(Re-)Assessing Political Careers Patterns in Multi-level systems

Insights from Wallonia

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ABSTRACT

The establishment of regional Parliaments in Western Europe has renewed the study of political careers. Since the beginning of the 21st century, an increasing number of – conceptual and empirical – studies have been published on political careers in multi-level systems. Despite the richness of the novel analytical approaches proposed, I argue that the current trend in the literature that consists to label a whole region (or even a country) as illustrations of integrated, alternative, or hierarchical careers pattern (might) produce an imperfect picture of the reality – or even worse, could lead to a misleading conclusion. I rather hypothesize that, within a single region, the possibility of multiple careers patterns has to be a priori considered: distinct professional political classes might co-exist. In this respect, two methodological elements must be integrated into the research design. Firstly, from a heuristic point of view, researchers should move from the (mere) analysis of level-hopping movements between two elections and rather adopt a microscopic point of view through the study of every single individual political careers (internal validity). Secondly, the cases under investigation should be selected only if they display a critical amount of legislatures in order to observe robust and non-contingent career patterns (external validity). For the sake of parsimony and clarity of my demonstration, I recourse to an in-depth case study – Walloon political careers – but cross-sectional research are certainly determinant to (in-)valid this hypothesis.

KEY WORDS: POLITICAL CAREERS, PROFESSIONAL POLITICAL CLASS, MULTI-LEVEL SYSTEMS, BELGIUM (WALLONIA).

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Introduction

The establishment of regional Parliaments in Western Europe has renewed the study of political careers. Since the beginning of the 21st century, an increasing number of conceptual and empirical studies have been published on political careers in multi-level systems. In the United Kingdom (UK), Spain, and Belgium (and to a lesser extent, in Italy and France), the transformed structure of opportunity of the formerly unitary state eventually results in the development of professional regional political spaces. The latter directly challenges the conventional assumption that ambition politicians move on the political ladder from the substate to the national layers. Recent findings demonstrate on the contrary that political careers can be characterized by opposite movements (from the national to the substate level), or simply prove the lack of hierarchy between territories. In some countries, ambitious politicians artfully find their path in the multi-level structure of opportunity. Both regional and national levels being equally attractive positions, a former national representative might run and win the substate elections and eventually come back to her primary office (those are defined as ‘integrated’ careers). At the opposite, the so-called ‘alternative’ pattern represents the case of a representative who purses his career at the mere regional or national level without ever moving to another assembly.

Despite the richness of these novel analytical approaches, I argue that the current trend in the literature that consists to label a whole region (or even a country) as illustrations of integrated, alternative, or hierarchical careers pattern might produce an imperfect picture of the reality – or even worse, could lead to a misleading conclusion. I rather hypothesize that, within a single region, distinct patterns might co-exist: a political class that display strong integrated patterns might ‘live’ along a second class of politicians who only have a career at the regional or national Parliament. The relative proportion of the distinct political classes surely varies across cases but the possibility of multiple patterns should be a priori considered and systemically assessed. To do so, two methodological elements must be integrated to obtain valid results. Firstly, from a heuristic point of view, researchers should move from the (mere) analysis of level-hopping movements between two elections and rather adopt a microscopic point of view through the study of every single individual political careers (internal validity); secondly, the cases under investigation should be selected only if they display a critical amount of legislatures in order to observe robust and non-contingent career patterns (external validity). The latter reason explains why this approach has been hitherto inapplicable in the new Western democracies as the emergence of professionalised regional political spaces is quite recent. Catalans vote for their national and regional representatives since 1980 in Spain, Scots have (re-)elected their regional MPs at the Scottish Parliament since 1999 in the UK while in Belgium, Flemish and Walloons directly elect their regional representatives since almost 20 years (since 1995). For the sake of parsimony and clarity of my demonstration, I however recourse to an in-depth case study – political careers in Wallonia – but cross-sectional research are certainly determinant to (in-)valid this hypothesis.

The first two sections introduce the literature review on political careers and expose to what extent a microscopic approach of political careers is required. Thirdly, I present the case selection and the methodology while in the fourth section I introduce the empirical findings that corroborate the co-existence of four careers patterns in Wallonia. Finally, I discuss the interest of the empirical results drawn from this single case study for international research on political careers and more generally, their crucial relevance for the study of regionalism and federalism.
(Re-)Assessing Political Careers Patterns in Multi-level Systems

1. Investigating Political Careers in Multi-Level Democracies: Literature Review

Until the end of the 20th century, in the wake of Schlesinger (1966)’s seminal work on the US Congressmen’s political careers, the substate level in multi-layered political systems was extensively considered as stepping stones toward the national level. The explanation appears at first glance intuitive: given the professionalisation of politics (Weber 1958), politicians animated by their “political ambition” aim to reach higher positions with more prestige and greater influence. This is the “unidirectional hypothesis” (Stolz 2003, 224): based on a cost-benefit calculation, US local politicians evaluate their interest to run for elections at the state legislatures, and if they cannot, rather than moving down, they at least seek to hold as long as possible their current offices. The most ambitious and successful of them will seek to enter the Congress or the Senate whilst a tiny minority of them would even run for presidential elections. Definitely, “political careers do not proceed chaotically. There are patterns of movement from office to office” (Schlesinger 1966, 118). The emergence of these patterns is thus not the product of chance but results from the evaluation of a given institutional architecture – i.e. the “structure of opportunity” – by ambitious political candidates. In other words, is it worth to take a run for higher offices or not?

