

**“Gimme your name and I’ll tell you who you are”
An exploration of the name of local lists**

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1. Introduction

The name of a party is an important dimension of its political position. Often, the label used by a political party in its name tells much about its ideology. But, since in most cases, only a few parties compete for each election it is difficult to undertake large qualitative and quantitative analyses of party names. Local elections can provide an interesting option, however. Indeed, in several cases, we find lots of different names, and not only the usual national party labels. In the last local elections in Wallonia, one of the three Belgian Regions, 1012 lists were in competition in 262 communes, thus an average of 2,68 list per commune but in fact anywhere from 1 list up to 14 lists.

Such data provide therefore a fertile ground for analysis. To study the name of the lists, we proceed in two steps. First, we build a typology of the names. We classify the lists in different categories: lists with national party name, lists with a clear reference to a national party, lists with an ideological label, lists with a clear reference to the commune's name, lists with a reference to the communal level but also lists with a reference to democracy, to a union or alliance, to change and an alternative way of doing politics, to the future, with puns, and with a reference to a person. In the second step, using multinomial regressions, we show where the different types of lists can be found and above all we look at their electoral performances and thus test the hypothesis whether the party name matters or not.

2. Data

In the context of the local elections of 14th October 2012 a unique data collection process has been implemented in order to understand and compare the local dimensions of these elections in the 262 Walloon municipalities. The focus was put on the 'supply side' of the election, i.e. the strategies set up by parties, focusing on each electoral list in each municipality and on candidates. Each municipality presents a different socio-demographic and political profile. There are not only huge differences in terms of the size of a municipality, its degree of urbanization, etc., but also in terms of campaign issues and of parties that compete in these elections. In some municipalities, the electoral competition occurs only between national parties while it occurs only between local parties in some others.¹

There are indeed differences in terms of party system in each municipality. National and local parties compete in these elections but in different configurations, producing 262 unique party systems. Sometimes a national party competes in a municipal election, sometimes it is a purely local party with only local candidates, with a lot of different scenarios in between (eg. a national party that competes with a local name, a local party that presents a list headed by a federal minister or MP, an electoral alliance between a national and a local party, etc.). In sum, the analysis of the name of the list running for elections requires first a clear typology of those lists at the local level.

¹ Yet, the electoral system is the same for all Walloon municipalities: a proportional system with semi-open lists where the voter can either vote for the list or one or several candidates on the same list. Seats are attributed based on the Imperiali formulae and on electoral districts that correspond to the limits of the municipality.

In order to fully grasp the local list phenomenon, all the 1012 lists that participated in the local elections of 2012 in Wallonia (262 municipalities) have been thoroughly analyzed². Existing measurements of the local list phenomena are not satisfactory as they only focus on a sample of electoral lists and they have little information about the determinants of a list name. Therefore, we collected a large amount of information on each list and on some categories of candidates on each list. Based on this data, we built a typology of electoral list and each list has been classified based on its position on a local-national axis. These positions have been clustered in five main ideal-types (see Table 1).

The ‘national’ lists are the electoral lists whose name corresponds exactly to existing parties at the national level. National parties are the one represented in the federal parliament (the French-speaking CDH, Ecolo, FDF³, MR, PP and PS) as well as the PTB+. 455 lists that participated in the local elections (45% of all lists) can be directly attached to a national party. Yet, some of these lists do not use the national party label but can still be attached indirectly to national parties by their names (eg. using the name of ‘PS+’ instead of ‘PS’ or of ‘MR-IC’ instead of ‘MR’) or by the fact that the majority of the candidates on the list are identified party members of one national party. In our typology, there are 99 such ‘quasi-national’ parties. Together, ‘national’ and ‘quasi-national’ lists account for more than half of the lists in competition.

On the other side of the local-national axis, we find purely local lists that display no connection at all with a national party. Such ‘local’ lists composed of local candidates represent 20,6% of the 1012 electoral lists in Wallonia. But not all local lists are purely local. We also identified ‘quasi-local’ lists, i.e. lists that are local but that display some connection with national parties. Our three criteria for the identification of quasi-local list are: the presence in the list of a regional or national minister or MP; or a list attached to a political movement with a supra-local or sub-regional ambition but is only able to be present in a few municipalities⁴; or a list identified by the coder as having another type of connection with a national party based on the media or the official discourse of the list. Together the local and quasi-local account for more than one third of the lists for the local elections in Wallonia in 2012. The last category of electoral lists concern the electoral alliances, i.e. the lists composed of a majority of candidates that can be attached to a least two political parties or that can be identified by the coder as an alliance based on the media or the official discourse of the list.

