

PhD project: A kingdom of fiefs? On the meaning of dual mandate holding.

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General overview

This paper is divided into two separate sections. The first part is an abbreviated outline of the entire PhD project. The project was accepted and funded by the Flemish Scientific Fund (FWO) in 2015 for a period of four years. The second part is an extract of a paper describing multiple office-holding in Belgium. The original paper is in Dutch and is currently being prepared for journal submission. That way, we provide both a general overview of the complete project and show some preliminary research results.

Phd Project

Introduction

In this project we aim to study the meaning of the accumulation of political mandates for the functioning of local politics in the federal Belgium. Therefore, we scrutinize the evolving distribution and impact of this practice through its electoral and functional dimensions.

In the literature accumulation is alternatively termed as multiple mandate-holding or *cumul des mandats* referring to the French archetypical practice. In this research project it is conceived as the simultaneous occupation by one person of an elected mandate at the local level (i.e. councillor, alderman or mayor) and a counterpart at the regional or federal level (i.e. member of the Flemish Parliament, Walloon Parliament, Brussels Parliament, the Chamber and/or the Senate or one of the associated governments). The vertical variant that can hence be delineated as dual mandate-holding is at the core of a wider phenomenon of legally allowed accumulation in the context of multilevel governance including horizontal (at the same level) and/or non-elected (outside the political realm) counterparts (Pilet, 2013).

Dual mandate-holding is traditionally identified with the political localism characterizing the so-called Southern state tradition in which Belgium is often categorized (De Ceuninck et al., 2005; De Rynck & Wayenberg, 2010). Therein, local interests and the political influence of place-bound governments play an important role in central decision-making. Local politicians have direct and frequent access to the centre, where they aim to influence the distribution of public provisions (Page & Goldsmith, 1987; Goldsmith & Page, 2010). The strength of those municipal councillors is then measured by the extent to which it is perceived to generate benefits for its own locality (Page, 1991). In this tradition an ethos of communalism and patronage underpins local government (Hesse & Sharpe, 1991). Municipalities primarily stand for historically anchored place-bound identities with relatively limited functions and discretion. Mediating the interests of their local community

vis-à-vis the higher tiers of government then is a prominent assignment of local politicians. Individual citizens will turn to these politicians to obtain certain public services and provisions. These particularistic motives coexist with more generic considerations striving to see the local level represented at the political centre to voice the concerns of the municipal sector in supra-local policy. Occupying elected mandates at both levels is thus seen as a powerful instrument thereto (Wayenberg et al., 2011).

Traditionally, linking both layers of government is the most important legitimation of vertical cumul (Ackaert, 1994). Nowadays the discourse has shifted to the potential disadvantages such as the risk of conflicting interests (implying an objectively unjust territorial distribution of supra-local means), the chance of distinct power concentration or an excessive time-consumption hindering the appropriate execution of either mandate. Observers in France (one of the few countries next to Belgium where vertical accumulation is that outspoken) have indeed emphasized the deep entrenchment of localism through dual mandate-holding to characterize their whole political system as a *‘république des fiefs’* (Mény, 1992). Both the scientific and societal debate predominantly bear on unscientific presumptions however. With the exception of fragmented empirical evidence on the extent of the phenomenon and some well-informed assessments on its effects, systematic comparative evidence on the actual meaning of simultaneously holding political mandates at different levels is lacking: *‘... there has been ample conjecture about the causes of this practice but little systematic empirical testing of hypotheses. The standard assumption [...] is that politicians cumulate because it is in their interest to do so; [...]. That assumption has not been put to empirical examination’* (Blais, 2006: 266).

Research objectives

This research namely aims to develop a more comprehensive and integrated view on dual mandate-holding through two perspectives with the practice both as a dependent as well as an independent variable. Each perspective is associated with a main question and consequent sub-questions leading to a number of research hypotheses. Our objectives are both cross-sectional (for a more systematic insight in both perspectives, their mutual interdependency and the determination of relevant contingency factors) as well as longitudinal (for the evolving character of the distribution and the impact of the phenomenon) with the federal Belgium as a reference period. This aim is summarized in table 1 and elaborated upon below.

Table 1. Summary of research objectives

Perspective	Dual mandate-holding as dependent variable	Dual mandate-holding as independent variable
<i>Main question</i>	How is dual mandate-holding distributed in terms of extent and reach?	What is the impact of dual mandate-holding in terms of effect and underlying causal mechanisms?