Although the unidirectional pattern is still a contemporary observable reality in the US1, the cost-benefit calculation approach suggests that distinct structures of opportunity (might) produce diverse patterns of political careers. Yet, the unidirectional hypothesis has been often theoretically assumed and not systemically investigated from an empiric perspective. On the one hand, the national bias present in most research has tended to overlook the predominance of the state level without scrupulously comparing the later with substate level careers patterns. On the other hand, most studies have focused on single institutions, be it national or regional Parliaments. Paradoxically, there was more cross-sectional comparative research than intra-case studies. The result was that even in studies on ‘classic’ federations – Germany, Australia, Canada, and US – with strong substate institutions, there was not comprehensive analysis of the linkages between levels (Gallagher and Marsh 1988; Rush 1994; Norris 1995, 1997; Best and Cotta 2000). According to Deschouwer (2001, 4-10), “the state structure is taken for granted, together with the centrality of the federal level” and “the direct link between federal states and career studies […] is missing”.

Since the 2000s, this gap is nevertheless being reduced. In formerly unitary states such as Belgium, Spain or the UK, and to a lesser extent in Italy and France, the creation of regional institutions with authoritative powers has indeed profoundly altered the structures of opportunity in Western democracies. Contrary to long-established federations in which the substate legislatures co-exist with the national Parliament since the creation of the federation, the regional Parliaments are the results of strong nationalist and regionalist demands. Those specific events certainly contributed to renewed approaches of careers patterns. Heuristically, investigating political careers in those new structures of opportunity constitutes indeed a great opportunity to (in-)validate the hierarchic unidirectional pattern. Furthermore, Scottish, Welsh, Irish, Walloons, Flemish, Catalans, Basques…they all fought to see the establishment of ‘their’ Parliaments. Far from being arenas for political amateurs, the regional levels constitute indeed genuine spaces for professional politics (Borchert 2001; 5; Carter and Pasquier 2010). It is therefore reasonable that assume that “regionalism matters for professional careers” (Stolz 2001; 2011, 224). Yet, regionalism is a necessary but not sufficient condition: the analysis of the effects of the structure of opportunity remains to be processed to really appreciate how emerge careers patterns. Following Borchert (2011), the cost-benefit calculation that individual politicians make is hence based on a threefold evaluation of its institutional environ-

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1 More than half of all Congressmen were former members of state legislature in 2010 while it would be hardly likely to see the election of a US President that does not have former experience at the substate level.
Assessing Political Careers Patterns in Multi-level systems

Stolz (2003)’s cross-sectional research of political careers was the first international comparison to truly integrate the territorial dynamics in ten multi-level democracies². Certainly the most important finding is that even though the unidirectional hierarchical pattern is still relevant to analyse political careers in some regions or countries, it is not the mere road to offices. Other models exist. Based on the magnitude and direction of movements between territorial levels – be it centrifugal (from the national to regional levels) or centripetal (from the regional to the national) – the author identified eventually four distinct patterns (see figure 1). The first category of career patterns is characterized by the hierarchy of levels of government: in addition to the “classic springboard” model in which national offices represent the highest level, there is the “inverse springboard” for which substate levels represent the desired positions. The main feature of these patterns is thus the unidirectional path followed by politicians: there is a clear-cut division of prestige and influence between substate and national offices and ambitions candidates aim to move to those offices. In this respect, the two patterns expose a high centripetal (classic springboard) or high centrifugal ratios (inverse springboard) associated with low movements in the (considered) inferior level of government (perceived as moving down on the political ladder). As previously mentioned, the US is still a good illustration of the classic springboard while examples for the inverse springboard are certainly odder.

Figure 1. Stolz’s Matrix of Career Patterns in Multi-Level Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High Centripetal Ratios</th>
<th>Low Centripetal Ratios</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Centrifugal Ratios</td>
<td>Classic Springboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Centrifugal Ratios</td>
<td>Integrated Careers</td>
</tr>
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</table>

The second category of careers pattern is also hierarchically oriented but not in a particular direction (alternative careers): both levels of government are evaluated as professional “spaces for politics” – depending on how each individual value these levels. Contrary to the existence of a unique political class in the hierarchic models, in the alternative careers pattern one can observe the emergence of a national political class as well as a regional political class. The main characteristic is thus a strong territorial divide associated with large sphere of autonomy at each level while there is a very low ratio of movements between regional and national institutions. This is for instance the case of Scotland (Stolz 2010, 2011): Scottish politicians’ level-hopping movements are very rare, either to Holyrood or Westminster.

