

Fanny Wille verdedigt haar doctoraat op maandag 6 juni 2011

De openbare verdediging tot het behalen van de academische graad van Doctor in de Politieke Wetenschappen van mevrouw Fanny Wille vindt plaats op maandag 6 juni 2011 om 15u30 in de Promotiezaal, gebouw D, 2de verdieping, lokaal D2.01, VUB-Campus Etterbeek.

De titel van het proefschrift luidt: "People seeking Power. A Qualitative Analysis of Local Coalition Formation in Belgium."

Promotor: Prof. dr. Kris Deschouwer en Prof. dr. Bruno Heyndels

Na de openbare verdediging volgt een receptie.

Gelieve uw aanwezigheid vóór 30 mei te bevestigen aan [fwille@vub.ac.be](mailto:fwille@vub.ac.be)

**Abstract:**

People seeking Power. A qualitative analysis of local coalition formation in Belgium

Coalition formation has been a favourite topic in political science research. It has led to many theoretical approaches and a lot of empirical studies. But despite all these efforts, several crucial questions remain unsolved and need attention.

The formation of coalitions is usually analyzed at the national level and is also theorized based on that same level. In this dissertation we focus at the local level of politics. By choosing the local level to conduct our research we wanted in the first place to get more easily access to the information to discover all the treasures and surprises of the so-called 'black box' of (local) coalition formation. We have explored the formation of coalitions after the local elections of 8 October 2006 in ten Flemish and ten Walloon municipalities and these twenty cases were the result of a maximum variation purposive sampling.

Our choice of methodology has been inspired by the different shortcomings and puzzles identified in the coalition literature. We therefore opted for a qualitative approach. The open interviews allowed us to dig deeper in and to reconstruct the way in which coalitions were formed. This dissertation thus tried in the first place to understand why some coalitions (at the local level) were formed and others were not and how local coalition formation really operates. The overall picture of our qualitative research - two major conclusions - is that the local level in Flanders and Wallonia is one of power-seeking actors in which persons are essential. The importance of personal relations is indeed quite striking. Personal sympathies and fine relationships can facilitate local coalition formation. Bad relationships and personal incidents however can be a real problem and burden local coalition formation. And very prominent and evident is the power-seeking ambition of almost all local parties and lists. That makes the local level a very 'insecure' environment in which persons seeking power need to make their strategic moves on time and thus often well ahead of the next elections.