Sub-questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Which variants of dual mandate-holding are distributed how? 2. Which factors explain variation in (1)? 3. How have (1) and (2) evolved over time? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. (How) does dual mandate-holding have an electoral advantage? 2. (How) does dual mandate-holding impact upon the time-allocation as a mandate-holder? 3. (How) does dual mandate-holding function as an instrument of interest representation for local government in general and/or that of the dual-mandate holder in particular? 4. How have (1) to (3) evolved over time?
Hypotheses	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Both the extent and the reach of dual mandate-holding have increased 2. The extent of dual mandate-holding has decreased with a more specific reach 3. Dual mandate-holding is significantly higher among members of parliament a) of the Francophone and/or traditional pillar parties, b) from categories of the smaller communities, c) with more mandate-experience and d) a more selective social profile 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Dual mandate-holding has a significant electoral surplus as a) (candidate-)members of parliament with a local mandate will obtain a higher share of preference votes in national elections, b) parties with a larger slate of local mandate-holders on their list in a certain constituency will obtain a larger electoral share, c) (candidate-)councillors with a parliamentary mandate will obtain a higher share of preference votes in local elections, d) parties with members of parliament on their local candidate list will obtain a larger electoral share and e) this surplus has increased over time 5. Dual mandate-holding has a significant effect on time-allocation as members of parliament with dual mandates a) show more supra-local absenteeism and less activism; b) spend their time more focused on local interest mediation and c) this effect has increased over time

		6. Dual mandate-holding creates significant opportunities for interest mediation as members of parliament with dual mandates a) will have more effective potential to intervene to the advantage of their locality, b) but will ultimately make the interests of their locality subordinate to supra-local partisan considerations and c) the significance of these opportunities has decreased over time
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The first research perspective focuses on dual mandate-holding as a dependent variable. Simultaneously occupying elected mandates at two levels then becomes the explanandum. The main question here is: how is the phenomenon distributed in terms of extent and reach? Based on the existing literature we can only partially answer these questions. The available empirical evidence is namely fragmented due to limitations in focus (either from the central perspective or from the local) and/or scope (one or a few electoral years). The most developed view (Ackaert, 1994; Fiers, 2001) is that on the national (and later on federal) parliament where from 1961 to 1999 the percentage of members with a simultaneous local mandate after each renewal of the chambers systematically amounts to around 65% (half of these in a local executive mandate). More recent research for specific supra-local elections and/or legislative assemblies (including regional parliaments) establishes similar or higher percentages (Verleden et al., 2009; Vanlangenakker, Put & Maddens, 2010; Pilet, 2013). Taking the two most recent municipal elections as a starting point (Ackaert et al., 2007; Rodenbach, Steyvers & Reynaert, 2013) and focusing on the members of the Flemish Parliament as well as on their Dutch-speaking counterparts in the federal chambers we can find levels of dual mandate-holding of about 80% at the start of the new municipal legislature (approximately 45% of which are occupying a local executive mandate). From a comparative perspective, Belgium is the country that displays the highest of these percentages after France (Kjær, 2006; Verhelst, Reynaert & Steyvers, 2013).

This research projects aims to supplement and integrate that fragmented empirical evidence in federal Belgium. Our reference period envelops regional, federal (1995, 1999, 2003, 2004, 2009, 2010 and 2014) and local (2000, 2006 and 2012) elections. It starts from two rival hypotheses referring to the sub-questions 2 and 3 mentioned. The first hypothesizes that both the extent and the reach of dual mandate-holding have increased throughout the reference period (H1). The most important explanation for that lays in the institutional transformation towards a federal and layered system in which the possible avenues for political careers have diversified and the number of available supra-local mandates have increased accordingly

(Pilet & Fiers, 2013). The second alternatively hypothesizes that the extent of dual mandate-holding has decreased in conjunction with a more specific reach of the phenomenon (H2). This is informed by a number of mutually reinforcing evolutions. For one thing, since the reform of 2003 the scale of electoral constituencies has been enlarged (from districts to provinces, implying a de-localization) giving national party headquarters more grip on the selection of (at least the eligible) candidates and diminishing the potentially determining effect of local notoriety. However, geographical spreading remains an element of ticket balancing and recruiting the associated local executive mandate-holders electorally beneficial (Maddens & Put, 2010). Therefore, we expect a less extensive type of dual mandate-holding to emerge that is more specifically anchored in the local executive. For another, the federalization process has led to the regions increasingly becoming the constitutive and policy-related frame of reference for local government. This leads us to expect that dual mandate-holding will concentrate more on the regional level (De Ceuninck et al., 2005). From recently available literature we can also infer a number of hypotheses (H3a-d) referring to the sub-questions 2 and 3 testing their generalizability in space and/or over time.