² Australia, Austria, Canada, Switzerland, the United States and Germany (in which Landers of East and West Germany are distinguished), Belgium, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom.
Finally, the last category – the integrated careers pattern – is the only pattern that does not expose a clear-cut hierarchy because both the substate and regional institutions are viewed as fairly attractive. Therefore, if a national parliamentarian has a better chance to hold an office in a substate institution than keeping her mandate at the national assembly (and reversely); it is worth moving from a level to another. This absence of strong territorial boundaries explains the large proportion of level-hopping movements in both directions: high centripetal and high centrifugal ratios. Spain and Belgium are often cited as good empirical examples of the integrated careers pattern (Fiers 2001; Vanlangenakker 2009; Stolz 2010, 2011; Dandoy, Dumont, and Verzichelli 2011). While Stolz’s matrix is very useful to appreciate inter-territory movements, the four boxes can be grouped into three categories as the classic spring-board and the inverse spring-board can be merged into a single model: the unidirectional model (towards the sub-state or the national levels). This is Borchert’s triptych classification exposed in figure 3. Despite the richness of these novel analytical approaches, I argue that some dimensions could be improved and eventually provide a better understanding of our empirical analysis of political careers.

**Figure 3.** Borchert’s Triad Classification of Careers Patterns

![Triad Classification of Careers Patterns](image)

2. **(Re-)Assessing Political Careers Patterns**

By systematically exploring the strength and weakness of the inter-territory linkages in political careers patterns, not only did these new trend of research permit to contest the conventional assumption that politicians move up on the political ladder in a unidirectional path but it also enables to renew political careers patterns. This is the case in new regionalised and federalised democracies but the patterns can also (re-)assessed in long-established federations (e.g. Canada or Germany). Indeed, we can now rely on comparative as well as in depth-case longitudinal studies whilst most research now integrate legislative and executive careers.

Cross-sectional and intra-case approaches are of a crucial importance to qualify careers pattern: there is unfortunately no ‘magic’ or given threshold of (level-hopping) movements to conclude whether a political careers is alternative or integrated. Only the recourse to a standard of comparison can truly do it. This can be a comparative research between several regional Parliaments within a single country – the main advantage is that a certain variables are kept constant (Lijphart 1971) – and/or various assemblies can be compared across distinct countries. From those comparisons, the findings can be that a unique careers pattern is identifiable within a single country – e.g. Belgian and Spanish political careers are considered as in line with the integrated model – or distinct patterns may exist within the same country – e.g. in Canada, we observe across the Provinces that alternative careers co-exist with class springboard. Again, all depends on the structure of opportunity of the regions/countries under scrutiny (offices ‘available’, ease of ‘accessibility’, level of ‘attractiveness’).
Of course, those models are ideal-types (in the Weberian sense) applied to countries or to one or several regions: the pattern identified is thus the dominant trend identified comparatively to others regions or state. Yet, the region or country’s careers pattern identified should not overlook the plurality of possible political actors’ behaviour. This is substantially one of the Borchert and Stolz (2011, 276)’s conclusion based on the comparative analysis of political path in six countries (Special Issue of Regional & Federal studies):

Clearly, in order to really speak of a dominant pattern, within-case variance (between different groups of politicians) should not exceed across-case variance (between politicians in different political systems). A brief glance at our six cases again suggests that, while there is variance within all of our cases, the patterns that have been detected exhibit relatively high levels of general validity.

Yet, the fact that the unit of analysis to describe career patterns remains largely based upon the level-hopping movements does not permit to fully obtain the internal validity of the findings. Concretely, in the case of an alternative career, the absence of movements is a necessary but not sufficient condition: can we really speak of a regional or national class if the assembly is made of a huge proportion of newly elected MPs at almost all elections. In this case, it would be more appropriate to speak of short-lived or ‘discrete’ political careers and questions the notion of professional political class. This is even more problematic in the case of integrated careers as researchers are tempted to overlook the importance of movements: if there is high and equal proportion of inter-territory movements, the region or the countries under scrutiny is found to expose integrated careers. However, it might be also very likely that for a significant percentage of politicians, we find alternative features complementary to the integrated pattern. One does not exclude the other. The internal homogeneity is thus not only related to across case variance between political parties as suggest Borchert and Stolz (2011), but also brings on the table the question of intra-case variance between individuals. In other words, based on individual careers observation, we classify careers pattern along profiles of “professional political class” (Borchert and Golsch 1995), rather than according to a single region and/or country.

In order to evaluate whether or not the same region expose distinct patterns, it request two methodological precautions. Firstly, researchers have to recourse to individual political careers as unit of analysis. This is clearly the conclusion drawn by Borchert (Borchert 2011, 136-7): future research should “takes individual political careers as its unit of analysis and follows them over time, through different institutions and across territorial boundaries”. It implies to switch from a macro perspective with a sequential approach (description of group movements between levels from one election to the next one) to a systematic individual and diachronic approach (see figure 2).