Table 1. Number of list (per type) and electoral results

List type	N	%	Votes (in %)
National	455	45,0	58,9
Quasi-national	99	9,8	10,3
Quasi-local	113	11,2	8,0
Local	208	20,6	10,3
Alliances	137	13,5	12,6
Total	1 012	100,0	100,0

² For more information about the project, its methodology and the data collection, see Dandoy, Dodeigne, Matagne and Reuchamps (forthcoming 2013).

³ This party split from the MR one year before the local elections of 2012 and currently has three federal MPs.

⁴ It mainly concerns the list related to the following political movements: Lepen, Wallonie d’abord, Fédération des Nationalistes Wallons, Parti pirate, Parti des pensionnés, and Démocratie Nationale.

3. Name of the lists

While the real nature of each list is an important variable to grasp as we have sought to do with a typology based on the composition of the lists, another endeavor is often neglected: the exploration of their name and what it tells about the list beyond their local vs. national nature. This is the aim of this paper to tackle this oft-overlooked question.

A descriptive approach based on the wording of the name and its frequency/occurrence can offer a preliminary albeit comprehensive and systematic understanding of the strategies of the lists competing at the last Walloon local elections (Table 2). The first column shows the number of occurrences of list names used in their strict acceptance, that is without being accompanied by a symbol, an adjective or another list name. The second column shows the number of occurrences of the term whether it is or not accompanied by a prefix or suffix. The third column shows the number of variations of the term.

Table 2. Occurrence of list names, terms and number of variations

	List names	Occurrence of the list name	Occurrence of the term	Number of variations
1	Ecolo	155	164	2
2	PS - Parti socialiste	116	133	7
3	MR - Mouvement réformateur	73	98	2
4	CDH - Centre démocrate humaniste	53	74	5
5	IC - Intérêt communal / Intérêts communaux	32	61	6
6	Ensemble	23	60	28
7	FDJ - Fédéralistes démocrates francophones	23	24	1
8	PTB+ - Parti du travail de Belgique +	13	13	0
9	Union communale	10	12	0
10	PP - Parti populaire	10	10	0
11	LB - Liste du bourgmestre	9	19	3
12	Avec vous	7	10	3
13	Union	6	24	13
14	Entente communale	6	7	0
15	Pour	5	37	3
16	Alternative	5	20	9
17	Renouveau	5	19	12
18	Wallonie d'abord	5	8	1
19	Action	4	12	9
20	Alternative citoyenne	4	4	0

In the first column, the four largest French-speaking parties occupy the top of the ranking. According to this classification, 'Ecolo' appears 155 times. It is followed by the 'Socialist Party', whose label was used 116 times, the 'Reform Movement', used 73 times and the 'Humanist Democratic Centre', 53 times. Below this top 4, the names of typical local lists appear. The names 'IC', 'Intérêt communal' et 'Intérêts communaux', have been grouped into a single category for consistency. They appear 32 times. The names 'Union communale', 'Liste du Bourgmestre' et 'Entente communale' appear ten, nine and six times respectively, occupying the ninth, the eleventh and the fourteenth positions in the ranking.

Within this top 20, most of the words' roots were present with at least one variation. For instance, the term 'Union' was declined in many ways with the addition of an adjective as in 'Union rurale' in Grez-Doiceau or 'Union villageoise' in Houyet; with a reference to the name of the municipality 'Union pour le renouveau à Plombières' in Plombières; a reference to the citizen as in 'Union pour tous' in Hensies. It is also possible to add symbols as in 'Parti socialiste +' in Malmedy.

No correlation can be established between the number of times a term appears in its strict acceptance and the number of its variations. Some rarely used words' roots were characterized by the absence of any variation. This was the case for 'Alternative citoyenne' or 'Entente communale'. Similarly, while the roots 'Ensemble' and 'Fédération des Démocrates Francophones' were used an equal number of times, the first takes 28 different forms including 'Ensemble 2012', 'V. Ensemble', 'Ensemble pour Etalle', 'Tous ensemble', 'Vivr'Ensemble' and 'Ensemble pour l'Avenir'. Meanwhile, the 'Fédération des Démocrates Francophones' was only taking one variation: 'FDF - Horizon 2012'. Within the top 20 list, some list names were not taking any different form. It was notably the case for 'Union communale', 'Parti populaire', 'Entente communale' and 'Alternative citoyenne'. Finally, these categories are not mutually exclusive. 'Action renouveau communal' is a variation of both 'Action' and 'Renouveau'. Similarly, 'Ensemble Liste du Bourgmestre' is a variation of both 'Ensemble' and 'Liste du Bourgmestre'.