In the second research perspective attention shifts to dual mandate-holding as an independent variable. Simultaneously occupying elected mandates at two levels then becomes the explanans. The main question here is: what is the impact of the phenomenon in terms of effect and underlying causal mechanisms? It can be divided into the following sub-questions: 1) (how) does dual mandate-holding have an electoral advantage; 2) (how) does dual mandate-holding impact upon the time-allocation as a mandate-holder 3) (how) does dual mandate-holding function as an instrument of interest representation for local government in general and/or that of the dual-mandate holder in particular; and 4) how have (1) to (3) evolved over time? Based on the existing literature we can only partially answer these questions as well. Here in particular, well-informed assessments often outweigh empirical evidence. The literature often assumes that combining mandates is electorally beneficiary. Dual mandate-holding pays off both collectively (for the candidate list as a whole) as well as individually (for the candidate who simultaneously holds mandates). Occupying a place-bound mandate provides local roots and apparent visibility in a constituency. These are important in the selection process for (eligible) electoral positions where parties tend to pitch their (executive) local mandate-holders in the supra-local electoral strive (Ackaert, 1994; Put & Maddens, 2013). For politicians the practice functions as a kind of baobab-strategy: it subtracts almost all political resources from the environment allowing little competition (François, 2006).

This leads to a number of hypotheses based on the allegedly significant electoral surplus of dual mandate-holding. (Candidate-)members of parliament with a local mandate will obtain a higher share of preference votes in national elections than their counterparts who do not hold dual mandates (H4a). And parties with a larger slate of local mandate-holders on their list in a certain constituency will obtain a larger electoral share than their counterparts in other constituencies (H4b). In reverse, it is hypothesized that (candidate-)councillors with a

parliamentary mandate will obtain a higher share of preference votes in local elections than their counterparts who do not occupy dual mandates (H4c). And parties with members of parliament on their local candidate list will obtain a larger electoral share than chapters in other municipalities where this is lacking (H4d). Finally (with regard to sub-question 4), we hypothesize that the impact of dual mandate-holding as an electoral strategy has increased over time (H4e) due to the growing importance of preferential voting as a result of the personalization of politics in general and the diminished effect of the transfer of list votes in particular (Karvonen, 2010; André, Wauters & Pilet, 2012).

In addition and with regard to sub-question 2 it is often assumed that dual mandate-holding has a significant effect on the time-allocation of mandate-holders (Pilet, 2013; François & Weil, 2014). On the one hand, this effect is apparent in scope of time. Those who occupy a dual mandate cannot reasonably spend an equal amount of time to each of those without this having an effect on (one of) both. The local mandate (as the prime power base) may then well prevail. We hypothesize that members of parliament who simultaneously hold a local mandate show more supra-local absenteeism and a ditto lower degree of activism (H5a). At the same time, they spend their parliamentary time more focused with a view to local interest mediation (H5b). Members of parliament who accumulate with a local mandate then make more use of questions and/or interpellations to bring attention to local problems with a supra-local dimension (Vaesen, 2006). Finally (with regard to sub-question 4), we hypothesize that the effect of dual mandate-holding on time-allocation has increased (H5c) due to the dynamics of both local as well as national political professionalization (Cotta & Best, 2007; Steyvers & Verhelst, 2012).

Finally, the literature makes of number of assumptions on sub-question 3. The starting point here is that dual mandate-holding creates specific and significant opportunities for influence deemed to benefit local interests in central decision-making. Its impact might in reality be twofold however and create rival tendencies. On the one hand, they may render dual mandate-holders more effective potential to intervene to the advantage of their own locality (H6a). On the other hand they may also enhance dependency on the centre: supra-local (re-)election as a necessary condition for the (continued) effect of dual-mandate holding may then lead to conforming to national party discipline. Dual mandate-holders will therefore ultimately make the interests of local government subordinate to supra-local partisan considerations (H6b). The literature suggests that this type of impact would be significantly larger in the French-speaking part of the country (H6c) and with regard to central investment decisions (as opposed to intergovernmental routine programs; H6d). This stems from the diminishing of political localism in Flanders where a more neutral management style and contractual planning relations between localities and the centre have emerged (De Rynck & Wayenberg, 2010). A more pluralist governmental context affects the shifting intergovernmental relations. Horizontal coalitions with non-state actors have become almost equally important as vertical access to the centre for local policy-making (Pinson, 2010). Therefore, we hypothesize that the impact of dual mandate-holding as an instrument of local interest representation has decreased over time (H6e).

