 2014 (the so-called 'mother of all elections', which was also obviously the mother of all selections). Six Flemish parties, i.e. Groen, sp.a, CD&V, Open Vld, N-VA and VB are scrutinised, with each 14 lists, what amounts to a total of 422 candidates per party. At the French-speaking side, five parties, i.e. Ecolo, PS, cdH, MR, FDF fall within the scope of the paper; they introduced at the maximum 21 lists and 365 candidates. Since this paper focused only on the lists where at least one candidate was elected this reduces the number of lists from 189 to 143 for a total of 4319 candidates to 'only' 569 candidates (see tables in appendix). The eleven political parties under study evolve within the (nearly) same institutional and electoral context, what allows for rich within-case and cross-cases comparisons, i.e. across processes for each list and across political parties

The first stage of the research involved disentangling how political parties selected their candidates. To do so, this research draws on qualitative data from semi-structured in-depth interviews with selectors (one or two key actors for the selection in each party, interviewed during the selection process). It also relies on internal party documents referring to the list drafting processes (party statutes and other party documents) and on press articles (articles from the main Belgian newspapers systematically archived from one year prior to the Election day), plus on some participant observation for the two green parties. The second stage encompasses a quantitative analysis of the electoral lists themselves. To that aim, I built a database listing all candidates' relevant descriptive information.

Operationalisation of the dependent variable

Despite the existence of rather strict gender quotas compared to other countries in the world (Krook 2009b) which have led some scholars to label Belgium a leader in that respect, or a model student (Meier 2012), the assessment of the gender diversity on the lists testifies that there is plenty of room for variations among the lists. If selectorates obey the quota rule *a minima*, there may be very few women elected in the Parliament, i.e. a weak gender balance. Being placed high up on the party list remains indeed almost a prerequisite to get elected. Candidates in Belgium have practically no chance to get elected from a lower position on the list. By way of example, 4% only of the candidates for the 2014 federal elections managed to get elected 'out of order', i.e. they attracted a sufficient number of votes so as to bypass a candidate higher ranked on the list (Vandeleene et al. 2016).

Because selectorates can hardly anticipate on the 'out of order' elections, they select the candidates who they want to sit in the assemblies on the first list positions (whose number depends on the expected party magnitude). If the party magnitude is lower than one, the party selectorates can avoid the election of a female candidate. When the party magnitude is higher than one – it is the case for almost all lists, a fe/male candidate could be selected on the second list position, but this does not prevent selectorates to fill the other eligible positions with candidates from a single gender. In sum, the gender quota does offer rather weak guarantees regarding the gender-balance in the Parliament. The party selectorates willingness to draft gender-balanced lists remains crucial. To grasp the gender-balanced character of a list, the analysis has thus to be done not only for the first two positions but at the level of the so-called realistic positions, what this paper tackles via the index developed hereunder. "What matters is whether women are nominated to 'winnable' districts or positions on party lists." (Krook & Norris 2014, p.7)

The focus of this analysis lies primarily on candidates in realistic positions. According to Hazan and Rahat, the realistic positions "include all those positions [...] that are seen at least as winnable before the elections" (2010, p.14). The likelihood of electoral success is as high for these positions that unless a strong and unpredicted defeat, the seat in the Parliament is guaranteed. In this research, the candidates in realistic positions correspond to all elected candidates (see the *ex post* method in Vandeleene 2016) except the candidates elected 'out of order' because it was impossible for the party to anticipate this electoral result during the selection process, plus the first substitute candidate if her party gained at least

one seat in the constituency¹. The number of lists under analysis is thus 143 for 569 candidates on realistic positions in total (see table in appendix).

In order to measure the gender diversity on the lists, a ‘gender-bancedness’ index (GBI) is developed for each list whose number of realistic positions exceeds two. The GBI calculates the share of female candidates among the candidates in realistic list positions, similarly to the ‘Index of Representativeness’ developed by Hazan and Rahat (2006). Values close to 0.5 display gender-bancedness, i.e. the selectorates gave to an approximate equal number of male and female candidates with good chances to be elected. Values below 0.5 and close to 0 exhibit a men-friendly trend in the selectorates’ decision. Conversely, values higher than 0.5 and close to 1 reveal that selectorates were more women-friendly.

$$GBI = \frac{\sum SRP_{fc}}{\sum SRP_c}$$

SRP stands for the selection of candidates in realistic list positions.

SRP_{fc} [female candidates] stands for the female candidates selected by party selectorates, in realistic list positions.

SRP_c [candidates] stands for the candidates selected by party selectorates, in realistic list positions.