By contrast, we find also 389 list names that have been used only once during the 2012 elections. Not taking into account alliances that add names of the parties existing separately, the number of list names appearing only once can be reduced to 296.

It should be kept in mind that the occurrences measured in this classification refer to the number of appearances. It is therefore important to consider this number carefully. The second classification reveals that the term 'Pour' was used 37 times in the 2012 local elections. However, it appeared in three variations 'Pour Andenne', 'Pour Chatelet' and 'Pour Huy'. Other appearances are not indicative of the constitution of alliances or of variations as they occur in list names such as 'Rassemblement pour Ferrières', 'Union pour tous' or 'Mouvement pour la Liberté et la Démocratie'. It is therefore necessary to conduct a more thorough analysis of each list in order to assess if additional occurrences revealed by the second classification result from the constitution of alliances, besides possible variations. Thus, the name 'Parti socialiste', taking seven different forms, appears 10 times in combination with local lists ('Parti socialiste-Liste du Bourgmestre') or national ('Parti socialiste-Ecolo') or national and local ('Liste du Mayor-CDH-Parti socialiste').

4. Typology of the name of the lists

To benefit from the overall picture provided by this descriptive approach, a qualitative typology of list names has been established. The typology consists of 14 non-exclusive categories. It provides the possibility to capture the different logics and discourses relating to local politics in Wallonia. Indeed, choosing a name it is presenting the voter a certain conception of local policy, a specific relation to this level of governance.

The "Reference to a national party" category is based on the reference to a national party. Indeed, local elections are characterized by a degree of nationalization and

political parties from higher levels of governance are competing at the local level (Deschouwer, 2012; Blaise et al., 2012). More specifically, this category includes lists whose name refers to one or more traditional parties represented in both regional and federal assemblies. Thus, lists referring to 'CDH', 'Ecolo', 'MR' and 'PS' parties are included in this category but lists referring to 'FDF' or 'MDL' are not. 459 lists refer to one or more national parties. Among these, 164 lists refer to 'Ecolo', 133 to 'PS', 98 to 'MR' and 77 to 'CDH'. It is important to keep in mind that one list can mention several national parties. Moreover, the combination of a reference to a national party with another category is possible.

The "Partisan reference" category refers to political organizations (different from the traditional four political parties) or to an ideological dimension in the broad sense, such as 'left' or 'center'. For instance, in the municipality of Verviers, the 'Parti populaire' and the 'PTB+' were competing. There was a 'Pirate' list in Walcourt as well as in La Louvière. 'FDF' lists are frequent in French-speaking Brabant, notably in Braine-l'Alleud, Chastre, Court Saint-Etienne, Nivelles and Waterloo. We also note the presence of lists called 'Front des gauches' in Marchin, Courcelles and La Louvière, and another 'Partisan reference' list in Liège: 'Vert et à Gauche'.

Beside its political dimension, the name of a list can also or rather reflect the specific political dynamics at the local level. On this question, there are different perspectives regarding the very nature of local politics in a municipality (Breux, Jacquet and Reuchamps, 2014; Steyvers et al., 2008). On the one hand, it can be argued that local politics is driven by the same sociological cleavages that are present in other policy levels. The first two categories of list names – "Reference to a national party" and "Partisan reference" – reflect such perspective. On the other hand, it can also be argued that the challenges posed to local governance are of another nature and impose a change in the supply side of an election. This may take the form of a-politicism or of the non-partisan character of certain candidates at the local level. In that sense, local politics is only linked to good governance and a close proximity with the citizen, and should be neutral of all party affiliation (Bherer and Breux, 2012). There are even national and regional officials that do not wish to appear under the party brand at the local level and would like to clearly distinguish the two policy levels. Even if these elements are based on the discourse of the political actors, they reveal a series of representation at the local level. The list name is a good illustration of this dynamic. Each of the following categories reflects certain dynamics related to the local policy level in Wallonia.

The category "name of the municipality" includes any list that clearly refers to the municipality – by directly mentioning the municipality's name – or its inhabitants. For instance, the lists "Clavier autrement" (*Clavier alternatively*), "Ensemble pour Fernelmont" (*Together for Fernelmont*), "Coquelicot Hélécinnois" (*Poppy Helecine*), "Honnelles Dynamique" (*Honnelles dynamic*) or even "Intérêts Franchimontois réunis" (*Joint Franchimontois interests*) belong to this category. This type of lists insists in the local dimension of the list policy project as being located in a precise political space.