Methodology

For a more comprehensive and integrated view on the distribution and the impact of dual mandate-holding this research adopts a mixed methods design with four phases (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007). It concerns the sequential variant that primarily applies statistical analysis for the measurement of phenomena and the determination of probabilities. The results of that analysis are the basis for a complementary selection of cases in which so-called model-fitting exemplars can be used to unravel underlying causal mechanisms (i.e. process verification). Deviant counterparts can then add variables to established theories through process induction (Ivankova, Creswell & Stick, 2006; Creswell & Plano, 2011). The starting point of this design throughout its different phases is a quantitative analysis of cross-sectional secondary data supplemented with primary, qualitative and/or longitudinal ones.

With regard to the first perspective (dual mandate-holding as a dependent variable) we aim to develop a quantitative database for the period of reference of our study allowing multivariate regression and the analysis of time series. A pooled analysis is intended (maximizing the number of cases over time and space). With regard to the second perspective (dual-mandate holding as an independent variable) primary data collection or qualitative supplements will predominate. Here the comparison over time will be made through a closed universe (relevant cases at relevant moments, i.e. cohorts of dual mandate-holders at the beginning (1995), in the middle (2003/4) and at the end (2014) of our reference period). Regression analysis is supplemented by comparative case study.

In a first phase we intend to refine these perspectives and explore our hypotheses with secondary analysis of quantitative data on dual mandate-holding. For the first perspective (H1-3) we start from the fragmented empirical evidence on dual mandate-holding gathered in the context of the parliamentary elections referred to in the research objective and data collected by the Centre for Local Politics after the municipal elections of 2006 and 2012. The latter data are limited to the Flemish Parliament and the Dutch-speaking group in its federal counterparts. For the second perspective and with regard to the first sub-question we can draw on a number of CLP-datasets on municipal elections since 1976 including data on electoral shares and preference votes for our period of reference (H4c-e). The second and the third sub-question (H5-6 a-c) can be explored by using the Belgian data of the comparative projects Political Leaders in European Cities (mayors; first wave in 2004; second wave planned in 2015) and Municipal Assemblies in European Local Governance (aldermen and councillors; 2008). The CLP was the Belgian partner in these projects (including approximately 15 countries). Each dataset encloses a variable probing into dual mandate-holding and allows to make linkages with the time-allocation and intergovernmental relations that are central in these sub-questions.

The hypotheses that have thus been refined can be further tested in a second phase. To that end primary data are necessary reflecting the nature of those collected earlier given the longitudinal purpose of part of this research. For the first perspective (H1-3) this implies a

completion for the local elections at the beginning of our reference period, the more recent parliamentary elections and/or the Francophone part of the country. With the exception of the most recent ones that are available through the parliamentary websites, these data will be obtained by archival research in the biographical collections of the various regional or federal parliamentary information, documentation and archive centres. For the second perspective and with regard to the first sub-question (H4a-b and e) we will comprise a dataset for the parliamentary elections in our reference period based on datasets made available online by the regional and federal government (i.e. www.vlaanderenkiest.be or www.verkiezingen.fgov.be). These include data both on the level of candidate lists as well as on individual candidates. For the second (H5) and third (H6a-c) sub-question and based on the websites of the various assemblies we can obtain insight into and compare the parliamentary activities (from legislative initiatives over plenary or committee interventions to questions and additional oversight and control actions) of (dual) mandate-holders. This can be analysed by applying the nominal method Vaesen (2006) has developed for the Brussels Parliament (in which the local character of parliamentary activities is deduced by screening for key-words in topics or subject-fields).

On this quantitative basis a comparative case study will be established in the third phase of the research. These cases will be selected as to on the one hand fit with the findings of the previous phases whereby we will focus on the causal mechanism of dual mandate-holding (i.e. the ‘how’-questions in the second perspective or process verification). On the other hand we will scrutinize deviant cases that will determine additional contingency factors through process induction affecting the impact of dual mandate-holding. This phase emphasizes verification. In selecting specific cases we will take the different types of (e.g. executive versus non-executive local mandates) and contexts for (regional versus federal mandates) dual mandate-holders into consideration. This phase must also allow to probe into the less visible and informal aspects of interest mediation through dual mandate-holding. Here, we will use comparative qualitative methods (Landman, 2008) including in-depth interviews with and observation of the selected dual mandate-holders supplemented with other relevant actors (such as colleagues mandate-holders or parliamentary group leaders).

Preliminary results

In this section, we will show some preliminary results based on the first perspective of this research proposal. We will skip the literature review, that has been partly covered in the introduction and research objectives, and only focus on the results and discussion due to place restrictions. In the first part of the PhD multiple office-holding is the dependent variable and we study the extent and reach of the phenomenon from a longitudinal and cross-sectional perspective. We will discuss hypotheses 1, 2, 3a & 3b below but neglect H3c & 3b, as they are covered in a second paper where we try to explain dual mandate-holding based on multinomial regression model (sub question 2), which is being prepared at the moment.