**Figure 2. Models of Analysis for Political Careers**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Macro-sequential approach</th>
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<tr>
<td>Elections C t&lt;sub&gt;0&lt;/sub&gt; → Elections R t&lt;sub&gt;1&lt;/sub&gt; → Elections C t&lt;sub&gt;2&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
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<td><strong>Unit of analysis = group movements</strong></td>
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<th>Individual- diachronic approach</th>
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<td>Elections C t&lt;sub&gt;0&lt;/sub&gt; ←→ Elections R t&lt;sub&gt;1&lt;/sub&gt; ←→ Elections C t&lt;sub&gt;2&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Unit of analysis = individual political careers</strong></td>
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Furthermore, it is not solely the ‘parliamentarian’ dimensions of the political career but the whole ‘political’ aspects that should to be taken into account. The local, regional, federal, and European levels (for Western democracies) at both legislative and executive levels should be systematically evaluated. And to obtain a comprehensive picture, the research should also integrate politicians’ attributes (geographical origins, age, and gender are good starting points for instance). For the latter, the reason is quite obvious: legal as well as intra-party organisation refrains or, on the contrary, promotes certain profiles of candidates (e.g. gender quota or younger and fresher candidates). Taking individual as unit of analysis – instead of movements – has been hitherto barely explored in the literature (see however Herzog 1975; Vanlangenakker 2009; Vanlangenakker and Maddens 2011), but it constitutes certainly a very promising path of research.

The second methodological condition relates to cases selection. In the new regionalised and federalised democracies, the limited numbers of legislatures has until very recently prevent from assessing the emergence (or not) of various careers patterns. The reason is simple: based on the magnitude and direction of movements, a study may certainly assume that a region or a state display strong characteristic of integrated, alternative or unidirectional patterns. However, it would be more difficult to speak of complementary patterns without a critical mass of data. Indeed, presuming that a regional alternative careers pattern co-exists with a strong integrative careers model request a substantive duration of ‘regional political life’ – a certain amount of regional legislatures. Otherwise, this is the external validity that would be here weakened due to the restricted sample of political careers under scrutiny. This fact also explains the methodological constrains faced by previous researchers. From now on, we hopefully access to sufficient data to test the hypothesis that a single region can display distinctive careers pattern. As the next section introduces it, I here recourse to a single in-depth case-study (career patterns in Wallonia) to explore this hypothesis.

3. Methodology and Dataset

Case selection

Since 1995, the two main Belgian communities – the Walloons and the Flemish – directly elect their regional members (MRPs) at the Walloon and Flemish Parliaments3 while they still vote for federal representatives (MFPs) at the Chamber of Representatives and the Senate. The direct regional elections were considered at that moment as (one of) the concretization of the process of federalization that started in 19704. Along with the direct elections of regional Parliaments, the 1993 fourth constitutional reform introduced indeed the new first article stating that “Belgium is a federal State composed of Communities and Regions”.

For the sake of clarity of the demonstration, I however only focus on the Walloon politicians in this paper. Moreover, considering that the electoral volatility is significantly higher in Flanders than in Wallonia – because of a highly fragmented party system – the evidences of the co-existence of distinct careers patterns will be clearer in Wallonia (it is more likely to have for instance alternative careers if the turnover is lower). The reason of the fragmentation is – largely – due to ethno-regional parties, not the electoral system (Swenden, Brans, and De Winter 2006, 870). Indeed, both Regions use the same electoral system: a PR open-list system

3 Since 1970s and until 1993, national MPs had a ‘dual mandate’: primarily elected as national MPs, they also composed the Flemish and Walloon regional assemblies while the Brussels-Capital Parliament had direct elected offices since 1993 and the German-speaking Community Parliament since 1974 (see XX).

4 Until the 1990s, the ‘regionalization’ process was rather perceived as mean to the settle the ‘community conflict’ but not a finality itself (Deschouwer 2009).
which means that electors can vote for the party ordered list or for specific candidates on this list. However, contrary to the presence of strong ethno-regionalist parties in Flanders, the historic Walloon regionalist party – Rassemblement Wallon (RW) – is not represented anymore in any parliament since 1981. However, it does not suggest that the regional cleave totally vanished in Wallonia. “Victim of its own success”, the regionalist Walloon movement (and its ‘political personal’) was rather “structurally and programmatically” absorbed by traditional political forces (Van Haute and Pilet 2006, 310) – i.e. mainly by the socialists (PS), but also by the liberals (MR), and the Christian Democrats (cdH) while the Greens (Ecolo) replaced the RW at the same as the major ‘protest’ party in Wallonia. There are thus only four major parties\(^5\) regularly represented in the assembly and no distinction between the federal and regional levels: there is a single – regionalised – party system in Wallonia (Brack and Pilet 2010). A final consideration to select Wallonia as a case study is that the Belgium’s southern region is the “lesser-known counterpart of Flanders” (Van Ginderachter and Leerssen 2012) even though it brings very interesting findings on careers patterns as I will demonstrate.