A following category ("reference to the local level") concerns the lists that refer to the local or municipal level or to the mayor. It mainly concerns list names such as "Entente communale" (*Municipal alliance*) or "Intérêts communaux" (*Municipal interests*), sometimes coupled to the name of the municipality or with a party name. For example,

the list “Mouvement Réformateur - Intérêts Communaux - Ensemble Jalhay Sart” (*Reform movement - Municipal interests – Together Jalhay Sart*) in the municipality of Jalhay gathers these different elements in its name. The reference to the local level is also present in a series of less frequent expressions, such as the list “Action pour un renouveau communal” (*Action for a municipal renewal*) in the municipality of Ramilies or the list “Commune Passion” (*Municipality passion*) in Sainte Ode.

Certain list names stress the citizens and democratic dimensions. As indicated by its label, the category “citizens - democracy” gathers the lists whose names evoke citizenship, citizens or democracy. For instance, the list “Pour Nandrin l’expression citoyenne” (*For Nandrin Citizen’s expression*) or the lists “Union démocratique” (*Democratic union*) in Fosse-la-ville and “Alternative citoyenne” (*Citizen’s alliance*) in Froidchappelle are part of this category.

The category “Union – alliance” concerns the lists whose name refers to the idea of union / alliance, i.e. containing words as “together”, “with you” or “alliance”. These elements may refer to diverse political trends such as the notion of alliance between several political groups or the distance with traditional political parties or movements. List names that contain words as “group” or “movement” have also been considered as part of this category, except those list that refer to the MR (*Mouvement réformateur*, one of the main national party). Among the lists in this category, we find for instance the list “Groupe d’ouverture” (*Opening group*) in the municipality of Pecq or “Ensemble pour vous” (*Together for you*) in Bièvre as well as the lists “Mouvement Citoyens Responsable” (*Movement responsible citizens*) in Herve, “Gestalte Zukunft MACH MIT!” (*Make the future JOIN!*) in Amel and “Mouvement Citoyen” (*Citizen’s movement*) in the municipality of Brugelette.

As indicated by its name, the category “Change” refers to change and/or to an alternative way of doing politics. Words such as “alternatively”, “renewal”, “succession”, “hope”, “action”, “initiative”, “opening” as well as the verbs “to mobilize”, “to react” and “build” under different forms belong to this category. It is basically a recurrent vocabulary in numerous political campaigns, particularly used by candidates from the opposition. The lists “Alternative Citoyenne” (*Citizen’s alternative*) in the municipality of Chapelle-Lez-Herlaimont, “Agir Ensemble” (*Act together*) in Chiny and “Action” in Bertrix are examples of this category.

The category “Future” concerns list names that refer to a future period or to a forthcoming event. This future perspective may concern precise events (often the next local elections), such as “Horizon 2018” in Fauvillers. But in general, the list uses words temporally more vague, with for instance “Aubel Demain” (*Aubel tomorrow*), “Perspectives et réalités” (*Perspectives and realities*) in Bouillon or “Construisons l’avenir ensemble” (*Let’s build future together*) in Chimay.

The category of puns gathers the list names that assemble several words and form a funny and evocating reference for the voters. Examples are found in list names such as “Lens et vous” (*Lens and you – Launch yourself*) in the municipality of Lens, “Lincent l’autre” (*The other Lincent – The one without the other*) in Lincent, “Geerons ensemble” (*Geer together – Let’s manage together*) in Geer or “Re-nous-vaux” (*Re-us-Vaux – Renewal*) in Vaux-sur-Sûre. These elements are still poorly known in political science

and appeal to an entertaining aspect of politics (Derville, 2005). The choice of this type of list name can also refer to the strategy of an electoral list to present itself as different from more traditional political parties and movements by adopting a more “alternative” label.

The tenth category of list names (“personalisation”) focuses on one individual or one politician. Even if *de facto* collective, electoral lists often play the card of the personalisation of politics, particularly at the local level (Wille and Deschouwer, 2012). Certain lists indeed consider that one of the factors that might help them securing an electoral success is the presence of a famous politician or individual and whose reputation is important and positive in the municipality. The most exemplary case is the one of a list constructed around the incumbent mayor. Those lists either refer to the function of the mayor (“liste du mayeur” and “liste du bourgmestre”, *mayor’s list* and all its declination), notably in Jurbise, la Hulpe and Silly, either to the name of the mayor or the principal candidate on the list, such as “Renard Ginette” in the municipality of Brugelette and “Wirtz” in Bullange.

In the same vein, the category “mayor’s list” concerns the electoral lists whose names correspond to lists such as “Liste du bourgmestre” or “Liste du mayeur” and their declinations. For instance, we observe in this category the lists “Liste Mayeur” in Meix-devant-Virton, “Député Maire” (*Mayor MP*) in Chiny and “Ittre + LB” (*Ittre + List of mayor*) in Ittre. Yet, most of these lists are also present in the category “personalisation”: on the 56 electoral lists that belong to the category “personalisation”, 46 also refer to the category “mayor’s list”.