This paper aims at looking at the gender diversity of the lists against the features of the selection process. Looking for causal relationships between the dimensions of the candidate selection process and the diversity of candidates in realistic positions will help understand how the intraparty mechanisms may affect the outcome of the elections in terms of gender. The gender of the candidates constitutes one of their core defining characteristics. The representation of both genders in adequate proportions on the lists is ensured in Belgium given the 50/50 quota, but this does not automatically lead to a gender balance in the elected assemblies. Yet, the list stage is highly critical for the group representation as most candidates are elected thanks to the position they received on the list. Attributing more list positions to one gender instead of the other inevitably gives more chances to this gender to be represented in the Parliament.

Operationalisation of the independent variables

The paper relies on four independent variables. Three refer to the selectorates and one to the process as such. The processes have been analysed for the candidates for realistic positions in particular. Most parties in Belgium in 2014 indeed applied an assorted selection process (Hazan & Rahat 2010), i.e. a process in which a difference is made among list positions. The candidates ending up on the same list are selected according to different procedures, and possibly by different selectorates. This implies that the process under scrutiny here was these of the candidates for the realistic positions and not for the other candidates on the lists.

I split the selection processes into two main phases, namely the *proposal* and the *approval* (Vandeleene 2014b; Vandeleene et al. 2013). The first phase concerns the selectorate holding the power to propose the names of the candidates. In some parties, this ‘draft list’ is called the ‘model list’ or the ‘project list’. This selectorate is crucial because in practice, lists are hardly changed after this first stage (or marginally). In the second phase, the selectorate ratifies the final list of candidates. This selectorate has the final word.

Regarding the degree of centralisation, what emerged from the data is a straight difference between processes where a centralised selectorate held the right to propose, and processes where a decentralised

¹ The chances are indeed high that this substitute candidate would sit in the assembly once before the next elections in 2019, and accordingly the candidate may affect the gender balance within the parliamentary faction.

selectorate could propose, either alone or with the intervention of a centralised selectorate². Within these two broad categories, two-subcategories are distinguished. On the one hand, when the degree of decentralisation was similar for the proposal and approval phases. On the other hand, when the degree of decentralisation was different for the first proposal phase and the second approval phase. This eventually leads to a binary variable reflecting the predominance of either centralised or decentralised selectorates.

For the selectorates' inclusiveness, a five-points scale has first been developed. There is no agreement in the literature regarding how to measure the inclusiveness of selectorates that are not 'the party members'. It was decided for this research to distinguish between four different sizes of selectorates next to the party members (a single selector, limited party elite, extended party elite and members' delegates). These four categories are ordered in function of the number of individuals gathered within the body that selected candidates. The final variable used in the model gathers selection process managed mainly by members or delegates versus the other three categories (i.e. the party elite, more or less limited in size).

The third variable regards the degree of institutionalisation of the procedures. It was assessed whether or not the process was well known in the intraparty arena, both considering the stages of decision-making and the actors involved in the decision. Concretely, this regards not only the respect of the party rules but also the extent to which the data converged towards a single type of process, i.e. whether all actors agreed on how the selection happened. The degree of institutionalisation of the key stage was considered (proposal rather than approval).

Finally, the composition of the selectorates is analysed. On the contrary to general measures of the size and the localisation in the party hierarchy of the selectorates, the actual composition of the selectorates in socio-demographic terms has rarely been studied (but see Caul Kittilson 2006; Cheng & Tavits 2011; Vandeleene 2014b). Because it is in most cases hazardous to assess the individual characteristics of each single selector (i.e. each member of each selectorate), the choice made in this research is to use the existence of quotas as proxy for the composition of the selectorates. If a quota is formally in force for a selectorate, it is considered that the rule has been respected, and that the representation was guaranteed for the group at stake. Accordingly, if the selectorates' composition was constrained by a gender quota, the representation of both sexes was considered as guaranteed. The values for this measure are binary. Each selectorate is assessed individually, and if at least one selectorate involved on the selection process had to respect a gender quota, it was coded as 1.