**Hypothesis and methods**

According to previous research (Fiers 2001; Pilet, Fiers, and Steyvers 2007; Vanlangenakker, Maddens, and Put 2010), there is a “strong evidence that career patterns in Belgium are in line with the ‘integrated careers’ model”. The aim of this paper is precisely to see whether there is a mere pattern observable or complementary ones. To test the hypothesis, I explore every single individual politician that, at a time or another, had a seat in the Walloon Parliament, the federal Parliament (Chamber and Senate) and the European Parliament. Overall, it concerns 420 individual political careers (317 men and 103 women) since 1991 federal elections and 1995 regional elections. For each individual career, I coded the 1° age, 2° gender, 3° constituency, 4° party affiliation, the political mandates at the 5° local, 6° regional, 7° federal, and 8° European levels; and finally, the experiences in 9° regional government and/or 10° federal government.

The 1991 elections represent the last elections of MFPs and constitutes, therefore, the starting point of the inquiry as some of them moved from the federal Parliament to the Walloon Parliament after the 1995 first regional elections. The data collected cover thus the period that started in 1991 until June 2012. Over this period, I scrupulously registered every movement within and between Parliaments (because of succession, resignation, level-hopping movements...) at elections time and during the four regional Walloon legislatures, the five European legislatures and six federal elections. These movements precisely explain that the number of MPs per legislature exceeds the number of seats available but not only. If there is a fixed number of offices in the Walloon Parliament (75) and at the House of Commons for the Walloon constituencies (48 seats)\(^6\), the situation is a bit more fuzzy for the senatorial seats: it is hence impossible to define \textit{a priori} the number of seats that will be granted to Walloon Senators.

\(^5\) Populist and xenophobic political parties – be it the FN or the PP – are the fifth kind of frequently, albeit not always, political parties represented in the federal or Walloon Parliament.

\(^6\) Due to the demographic evolutions, there are 49 seats since 1999 elections There were 69 available seats in 1991 but reduced after the fourth constitutional reform of 1993 consequently to the direct elections MRP. Maps and data: (Renard and Dodeigne 2012; Dodeigne and Binard 2012). Therefore, I do not include the Brussels seats from the Brussels-Hal-Vilvorde district as I only focus on Walloon political careers.
Table 1. Walloon MEPS, MFPs, and MRPs’ Political Careers Analysed

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<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>91-95</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95-99</td>
<td>89 MRPs</td>
<td>95-99</td>
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<tr>
<td>99-04</td>
<td>98 MRPs</td>
<td>99-03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04-09</td>
<td>92 MRPs</td>
<td>03-07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09-14</td>
<td>89 MRPs</td>
<td>07-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>10-10</td>
<td>13 S/58 CH</td>
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Data gathered until 11 June 2012.
Source: Compilation by author based on reports published by the respective Parliaments; local mandates completed with biographical encyclopaedia of Walloon Parliamentarians (Delforge 2010).

Indeed, among the 15 Francophone ‘directly elected senators’, some of them are Walloon and other come from Brussels-Capital. Depending on the confection of the list of candidates by the political parties at each senatorial election, there are more or less Walloon candidates that have chance to be elected in the upper chamber of the federal Parliament. The situation is identical concerning the four ‘co-opted’ Francophone senators. The variance in the number of Walloon members at the European Parliament (MEPs) has exactly the same explanation: out of the eight seats allowed to the Francophones, the effective number of Walloons or Brussels representative sent to the European Parliament depends on the political parties and electors’ behaviour.

Having introduced the date used for the purpose of this paper, I now present how I will validate (or not) the hypothesis of co-existence of career patterns within a single region – i.e. the variety of political class. I particularly focus on three indicators:

- **At the 2010 federal elections:** I consider a the possibility of federal alternative careers. After five federal elections in the new institutional architecture established in 1995, how many MPs did pursue a career at the federal Parliament without ever moving to the Walloon or European Parliament? And, for how long did they have a seat at this level government? Since the first 1995 regional elections, we can really observe ‘actors playing with the new rules of the games’.

- **At the 2009 Walloon regional elections:** I here calculate the proportion of MRPs with a regional alternative career. In line with the criteria used for the federal alternative career, I only consider regional Walloon politicians that have been holding an office at the regional level solely. It implies that all MRPs presenting level-hopping movements since 1995 – as parliamentarian or to be called in the federal government (including the European Parliament) – are not considered for the alternative regional career. Besides, the period covered goes until June 2012 to evaluate any level-hopping since the last 2009 regional elections (for instance, movements after the 2010 federal elections or after the formation of the federal Government in December 2011).

- **During the 1991-2012 period:** parallel to the evaluation of the existence of possible alternative careers, I also aim at reassessing the consensus about the Belgium’s integrated career pattern (Pilet, Fiers, and Steyvers 2007; Fiers 2001; Vanlangenakker, Maddens, and Put 2010). Undoubtedly, the magnitude and the direction of level-
hopping movements tend to confirm the existence of this model in Wallonia. However, analysing who are responsible for these movements is crucial. Indeed, in case of a large proportion of level-hopping movements due to a very restricted number of politicians does not have the same ‘taste’ if, at the opposite, all movements are the result of many distinct politicians. In this respect, the more the movements are due to the same politicians, the more integrated character of this political class is pronounced but the smaller the integrated political class is. So far, the electoral cycles have produced six possible inter-territory ‘corridors’ (but changes remain observable during sessions if a MRP or MFP is called into the federal or regional Government). Except for the 1995 and 1999 elections for which there were joint federal, regional and European elections, there is no vertical simultaneity between the federal and regional/European elections. However regional and European are systematically organised simultaneously. Considering the latter observation, and for the sake of parsimony, I do not present in the rest of the paper the European elections. However, I carefully take into account level-hopping movements from or towards the European level.