The category entitled “Reference to Wallonia” gathers the lists whose name refers to the Walloon region or to the Walloons, its inhabitants. In this category, we observe for instance the lists “Fédérations des nationalistes wallons” (*Federations of Walloon nationalists*) in the municipality of Hotton, “Rassemblement wallon” (*Walloon gathering*) in Quaregnon, “Wallonie d’abord” (*Wallonia first*) in Seraing and “Nouvel élan wallon” (*New Walloon impuse*) in Pepinster. It is basically a reference to another policy level and a political and identity space larger than the municipality. Yet, most of those lists can be considered as close to the extreme-right (Blaise, de Coorebyter and Faniel, 2012).

Another category (“Reference to Belgium”) includes the lists that refer to Belgium or its inhabitants. This category mainly concerns the lists related to the national party “Parti du Travail de Belgique +” (*Labour party of Belgium +*). An exception I found in an extreme-right list: “Front national belge” (*Belgian national front*) in Charleroi. One has to remark that there are no lists that refer to the Frenchs-speaking community of the European Union.

The last category (“others”) gathers the list names that have not been included in any of the categories above. Contrary to previous categories, this one is not inclusive. Examples of such list names are to be found in the case of “Un bon point” in the municipality of Stavelot and “Ecout@” in Saint-Léger.

Similarly to the classification of lists into the five list type categories (from national to local – see above), each list name has been classified according to at least one of the 14 categories by three researchers. There were very few differences between these three

coding jobs, leading to an important validity of the obtained results. Table 3 concerns the number of electoral lists that correspond to each of the list names categories, as well as the percentage of the 1012 list per category. Clearly, almost half of the lists names refer to one of the national parties (45,36%). This category is followed by categories such as “reference to the local level” and “union – alliance” (15,91%) and “change” (13,04%).

With the exception of the category “others”, these categories are not mutually exclusive, explaining why the sum is superior to 100%. Many of these electoral lists belong in at least two categories of list names. For example, the list “Construisons Doische Autrement” (*Let’s build Doische alternatively*) belongs to the categories “change” and “name of the municipality”. The list “Rassemblement ouverture communale” (*Municipal rally opening*) in Gouvy belongs to three different categories: “union – alliance”, “change” and “reference to the local level”. Certain categories are by definition the object of rather large overlap with others, as for example the numerous lists in the categories “personalisation” and “mayor’s list”.

Table 3. Number of lists per category

Category	N	%
Reference to the national party	459	45,36
Reference to the local level	161	15,91
Union - alliance	161	15,91
Change	132	13,04
Name of the municipality	128	12,75
Reference to the party	111	10,97
Personalisation	56	5,53
Citizens – democracy	52	5,14
Mayor’s list	45	4,45
Future	33	3,26
Others	28	2,26
Reference to Wallonia	22	2,17
Reference to Belgium	13	1,28
Puns	12	1,19

5. Explaining the choice of the name

Once this typology is created, we now want to know the structure of opportunity affecting the choice for these specific names. For instance, do we find most often lists referring to the municipal level in large or in small towns? To what extent do list presented in the former 2006 local elections impact upon the name? Does the candidacy of incumbent mayor affect the choice for the name of the list? Answers to these questions are given in the logistic models presented in the Tables 4 (a to h) in appendix. The independent variables are the size of the municipality (log of the number of inhabitants), the degree of urbanization (urban, rural and semi- urban as the reference), the effective party number (the fragmentation is then established as ‘low’ with one or two parties competing, ‘medium’ with three or four parties and ‘high’ with more than four lists), the presence of the incumbent mayor on the list, the presence of the list in

2006, lists that are incumbents of an absolute majority, and finally the candidacy of representatives from other levels of government (regional, federal and European).

Due to the low frequency of certain categories, some categories have been merged to give more statistical leverage. In this section, we combined the “ideological reference”, the “reference to a national party” and the “partisan reference” into a first group called *ideological reference*. A second group that refers to the *municipality level* includes “the reference to the municipality” as well as the name “municipality”. We also combined the categories “future” and “changes” to create the category *change/future* while the lists referring to “Wallonia” and “Belgium” are merged together into *institutional reference*. Finally, the following categories are analyzed separately as initially created: *Citizens - Democracy*; *List of the mayor*; *Alliance – Union*; *Other*.