Method of analysis

The dependent variable measures the degree of gender diversity on the realistic positions. This variable is a proportion, i.e. the proportion of women on these positions. Given the index nature of the variable (bounded values), the observations of the GBI have to be transformed. A proper regression model would indeed necessitate the variables to be unlimited – unlike the current index that only varies between 0 and 1. With indexes, the assumptions of normality and continuity are violated. In order to cope with this problem, the values could be modified into logit (the logarithms of the odds ratio). The logit transformations present the advantages of providing unlimited continuous variables that fit into an OLS regression model. This technique has already been used in candidate selection literature (Put & Maddens 2015; Put 2015; Shomer 2016). The major drawback related to the use of logit values appears at the interpretation stage because the results should be interpreted in a more sophisticated way, i.e. on the logarithmic scale rather than on a regular scale. Another issue is related to the existence of some zero scores that could not be transformed by the logit function. In this research data, there are indeed 18 lists

² The process' decentralisation scale resembles the scale developed by Bille (2001). However, this scholar distinguishes between selectorates 'proposing' and 'deciding'. It is argued in this paper that proposing is actually deciding, since the approval phase is most of the time a formal stage where hardly anything is modified in comparison with what has been proposed.

that score 0 on the GBI. Adding some noise to the values could easily solve the problem (e.g. adding a constant of a very low value like 0.001 to all values of the indexes so that no list scores zero anymore, as Put (2015) did). As a result, the following transformation is applied to the GBI:

$$\ln(GBI) = \ln \frac{GBI + 0.001}{1 - GBI - 0.001}$$

Given that this new variable can be considered as continuous, a linear regression was run. The OLS regression model includes all four independent variables (all dummies with the 1-value reflecting what is expected to favour gender diversity), plus one control variable. The analysis had indeed to control for the specific influence of the total number of realistic positions available for selectorates. One could indeed hypothesize that when the number of positions is lower, selectorates have fewer possibilities to diversify the slate in terms of gender.

Table 1: Summary of the operationalisation of the variables included in the model and of the hypotheses

Variables	Hyp.	Operationalisation	Values
Dependent variable			
GBI (‘gender-balancedness’ index)		Proportion	0 = lowest value (no female candidate on a realistic list position; 1 = highest value (no male candidate on a realistic list position))
<i>Ln (GBI)</i>		<i>Continuous variable</i>	<i>Logit transformation of the scores on the GBI with some noise (0.001)</i>
Independent variables			
Centralisation of the selectorates	+	Dummy variable	0 = predominance of decentralised selectorates; 1 = predominance of centralised selectorates
Exclusiveness of the selectorates	+	Dummy variable	0 = predominance of inclusive selectorates; 1 = predominance of exclusive selectorates
Institutionalisation	+	Dummy variable	0 = non-institutionalised process; 1 = institutionalised process
Gender quota for the selectorates	+	Dummy variable	0 = no gender quota; 1 = at least one gender quota for one selectorate
Control variable			
Number of realistic positions on the list		Continuous variable	

Empirical results: does candidate selection matter?

Descriptive statistics

The electoral lists of Belgian political parties are forced to be gender-balanced (Sliwa et al. 2011; Meier 2012). Strict quotas indeed apply both at the list level and at the level of the two top positions on both the effective list and the substitute list. Yet, political parties remain free to favour more men or more women to some extent. This paper therefore studies the gender balance among the candidates in realistic positions, i.e. the candidates who had great chances to form the future parliamentary group of the party, and comes to the conclusion that the lists do differ to a considerable extent – what triggers the need to assess whether this is due to a different selection process.

The GBI (the ‘gender-balancedness’ index) measures the proportion of men and women selected in the realistic positions of the list. The number of realistic positions extensively varies from one party to the other, but calculating the proportion neglected these differences in size. All lists with at least one elected candidate had minimum two realistic positions (the elected candidate plus the first substitute candidate), so the gender balance could be ensured although the gender quota does not compel parties to have balanced heads of lists.

The mean GBI for each party reflect a wide diversity within the Belgian arena regarding how many female candidates were included on the realistic positions. No party bypasses 0.5, what means that no party had more female than male candidates on the safe places. Some parties do come close to the balance, most notably the Flemish socialist party sp.a, the Flemish Christian-democrats of CD&V and the francophone green party Ecolo, with on average more than 45% of female candidates at the top of the list. At the other extreme of the spectrum, the far-right party VB has a mean score of less than one fifth of the candidates who were women. It may be surprising that Groen scores on average 0.29 given the green parties’ commitment to gender issues, but this was related to the fact that this party had a low party magnitude in most constituencies.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for the GBI, per party

Party	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
<i>Green parties</i>			
Ecolo	11	0.451	0.163
Groen	12	0.292	0.255
<i>Socialist parties</i>			
PS	20	0.381	0.198
sp.a	13	0.479	0.181
<i>Christian-democratic parties</i>			
cdH	17	0.412	0.229
CD&V	13	0.457	0.085
<i>Right-wing liberal parties</i>			
MR	21	0.322	0.175
Open Vld	13	0.431	0.143
<i>Regionalist parties</i>			
FDF	2	0.417	0.118
N-VA	13	0.341	0.139
<i>Extreme right party</i>			
VB	8	0.188	0.208
Total	143	0.380	0.192

What is striking in this table is the wide diversity of scores on the GBI. This means that Belgian political parties do differ from each other to a conservable extent regarding the gender diversity on the lists. There does not seem to be a strong pattern along the ideological divide nor the linguistic divide. The standards deviations are also quite large, what enhances the need to assess the diversity at the list level and not to generalise at the party level.