4. Analysis of The Results: Political Classes’ Career Patterns in Wallonia

The results presented in the figure 4 can be read at three levels. The middle life-time shows the integrated career pattern and the small arrows in between two elections represent the MPs who moved from a level to another (i.e. the level-hopping movements). The upper life-time represents the number of MFPs with (federal) alternative careers while the lower life-time exposes the amount of MRPs with a (regional) alternative career. For these latter two life-times, as previously mentioned, the calculation is based on the more recent elections to obtain a critical mass of data.

What conclusions can we draw from this figure? At first glance, in line with existing research on Walloon political careers, it is right to state that the integrated pattern has indeed strong empirical evidences in view of the 105 level-hopping movements. Yet, considering the special political event of the first Walloon elections, the primary regional elections that saw 50 MFPs elected in 1991 moving from the federal to the regional have to be distinguished from the others level-hoppers (i.e. 1995-2012 period). Of course, the notorious high magnitude of level-hopping movements for the first regional elections calls out to interrogation: 69.3 per cent of all the seats were occupied by MRPs with former federal experience (see table 2). In comparison to other Western countries, the percentage is in fact notoriously higher: they were for instance only 12.6 and 18.6 per cent of former national MPs in Catalonia (1980) and Scotland (1999) at the first regional sessions (Stolz 2011, 229). The conclusion remains true if one adopts another perspective: it is indeed worth distinguishing the “institution-oriented import perspective” (the number of MRPs with federal experience) from the “actor-oriented export perspective” (the MFPs who left for regional Parliament). In the latter case, 33.9 per cent of all the Walloon MFPs who left the federal Parliament for the Walloon Parliament is again higher than in Catalonia (24.6) and in Scotland (20.6).
Figure 4. Number of alternative and integrated careers (1991-2012)

Key
* The 55 level-hopping movements are however due to solely 39 individual politicians.
Federal elections (F) __ __ __. Regional/EU elections (R/EU) .................. Joint federal/regional/EU elections __________
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Table 2. First Composition of the Walloon Parliament
(At elections time and at the end of the session)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Representatives (N)</th>
<th>Percentages (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Import Perspective</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRPs with experience in federal Parliament</td>
<td>52 (41) of 75</td>
<td>69.3 (54.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Export Perspective</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MFPs who left for the Walloon Parliament</td>
<td>50 (38) of 112</td>
<td>44.6 (33.9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Numbers and Percentages into brackets represent ratio at the end of the session In addition to the 50 level-hoppers identified, the 52 Walloon representatives with national experience also integrate individuals that held historically an office at the federal Parliament but not during the 1991-1995 federal legislatures prior to the first 1995 regional elections.

This picture is nevertheless slightly different when the composition of the Parliament is considered at the end of the legislature rather that at the elections time (number into brackets in table 2), the reason is largely due to Ministerial appointments (at the moment, a representation ceases to seat during her executive mandate). Still, even though the proportion of Walloon MRPs with national experience (import point of view) decreased to 54.36 per cent whilst, from the export perspective, the percentage of MFPs who left is reduced by more than 10 per cent to reach 33.9 per cent. Yet, the disparities with the Scottish or Catalonian cases remain to be explained. The analysis of the structure of opportunity is here relevant: this is the ‘relative proportion’ of seats at stakes between the federal and the regional Parliaments that creates this huge percentages – i.e. relating to the three A’s theory, one should look at the seats availability. For instance, there were 72 Scottish Westminster seats and 129 at Holyrood that creates a ratio of 0.56 in 1999. In other words, even though all the Scottish MPs had moved to the Scottish Parliament, the latter would have been composed at the maximum of a short majority of level-hopping MPs. At the opposite, there were 112 Walloon federal seats – 69 deputies and 43 senators, including co-the provincial (5) and co-opted (4) members7 – but only 75 regional seats and consequently, the ratio is completely reversed (1.73). Because the total number of Walloon seats was reduced by around 50 per cent at the Federal Parliament in 1995 (see data section), there was at that moment a political class representing almost twice the size of the Walloon Parliament. The structure of opportunity thus largely explains the higher percentages of MRPs with an experience in the federal Parliament.