Firstly, lists from semi-urban towns are more likely to belong to lists with a ideological reference. The situation is however very different in rural and urban communities. Indeed, in comparison to lists from semi-urban municipality, lists in urban area are 7% less likely to opt for this type of name while the odds are 76% lower for lists in rural area. Similarly, the larger the size of the municipality, the more likely candidates will choose that name for their lists. This tends to confirm the thesis that it is in rural communities that local politics differs most effectively from the federal and regional arenas. The traditional political cleavages are less mobilized by candidates and the name of the lists tend to reflect it. Furthermore, it is in municipalities where the political offer is the most similar to the federal/regional political arena (the four main parties in competition) that we find more often this type of lists. Lists with the incumbent mayor as candidate are on the contrary less likely to opt for this name. The presence of the list in 2006 as well as the presence of representatives from another level of government have strong positive effects. The latter is non-very surprising because those representatives are clearly associated with a national party and tend to adopt the national symbol for the name of the list.

Secondly, lists that evoke the municipality (the term municipality itself or the name of the town) are concentrated in rural and semi -urban areas. In other words, it is less common to underline the local nature of lists from urban centers (this tends to validate a more pronounced nationalization of local elections in the largest Walloon municipalities). Lists with the mayor as candidate are also three times more likely to adopt this label. Because this central actor represents the legal and political ‘face’ of the town, it is not surprising that these lists tend often to opt for this type of name. On the other hand, lists with representatives from another level of government are less likely to use that label. It might be explained by the fact that that it is easier to display this local feature when the list does not include representatives from the regional and/or federal political arenas.

Thirdly, the lists from the rural towns are much more likely to choose a label referring to the concepts of alliance and union. The larger the town, the less likely candidates opt for this type of name. From this point of view, the strategy of alliance and union is less often used in cities than in the countryside. Furthermore, the use of that label tends to be higher in the fragmented party competition. Therefore, the use of such term may be explained by a strategy to be seen as ‘different’, i.e. above the party interest and in favor of all citizens’ interest. The presence of the mayor as candidate as well as lists already

presented in the 2006 elections are positively correlated. However, lists from the incumbent absolute majority and the presence of representative from another level of government tend to less frequent for this type of name.

The “listes du bourgmestre” are more likely to be found in semi-urban areas and in communes with mean electoral competition. Such lists are also found in middle-size communes. Indeed, more urban communes are less likely to feature this type of name. The presence of the list in the previous election has no impact. The absolute majority and the presence of representative from other levels have a negative effect. The effect of the mayor’s presence has been tested given the very nature of this name. Nonetheless, there is one “liste du bourgmestre” without bourgmestre.

The reference to citizens is more frequent in cases where there is little electoral competition and in semi-rural areas. This name is thus not so much present in communes where there is a partisan competition, as it is more often the case in urban areas. Such lists are found in a political landscape made of one or two lists only. To confirm this non-partisan dynamics: groups from an absolute majority or with representatives from other level are less likely to use this reference to citizens.

The institutional reference to Wallonia and to Brussels is more often seen in the cities. The lists in urban areas are almost three times more likely to have such a reference than list in semi-rural areas. Similarly it goes with the size: the bigger the size of the commune, the more likely the chance to find such reference. It is important to note that this category refers mainly to leftist lists of the “PTB +” and of – far – rightist of “Wallonie d’abord!”. These lists are especially found in communes where there is a high electoral competition and where traditional political parties are already present.

The last category related to future and change. As reminded above, it is an often-heard discourse in Western democracies. These lists are more likely to be found in rural areas and in less inhabited communes but were there is a mean electoral competition. Lists already present in 2006 or from an absolute majority or with a mayor and representatives from other levels are unlikely, unsurprisingly, to adopt such a name.

Finally, in terms of electoral results, the choice of a name has also some importance. For each category, we have looked for the relative electoral performance. It is important to keep in mind there are only statistical relations and the weight of the name should not be overestimated on the votes, which is a complex process. Nevertheless, some trends can be identified. All other things being equal⁵, some categories show in average a higher result than the others: “Ideology” (+ 2%), “Reference to the commune” (+ 3%), “Alliance – Union” (+ 4%), “Citizens – democracy” (+ 2%), “Change – future” (+ 4%). By contrast, the institutional reference (to Wallonia and to Belgium) is a disadvantage with a score inferior to score of 6% but this should not be surprising given the specific nature of the lists behind this name. The “liste du bourgmestre” has no influence on the electoral result.

6. Conclusion

⁵ We have used here a linear regression.