Multivariate analysis

It appears from the literature that candidate selection modes may impact politics. It is said to be able to influence the composition of the political elite. This paper focuses in particular on the impact of candidate selection on the gender diversity among candidates. Since gender quotas do exist for the case

under study, Belgian political parties in 2014, the analysis has been restricted to the area where party selectorates could make decisions impacting the gender balance. The so-called realistic positions on the list are scrutinised and it is assessed to what extent the gender diversity on these positions on each of the 143 lists can be explained by differences in selection modes. Can the mode of selection predict the diversity of the lists in terms of gender? I use ordinary least squares (OLS) regression to estimate the model, with the logit transformation results of the GBI as dependent variable. The model includes the four independent variables reflecting the variation in the selection mode as well as the number of realistic positions of the list, so as to control for the range of possibilities that selectorates faced. Results are reported in Table 4.

Table 2: Explaining the gender diversity among candidates on the realistic list positions (unstandardised coefficients)

Variables	Parameter estimate	Std. Error
Centralisation of the selectorates	-1.052*	0.434
Exclusiveness of the selectorates	0.354	0.638
Gender quota for selectorates	1.084*	0.536
Institutionalisation of the process	-1.273*	0.524
Number of realistic list positions	0.220**	0.069
Constant	-1.506**	0.553
Adjusted R ²	0.121	
N	143	

*Sign.: * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.*

Dependent Variable: Ln (GBI) with noise (0.001)

Although this model does not explain a great share of the variance regarding gender on the lists (slightly more than 12%), the regression results still point to some significant relationships between the features of the selection process and the extent to which the realistic positions were filled with female candidates. The selectorates selected more women on the realistic positions when they were decentralised, when a gender quota applied for their composition and when the process was less institutionalised.

The literature on candidate selection usually focuses on the two main characteristics of the selectorates, i.e. their degree of decentralisation and of inclusiveness (Rahat & Hazan 2001). What this research's results indicate is that decentralisation might be more predictive of the gender balance of the list than inclusiveness. The variable depicting the predominance of centralised versus decentralised selectorates is significant in the regression model. Centralised selectorates were expected to favour a balance of genders because they would be more prone to take care of broader interests than decentralised selectorates. Decentralised selectorates would be tempted to select more men than women because they would prefer to opt for the security electorally speaking rather than 'sacrifice' their own constituency for the sake of the gender diversity. These findings actually show the opposite pattern where processes with a predominance of decentralised selectorates introduce more balanced lists (on average 40% of female candidates on the realistic positions, against 31%).

The degree of inclusiveness does seem to be influential in this model. The literature stated that the size of the selectorates may matter because of differences in decision-making possibilities (aggregation of votes versus direct interaction between the selectors). Yet the findings do not corroborate the literature that argued that the size of the selectorates matters for the gender diversity on the lists.

Another key characteristic of the selectorates is yet significant and goes in the expected direction. When the list was drafted by at least one selectorate to which a gender quota applied, the list tends to have more women. This is in line with the outgroup effect theory (Niven 1998) which mainly explains why the literature expects gender-balanced selectorates to produce gender-balanced outcomes. Selectors

would be tempted to select ‘people like themselves’. Accordingly, when women are mandatorily included in the selecting body, it is more likely that more female candidates will be selected. In sum, it seems that the nature of the selectorates may well be related to the diverse character of the electoral lists in terms of gender.

The last independent variable was the institutionalized character of the selection process. Here again, the results contradict what was expected. The literature suggested that if processes were institutionalized, they would be more transparent to outsiders – whose are (still) mostly women. Transparency helps outsiders to understand how it works and where to act in order to obtain a position on a list. Similarly to the results of Caul (1999)’s study, it is observed in the data on Belgium in 2014 that lists resulting from non-institutionalized processes are more diverse in terms of balance between men and women than when the process is more institutionalized.

As expected, the number of realistic positions on the list is predictive to the balance of profiles. It seems indeed obvious that when selectorates have a wider choice, they could more easily strive for the gender diversity than when they only have a limited number of list positions that are realistic. In this case, they would maybe consider other selection criteria than gender for the very reduced number of individuals who face a chance to enter the parliament. The findings of the OLS model hold when it is controlled for this key variable.