Even when leaving aside the specificity of the large cohort of level-hoppers at the first Walloon elections, 55 inter-territory movements between 1995 and 2012 still must be taken into account. Their magnitude and direction (28 from Walloon to federal Parliament; 27 the other way around) have been perceived as strong evidences to qualify Wallonia as a good illustration of a Region with an integrated careers pattern. Comparatively to other Western regions (Flanders in Belgium but also Catalonia in Spain), those proportions are indeed very similar. However, as I mentioned earlier, the calculation of movements between assemblies should not overlook who are causing these ways and returns. From this analytical lens – this implies to take individual careers, not the movements, as the unit of analysis – the number

7 Actually, the number of seats is even higher if one considers the co-opted Provincial Senators (28).
‘55’ drops to 39. And although it remains substantial, the difference is also relevant (minus 29.1 per cent). What are the profiles of these level-hoppers? There are 30 men and 9 women (which means that there is no under- or over- gender representation considering the overall proportion of women in the 420 careers analysed, namely 24.5 per cent). Furthermore, the fact that there are 21 PS, 10 cdH, 8MR and none Ecolo while 29 of them come from two specific geographical area (Provinces of Liège and Hainaut) tell us something about the dynamic. But more crucially, almost half of the 55 level-hopping movements (43.6 per cent) are due to only 9 politicians.

But before moving to this, it remains to appreciate whether or not other careers patterns are observable. And in fact, although there are 39 individuals with an integrated career, we complementary observe on figure 4 that 34 politicians display the characteristics of an alternative career pattern. It is worth reminding that these 34 politicians – of whom 19 have a ‘federal’ alternative career and 15 have ‘regional’ alternative career – never had an experience at another level of government (be it in Belgium or at the European level), either as Parliamentarian or member of the executive. Besides, I only considered the individual careers with (at least) three mandates in the countdown of federal and regional alternative careers (see table 3). Why three mandates?

Table 3. Number of Mandates of MPs with Alternative Careers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Federal alternative career until 2010</th>
<th>Federal alternative career until 2012</th>
<th>Regional alternative career until 2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>≥3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12 (M=4.14)</td>
<td>19 (M=4.22)</td>
<td>15 (M=3.64)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Firstly, the mean of political experience in the federal or Walloon Parliaments is systematically under or near to two mandates (from 1.8 to 2.2 mandates). Taking an indicator of (at least) three is thus a prudent standing point of view, as it constitutes the number of elections superior to the mean. The latter is reinforced by a second factor, especially for MRPs with an alternative career: I already mention and explain why the 1995 Walloon Parliament was largely composed of representatives with a former federal experience (54.6 per cent) at the end of the session. And, considering the duration of their previous federal experience (the mean is of 2.52 mandates of four years, around 10 years of political experience) associated with the physical age (26.6 per cent reach the age of pension at the end of the session while the mean age was of 52.4 years old), it is not surprising to observe that 29 out of the first 75 MRPs (38.6 per cent) did not have any regional, federal or European offices post – comparatively, there were 37.7% of the 61 MFPs. In addition to these two first elements, it is important to bear in mind that even though the electoral volatility is not very high in Wallonia, candidates must run and win the elections. In other words, being able to accumulate a unique alternative
experience of at least three mandates (the mean duration is of 3.65 at the Walloon Parliament and 4.22 at the Federal Parliament), without never moving between levels, is thus a strong evidence of alternative political class – be it regional or federal.

Finally, I also considered the 2007 federal elections for the existence of a federal alternative careers pattern since the 2010 federal elections have been anticipatory organised resulting in a much lower turnover (20.97) in comparison to other federal elections (from 25.9 to 46.9 per cent). The reason is simple: political parties did reselect more than usually their incumbents MFPs to set up their list of candidates due to the restricted period allowed for the electoral campaign. Without denying the relevance of the federal alternative political class, this information should be kept in mind.

Once we catalogue the composition of the two professional political classes identified so far – 39 integrated, 34 alternative split into 19 federal alternative and 15 regional alternative careers – one could put into perspective their representativeness within the overall 420 careers that covers the 1991-2012 period. Indeed, once we totalize all the careers of the three patterns identified (39+34, N=73), the extreme majority of political paths is thus logically composed of individuals that never caused level-hopping movements and less than three mandates at the regional or federal levels (the criterion used to qualify an alternative career). In other words, the last and larger category of Walloon careers is made of short-lived experiences at either the regional or federal level (figure 5). Methodologically, it would be however difficult to assess whether the on-going careers will turn into integrated (e.g. current MRPs who would move to the federal Parliament) or alternative (e.g. actual MFPs that would experience a third mandate at the next 2014 elections). It follows that the status of 122 political careers (29.05%) remains indecisive, only future elections would permit to qualify those careers. It is on the contrary prudent and methodologically valid to consider those who have now firmly stop their political career at the regional, federal or European levels.

**Figure 5. Repartition of Political Classes on the Overall Population of MPs**

Those represent what I qualify the discrete political career class. And interestingly, not only does Wallonia present more than a mere careers pattern, but the discrete careers pattern actually encompasses the overwhelming majority of all the individual careers since 1991. I
hitherto promoted the definition of careers pattern along (professional) political class, but this element critically raises the question of whether or not the individuals with a discrete profile can be labelled as professional politicians considering their short lived parliamentary experiences (the mean is under 2 mandates). Politicians with integrated or alternative careers concentrate on the contrary a fairly high level of professionalisation. However, a discrete experience at the parliamentary level should not be confused with Schlesinger (1966)’s “discrete ambition”. Indeed, once we take into account the representatives’ attributes (and particularly geographical origins together with local mandates); the dichotomous professional-unprofessional profile debate shapes another way.