Our data consists of all members of Belgian parliaments and governments during our reference period 1995 – 2014, that is the federal chamber and senate, the Flemish parliament, the Walloon parliament and the Brussels parliament. There was insufficient and unreliable data about the 25 members of the German-speaking community parliament, that has consequently been disregarded in following analyses. While we possess data of 2512 representatives and ministers, we must bear in mind that these are in fact only 1417 unique individuals. Also note that a snapshot was taken of every parliament after the installation of government, so that elected representatives that took a ministerial office are already replaced in parliament. Individual substitutions during the legislature are not brought into account.

Figure 1. Percentage of multiple office-holders in five Belgian parliaments and governments (1995 - 2014).

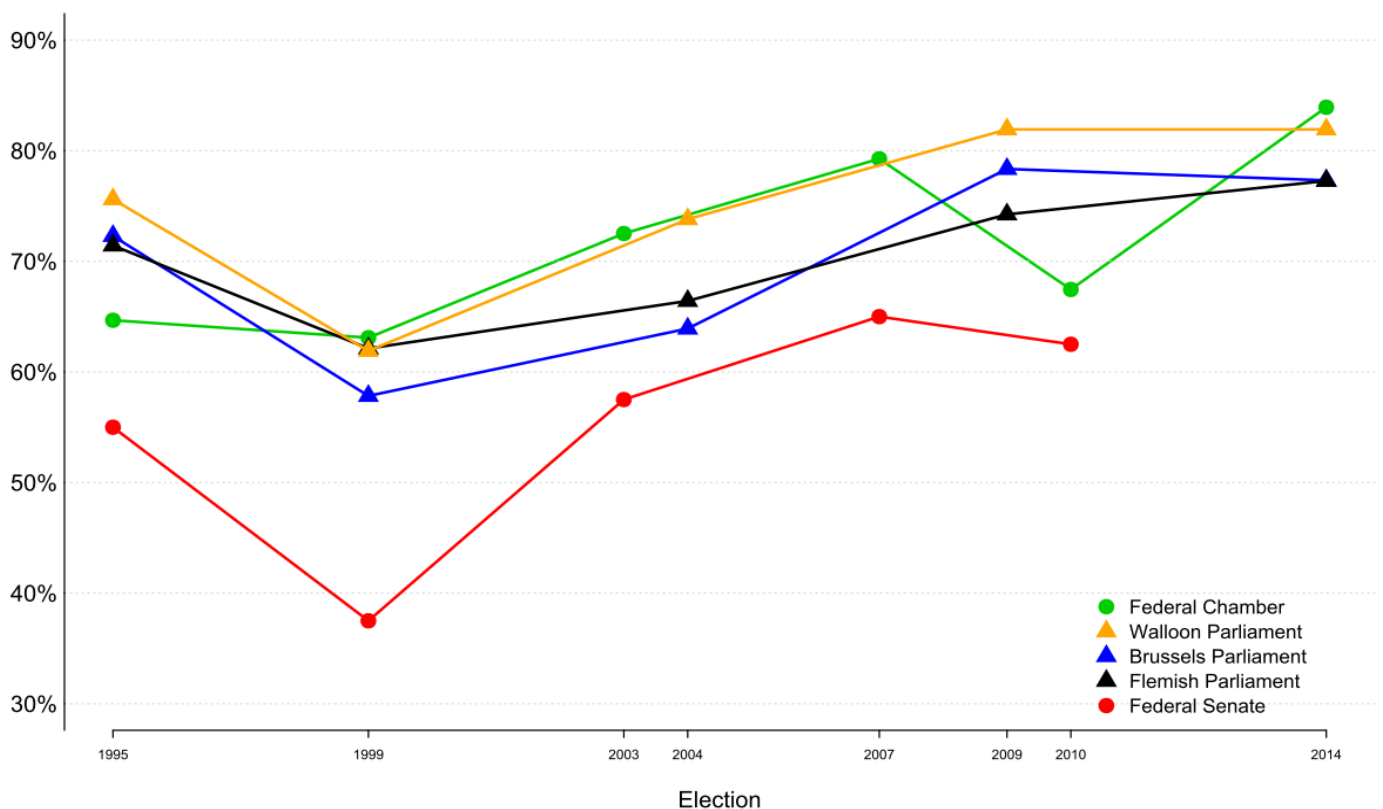


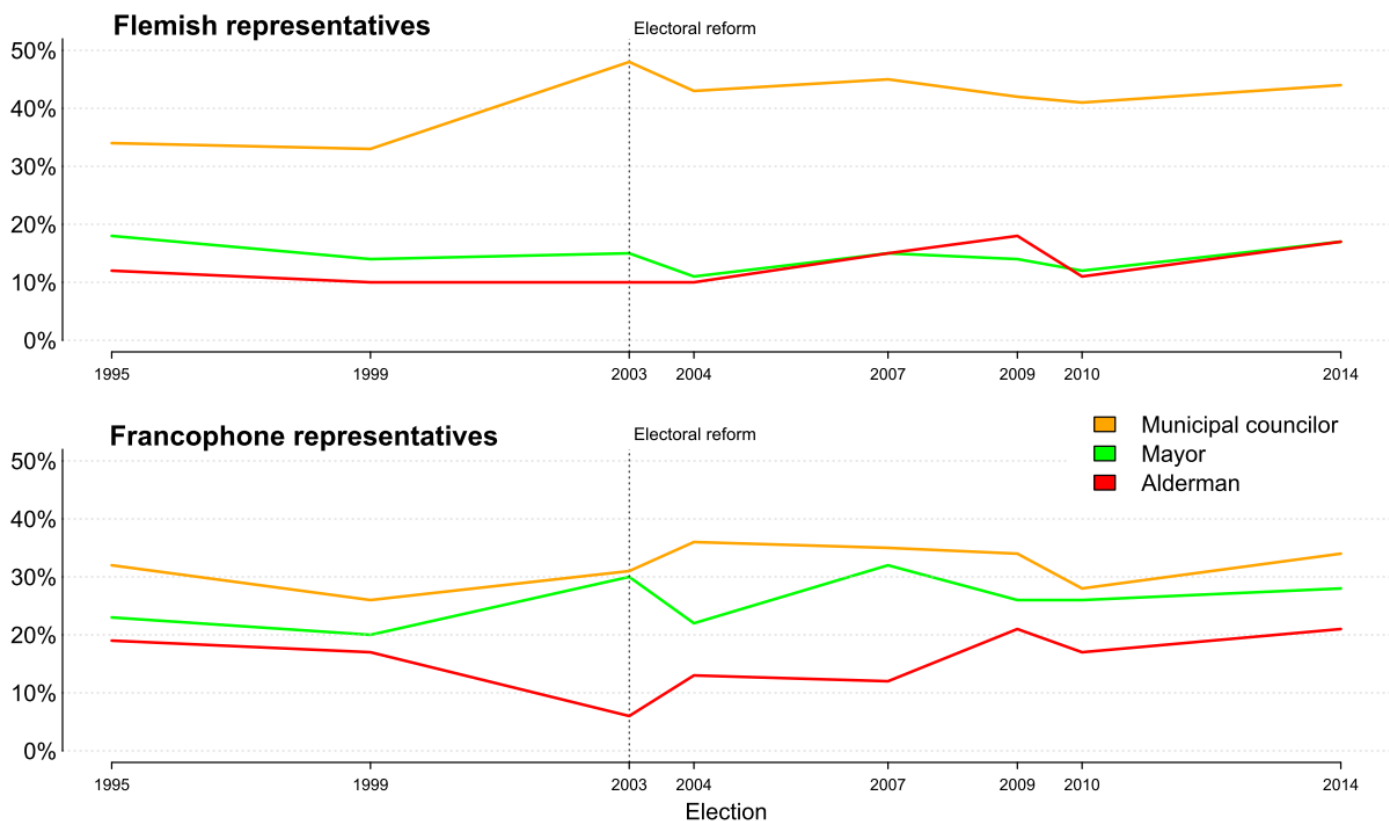
Figure 1 shows three important findings: the increasing level of cumul, the stability of the federal-local combination and the drops in 1999 and 2010. All of them will be discussed in order. First of all, these results demonstrates that extent of dual mandate-holding has increased throughout the reference period. There is a gradual and positive evolution in the amount of cumulards. In 1995 about 68.7% of all politicians had a second local position, whereas in 2014 after the last elections more than 80% had one. During the entire period, the total level of cumul amounts to 70.5%. A striking example, there is almost no difference between members of parliament and members of government. In the case of the

latter, two thirds also had a municipal office. Although, we must stress that at that moment a special mechanism comes into effect. This indicates that the combination of multilevel governance and the Belgian federalization process provides politicians with more avenues for supra-local careers. The possibilities of this evolution are being fully grasped by politicians, so it seems.

Due to that same federalization process, regions became the reference point for local governments, as more and more competences have been transferred to the three regions. However, the federal-local combination is still the most popular form of cumul. Multiple office-holders do not migrate to the regional level and based on these results, there is no indication that they will concentrate on the regional level in the future.