As for each election, the elections of 14 October 2012 have come with a number of unusual names for the lists in competition. Beside the political (because they are inspired by national political parties) names such as “CDH”, “Ecolo”, “MR” or “PS” or the more local references such as “Intérêts communaux” or “Liste du bourgmestre”, quite a few names were very specific to each of 262 local context. The choice of a name is always a complex decision. In this paper, we have sought to investigate this question that is often overlooked. We have shown that there is a multitude of list’s names but they can be classified in different categories. What’s more these categories can tell a lot about the nature of the lists. Therefore behind the name of a list are political dynamics. Thus the choice of a list reflects the decision of a group of a people who will seek as any votes as possible under such umbrella. Indeed, much more than the sequence of several letters, the name of a list is the heart of a political engagement on the local scene.

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Appendix

Table 4a. Reference to the municipality

Covariates	Beta	Std. err.	Prob.	odds ratio	95% c.i. interval	
Intercept	1.7140	1.2931	0.1850	-	-	-
Population (log)	-0.3193	0.1455	0.0281	0.727	0.546	0.966
<i>Urbanization (ref: semi-urban)</i>						
Rural	-0.0596	0.1869	0.7497	0.942	0.653	1.359
Urban	-0.8581	0.2738	0.0017	0.424	0.248	0.725
<i>Fragmentation (ref: medium)</i>						
Low fragmentation	0.3521	0.2201	0.1097	1.422	0.924	2.189
High fragmentation	0.5746	0.2629	0.0288	1.776	1.061	2.974
Incumbent list with abs. maj.	0.0430	0.2590	0.8682	1.044	0.628	1.734
List presented in 2006	-0.1714	0.1634	0.2944	0.843	0.612	1.161
Mayor	1.1635	0.2189	<.0001	3.201	2.084	4.916
Rep. from other level of gov.	-0.3095	0.2632	0.2396	0.734	0.438	1.22

Table 4b. Change & future

Covariates	Beta	Std. err.	Prob.	Odds ratio	95% c.i. interval	
Intercept	1.4601	1.5186	0.3363	-	-	-
Population (log)	-0.3325	0.1717	0.0527	0.717	0.512	0.717
<i>Urbanization (ref: semi-urban)</i>						
Rural	0.9513	0.2089	<.0001	2.589	1.719	2.589
Urban	-0.2742	0.3306	0.4069	0.760	0.398	0.760
<i>Fragmentation (ref: medium)</i>						
Low fragmentation	0.0401	0.2648	0.8796	1.041	0.620	1.041
High fragmentation	0.0838	0.3335	0.8015	1.087	0.566	1.087
List presented in 2006	-0.2666	0.1950	0.1715	0.766	0.523	0.766
Incumbent list with abs. maj.	-1.3476	0.4368	0.0020	0.260	0.110	0.260
Mayor	-0.2226	0.2920	0.4460	0.800	0.452	0.800
Rep. from other level of gov.	-0.6375	0.4206	0.1296	0.529	0.232	1.205

Table 4c. Ideology

Covariates	Beta	Std. err.	Prob.	Odds ratio	95% c.i. interval	
Intercept	-0.7728	1.0558	0.4642	-	-	-
Population (log)	0.0998	0.1177	0.3967	1.105	0.877	1.392
<i>Urbanization (ref: semi-urban)</i>						
Rural	-1.4182	0.1938	<.0001	0.242	0.166	0.354
Urban	-0.0663	0.2058	0.7474	0.936	0.625	1.401
<i>Fragmentation (ref: medium)</i>						
Low fragmentation	-0.9387	0.2338	<.0001	0.391	0.247	0.619
High fragmentation	-0.1581	0.2250	0.4823	0.854	0.549	1.327
List presented in 2006	0.1895	0.1491	0.2036	1.209	0.902	1.619
Incumbent list with abs. maj.	0.0602	0.2645	0.8199	1.062	0.632	1.784
Mayor	-0.0956	0.2201	0.6642	0.909	0.590	1.399
Rep. from other level of gov.	1.0236	0.2440	<.0001	2.783	1.725	4.490

Table 4d. Institutional reference

Covariates	Beta	Std. err.	Prob.	Odds ratio	95% c.i. interval	
Intercept	-12.2538	2.3148	<.0001	-	-	-
Population (log)	0.9445	0.2458	0.0001	2.572	1.588	4.163
<i>Urbanization (ref: semi-urban)</i>						
Rural	0.2019	0.8274	0.8072	1.224	0.242	6.194
Urban	1.0496	0.5375	0.0509	2.856	0.996	8.192
<i>Fragmentation (ref: medium)</i>						
Low fragmentation	-0.1953	1.0668	0.8547	0.823	0.102	6.656
High fragmentation	0.4141	0.4572	0.3651	1.513	0.618	3.707
List presented in 2006	-0.4528	0.3968	0.2538	0.636	0.292	1.384
Incumbent list with abs. maj.	-10.1468	262.6	0.9692	<0.001	<0.001	>999.999
Mayor	-11.5821	219.9	0.9580	<0.001	<0.001	>999.999
Rep. from other level of gov.	-13.3449	265.6	0.9599	<0.001	<0.001	>999.999