Concluding remarks

The theory suggested and the practice confirms that the selection mode matters. This paper studied the case of 143 electoral list drafting processes in Belgium in the run-up to the May 2014 triple elections (regional, federal and European). The large number of political parties and the peculiar case of simultaneous elections gave the opportunity to reach a significant number of selection processes while ensuring a diversity on the independent variables. While the Belgian political parties differ to a substantial extent regarding how they select and who selects the candidates (see Vandeleene 2016), important variations were also found within the lists regarding the diversity of candidates.

This research focused on the diversity in terms of gender. Gender representation in politics is probably one of the key issues when one tackles the question of political representation. By selecting the candidates who will run for office, the parties are the key players impacting on the representation of the gender diversity in the political arena. They may be held responsible for the success or the failure of women’s representation in the political elite. Indeed, what matters is not only how gender-balanced are the elected assemblies, but also how gender-balanced is the political elite at large. The thousands of candidates running for office in Belgium in 2014 are the public face of the political parties. They embody the parties and by doing so, they may represent a diverse picture of the political world, or not. It was thus critical to test how candidate selection could impact this gender diversity.

Yet, the findings demonstrate that selection matters but not always in the expected direction. Some results contradict the literature on candidate selection – what could maybe be caused by the fact that the empirical statistical analyses of the impact of candidate selection on the types of selected candidates are still quite rare. More research has still to be done in a multiplicity of cases so as to come with strong evidence of a causal relationship that could be generalized. It was shown in this dissertation that decentralised selectorates are more prone to balance the lists in terms of gender than are the centralised selectorates. The pattern falsifies the theoretical expectations (Norris 1997a; Rahat 2007). Besides, the inclusiveness variable was not significant, contradict previous works that argued that the size of the selectorates matters (the more exclusive the more prone to select women (Lovenduski and Norris 1993; Rahat 2007)).

Beyond the two classical variables depicting the selectorates, this paper scrutinized the composition of the selectorates, i.e. who decides. The personal traits of the selectors were found to match the traits of the candidates (Niven 1998; Cheng & Tavits 2011). This paper provides evidence for a mirror

relationship between the selectors and the candidates and confirms the outgroup effect theory. When women are part of the selectorates, female candidates are favored – what does not yet mean that they outreach the number of male candidates, but that the list comes closer to the 50/50 balance. The paper also added to the scheme a variable describing the type of process, i.e. whether or not the process' procedures were institutionalized within the party. The hypotheses derived from the literature were inconsistent (Norris & Lovenduski 1995; Caul 1999). The pattern uncovered on the basis of the data of this research shows that it is when the process is less institutionalized that the female candidates have greater chances. Some leeway in the process would be in favour of diversity.

The mechanisms of candidate selection are crucial to the process of representation. This research has demonstrated that it is worth studying candidate selection mechanisms not only for themselves but also for their larger significance for the entire political process. If there were an influence of the types of selectorates on the types of candidates, this would mean that the modes of selection truly limit the choices that voters face in the voting booth. When political parties determine their own kind of selection process, they may also indirectly determine the type of candidates who will run for office – do the procedures encourage women to be candidate under the party banner, consciously or unconsciously? Do they give the same chances to male and female aspirants during the selection process? Given the constraining nature of the Belgian electoral system where there is hardly no chance to be elected out-of-order (without the party specific support), the types of selection mechanisms also directly influence the kind of representatives who will pass the laws – more or less similar to the gender balance within the population. All in all, this research suggests that party politics is definitely relevant to politics in general, and to the composition of the political leadership in particular.

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Appendices

Table 3: Number of lists under analysis, per parliament, per linguistic group

	<i>Flemish parties (x6)</i>			<i>French-speaking parties (x5)</i>		
	Per party		Total	Per party		Total
	N lists	N candidates	N candidates	N lists	N candidates	N candidates
European level						
European Parliament	1	19	114	1	14	70
Federal level						
House of Repr.	6	160 (139/146)	925	6	109 (106)	542
Regional level						
Brussels Parliament	1	33	198	1	88	440
Walloon Parliament	0	0	0	13	154	770
Flemish Parliament	6	210	1260	0	0	0
TOTAL	14	422 (401/408)	2497	21	365 (362)	1822

Note: The numbers into brackets correspond, for the Flemish parties, to Groen first and the sp.a second, and for the French-speaking parties, to Ecolo.

Table 4: Number of ‘realistic’ lists under analysis, per parliament

	N lists with at least one elected candidate	N candidates in realistic positions
European Parliament	10	29
House of Representatives	49	190
Brussels Parliament	11	83
Walloon Parliament	34	156
Flemish Parliament	39	111
TOTAL	143	569