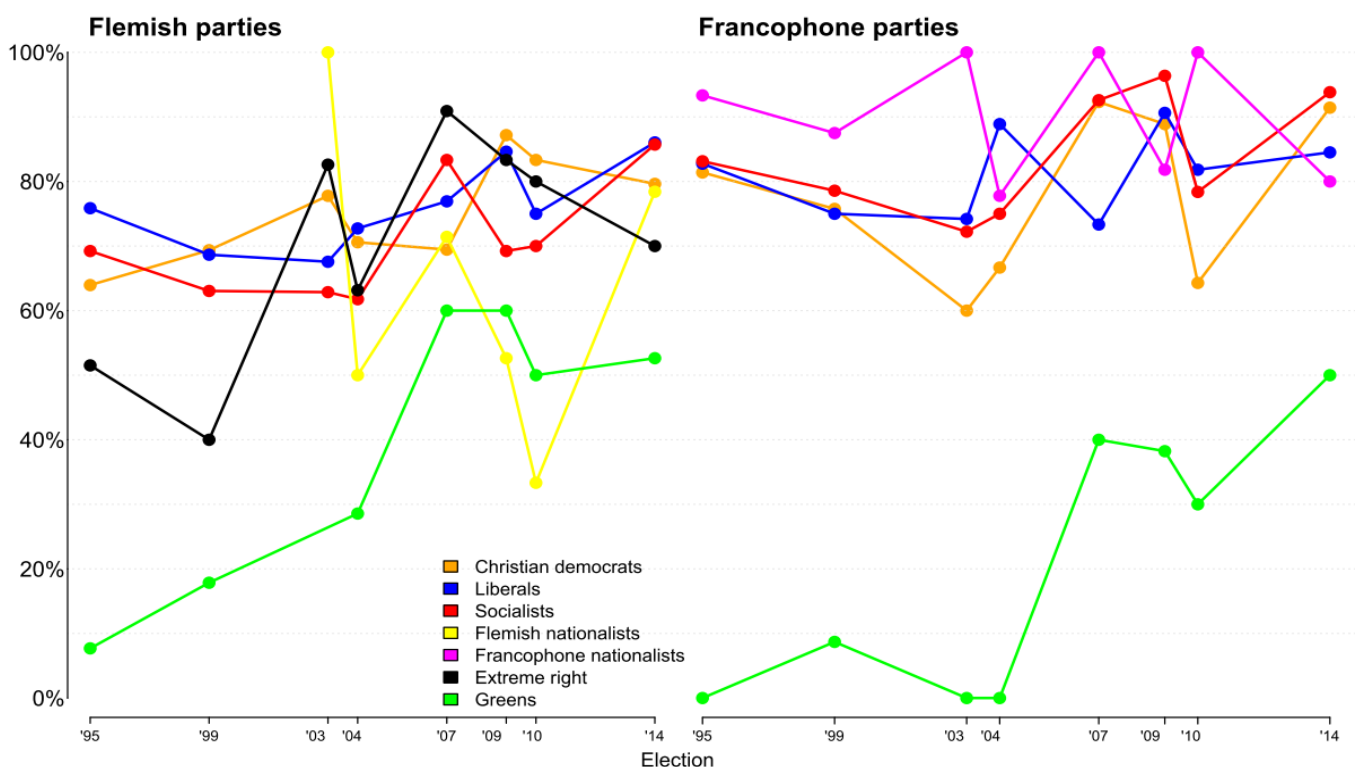
The exponential drops in 1999 and 2010 are caused by electoral swings, and more specifically by victories of new political parties. In 1999 the green and the right wing extremist party both made significant progress in federal and regional elections. Although they were successful on the (sub)national level, their local embeddedness was almost none existent. Therefore, the absolute majority of the new representatives had no local mandate, resulting in a decline of the total level of multiple office-holders. A similar effect occurs in 2010, when the restructured Flemish nationalist party wins the federal elections with more than 30% of the votes.

Figure 2. Percentage of municipal representatives per language group (1995 - 2014).



The second hypothesis assumed that the reach of double mandates would become more specific, oriented towards a local executive function. Figure 2 demonstrates that the frequency of a certain local mandate is dependent on the language group, but nevertheless is quite stable. For example, we see that most members of parliament are simultaneously municipal councillor in both language groups. Although francophone representatives opt more often for an executive position, compared to their Flemish colleagues, we cannot speak of a sharp increase. The electoral reforms of 2003 did seem to have an effect, albeit small. In Flanders, the expansion of electoral constituencies resulted in a growing number of ordinary councillor. Contrary to our assumptions, they are responsible for the intensification of multiple office-holding. In southern Belgium the amount of mayors has increased after 2003, while the number of aldermen has decreased. This could suggest that political parties in Wallonia expect the most electoral potential of a mayoral position. Yet, the effect is temporary as the amount of both executive functions seems to stabilize afterwards. To conclude, we did not find a general trend towards a more specific form of cumul, anchored in the local executive. If there was any impact of electoral reforms, it can only be discerned in Wallonia.