Table 4e. Citizens & Democracy

Covariates	Beta	Std. err.	Prob.	Odds ratio	95% c.i. interval	
Intercept	-0.2658	2.2583	0.9063	-	-	-
Population (log)	-0.2127	0.2549	0.4040	0.808	0.490	1.332
<i>Urbanization (ref: semi-urban)</i>						
Rural	-0.3919	0.3831	0.3063	0.676	0.319	1.432
Urban	0.0111	0.4531	0.9804	1.011	0.416	2.458
<i>Fragmentation (ref: medium)</i>						
Low fragmentation	0.1675	0.4195	0.6896	1.182	0.520	2.690
High fragmentation	-0.6393	0.6248	0.3062	0.528	0.155	1.796
List presented in 2006	-0.5903	0.2933	0.0441	0.554	0.312	0.985
Incumbent list with abs. maj.	0.2235	0.6523	0.7318	1.250	0.348	4.491
Mayor	-1.3706	0.6353	0.0310	0.254	0.073	0.882
Rep. from other level of gov.	-0.4055	0.6262	0.5173	0.667	0.195	2.275

Table 4f. Mayor List

Covariates	Beta	Std. err.	Prob.	Odds ratio	95% c.i. interval	Covariates	
Intercept	-4.7274	2.3638	3.9995	0.0455	-	-	-
Population (log)	0.2186	0.2626	0.6927	0.4052	1.244	0.744	2.082
<i>Urbanization (ref: semi-urban)</i>							
Rural	-0.0766	0.4191	0.0334	0.8550	0.926	0.407	2.106
Urban	-0.6230	0.4986	1.5612	0.2115	0.536	0.202	1.425
<i>Fragmentation (ref: medium)</i>							
Low fragmentation	-1.1461	0.7590	2.2798	0.1311	0.318	0.072	1.407
High fragmentation	0.0362	0.4731	0.0059	0.9390	1.037	0.410	2.621
List presented in 2006	-0.0116	0.3400	0.0012	0.9728	0.988	0.508	1.925
Incumbent list with abs. maj.	-0.3855	0.5519	0.4877	0.4849	0.680	0.231	2.006
Mayor	-0.2426	0.5573	0.1895	0.6634	0.785	0.263	2.339

Table 4g. Union & Alliance

Covariates	Beta	Std. err.	Prob.	Odds ratio	95% c.i. interval	
Intercept	5.6302	1.6167	0.0005	-	-	-
Population (log)	-0.8456	0.1847	<.0001	0.429	0.299	0.617
<i>Urbanization (ref: semi-urban)</i>						
Rural	0.3784	0.2088	0.0700	1.460	0.970	2.198
Urban	-0.0912	0.3405	0.7889	0.913	0.468	1.779
<i>Fragmentation (ref: medium)</i>						
Low fragmentation	0.00159	0.2484	0.9949	1.002	0.616	1.630
High fragmentation	0.6689	0.3335	0.0449	1.952	1.015	3.753
List presented in 2006	-0.0877	0.1948	0.6525	0.916	0.625	1.342
Incumbent list with abs. maj.	0.5774	0.3280	0.0783	1.781	0.937	3.388
Mayor	-0.2520	0.2921	0.3884	0.777	0.438	1.378
Rep. from other level of gov.	0.1556	0.3166	0.6232	1.168	0.628	2.173

Table 4h. Others

Covariates	Beta	Std. err.	Prob.	Odds ratio	95% c.i. interval	
Intercept	-8.8006	3.1538	0.0053	-	-	-
Population (log)	0.5994	0.3470	0.0841	1.821	0.922	3.595
<i>Urbanization (ref: semi-urban)</i>						
Rural	1.2773	0.4585	0.0053	3.587	1.460	8.810
Urban	-1.3599	0.8031	0.0904	0.257	0.053	1.239
<i>Fragmentation (ref: medium)</i>						
Low fragmentation	-0.4073	0.6674	0.5417	0.665	0.180	2.462
High fragmentation	-0.4420	0.7719	0.5669	0.643	0.142	2.918
List presented in 2006	-0.2413	0.4182	0.5639	0.786	0.346	1.783
Incumbent list with abs. maj.	-0.0198	0.8284	0.9809	0.980	0.193	4.972
Mayor	-0.3489	0.6605	0.5973	0.705	0.193	2.575
Rep. from other level of gov.	-0.3846	0.7747	0.6196	0.681	0.149	3.107