Figure 3. Percentage of multiple office-holder in each party, per language group (1995 - 2014).



H3a suggested that the amount of multiple office-holders would be higher in francophone and traditional parties. Previous figures already gave an impression of the distribution of

dual mandate-holders among language groups based on region. Although, caution is required. For example, figure 1 show federal representatives of the chamber and senate, but they are both populated by dutch and francophone politicians. Figure 3, on the other hand, brings a clear image of the evolution between the language groups and political parties. First, multiple office-holding is somewhat less frequent in Flanders, confirming hypothesis 3a. However, the trend is definitely increasing in both regions. In addition, the Flemish interparty variation is large and very volatile. We believe both are caused by electoral swings and the introduction of new parties. There seems to be an inverse relation between electoral success and the number of cumulards. When parties are victorious, new members get into parliament that often do not have a local function. When the results are disappointing, mostly experienced and incumbent cumulards get re-elected. Similarly, new parties seize their first win on the national or regional level and acquire parliamentary seats. In subsequent elections, they duplicate their success at the local level, allowing them to introduce more municipal councillors in the next national electoral strive. This explains the increasing trend of multiple office-holding in new parties. All Walloon parties have more dual mandate-holders compared to the average Flemish party, although the difference is small and decreased throughout time. Écolo, the green party in Wallonia, is the only exception.

Second, a first glance at figure 3 reveals that traditional pillar parties (Christian democrats, liberals and socialists) have more cumulards in their respective fractions compared to new parties. But when we take into account that new parties need time to translate national success into local success, and then back into national success, the differences are not that large. The Flemish extreme right party, green party and nationalist party all seem to copy the strategy of the traditional parties and try to include as many municipal representatives in their candidate lists. In general the degree of cumulards becomes more and more similar through time, although some discrepancies continue to exist. In Flanders, the three pillar parties still are on top of the cumul-list in 2014. In Wallonia, the picture could not have been more clear. The green party is nowhere near the level of multiple office-holders of the traditional ones. In short, even when accounting for nuances, new parties have less dual

	Rural commune	Urbanized commune	Urbanized centre	Regional city	mandate- holders.
Total number MP's	603	694	626	808	Table 1. Percentage of local
Percentage cumulards	66%	75%	72%	65%	
- Mayor	20%	32%	22%	5%	
- Alderman	15%	15%	17%	12%	
- Councillor	31%	28%	22%	48%	

representatives per municipal category (1995 – 2014).

Lastly, we found an inverse U relation between the degree of cumul and the municipal degree of urbanization. The later has been divided into four categories based on an extensive socio-economical typology of Belgian communes (Belfius, 2007), ranging from the smallest rural communes with few inhabitants and limited economical potential to regional cities that have plenty of both. The data in table 1 shows that members of parliament originating from rural communes or regional cities are less inclined to combine two mandates. MP's elected in urbanized communes or centres are far more likely to have a local function. Even more, the difference is most outspoken among mayors. Only 5% of city representatives are mayor, whereas 32% of representatives from smaller urbanized communes are mayor. The number of aldermen is almost equally distributed, but municipal councillors are more frequent among city and rural MP's to cover for their lack of executive cumulards. It is possible that executive functions in larger communes have a significantly higher workload, and therefore withhold them to combine several mandates. However, we want to stress that there are only 31 regional cities in the sample, which could overstate our results. The reduced level of cumul within small, rural communes is completely unexpected.

Conclusion

The results indicate that multiple office-holding is extremely widespread in Belgium. In addition, the phenomenon is still on the rise since regional parliaments were directly elected in 1995. After the last elections, four out of five Belgian representatives had a second local mandate. The type of local mandate, however, differs slightly among language groups. In the southern region, francophone representatives opt more frequently for an executive municipal function, primarily the one of mayor. In Flanders, municipal legislative councillors are clearly more popular. There is however no evolution towards an executive interpretation of the double mandate. The regional discrepancy is similar when considering political parties, where the francophone ones consistently have more cumulards. Also, traditional parties have more local councillors in their fractions, but new parties try to copy their strategies quickly. After their first national electoral success, they systematically include more municipal representatives in their parliamentary fractions. The only exception is the green francophone party (Écolo), where only half of the MP's accumulates. Lastly, the smallest and the largest communes have the least number of cumulards. Particularly mayors of regional cities are rarely found in parliament.

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