A large proportion of MPs’ discrete profile had indeed a local executive office – with often strong grassroots – prior to their election in the Walloon or federal Parliament. A local position they held during their parliamentary mandate (simultaneity of offices) while most of them return to these municipal offices at the end of their Parliamentary experience. Considering the attractiveness and the professionalised status of most of these municipal mandates, we can undoubtedly speak of discrete political profile but certainly not of non-professional political class: they are not parliamentary-oriented professional class, but they together form a genuine local-oriented professional political career.

5. Discussion

Based on this picture, it is clear that I have to dig deeper and that I need more than ‘numbers’ but a comprehensive analysis of political actors’ behaviour(s) into the Belgian structure of opportunity to explain Walloon careers paths. Only this analysis would enable to explain how and why emergence political classes. The aim of this paper was not to provide such comprehensive analysis. But based on biographical interviews, complemented by semi-directed interviews in face to face or through telephone as well as study of political parties’ internal regulations, it is certain that the (semi-) open-list PR electoral system, candidate selection processes, the regionalised Walloon party system, the magnitude of electoral district and its variations across levels of government, legal restrictions (e.g. gender restriction) or party’s internal regulations (e.g. age, geographical origins, etc.) at together at play and frame an ambitious candidate’s political career.

The main objective of this paper was to test whether or not multiple career profiles might co-exist within a single region country. Contrary to the current trend of the literature that mainly draws conclusions based on level-hopping movements between elections and across levels, I think that researcher should adopt a more microscopic view and systematically recourse to individual careers as unit of analysis – i.e. moving from a macro-sequential perspective to an individual-diachronic approach. It follows that career patterns should be primarily identified along political classes and associated to a single region only if there is a single career pattern identified. This microscopic standing point, albeit time consuming in data collection, is thus of crucial importance for internal validity of the findings. This conclusion is very clear based on the analysis of Wallonia.

Not only do other career patterns co-exist along the already identified integrated careers pattern, but the integrated careers pattern is quantitatively equivalent to the federal/regional alternative careers profile. However, the discrete parliamentary profile represents the overwhelming majority of the careers observed which leads me to establish two kinds of profes-
sional classes. Parliamentary-oriented careers (regional/federal alternative and integrated careers) and Local-oriented careers (that composes most of the discrete profile).

Nevertheless, those profiles remain ideal-types in the Weber’s word: “An ideal type is formed by the one-sided accentuation of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent concrete individual phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified analytical construct” (Weber 1949 [1904] 90). In this respect, there is a continuum between profiles rather than a dichotomy. To be sure, the 39 integrated careers presented on the figure 6 – the X-axis represents the number of Walloon regional mandates and the Y-axis the number of federal mandates – spread from the 0 corner to the upper-right case.

**Figure 6. Scattergraph of Integrated Careers**

The first plain blue circle illustrates the most “integrated” individuals of the integrated political class: those are the 9 individuals concentrating almost 50 per cent of all the level-hopping movements for the 1995-2012 period. Quite unsurprisingly, they are the ‘big names’ in the political parties: mainly ministers moving from a level to another to attract voters’ ballots with popular figures. On the other hand, the below circle shows that some MPs stay more or less long at the regional level (lower-right red points) or at the federal level (upper-left red points). In other words, some MPs tend to reveal an “alternative” profile while those very close to zero on the graphic tend to present a more “discrete” profile. From a conceptual perspective, I thus think that the figure 7 better grasps the reality of political careers taking into account individuals as unit of analysis. Firstly, the federal alternative profile ideal-type is at the extreme opposite of the regional alternative profile (the ‘capitalisation’ of political experience is at its maximum at the two distinct levels of government without any experience at another level).
Secondly, the discrete ideal-type with a minimal parliamentary experience at both levels of government is in total opposition to the integrated profile in which on the contrary MPs maximise their political experience at the two levels – virtually, this MP would move from a Parliament to another at each election. Finally, this figure must be seen as a continuum: between the four ideal-types we find the 420 individual careers I have analysed. On this matter, I already proved that a majority of the careers under scrutiny (discrete careers profile) would be concentrated in the lower-left corner, 15 careers would be on the lower-right case, 19 on the upper-left case, and the 39 integrated have already been presented on the Scattergraph (figure 6). I also wish to recall that this individual approach is only applicable for cases with a substantive number of elections: this is the reason I do not yet situate the current careers as they could turn into federal or regional alternative careers (if minimum three mandates), evolved towards an integrated pattern or will have no ‘future’ at the Parliament (discrete profile).

**Conclusion**
Basques, Catalans, Scots, Welsh, Irish, Walloons or Flemish are often presented as (quite) homogenous and unitary actors in the literature on Western European politics. The study on political careers is not an exception to this trend. In most studies, those regions are regularly associated with a *unique* careers pattern: for instance, Catalonia, Flanders and Wallonia display integrated pattern while Scotland has an alternative model. Although a unique careers pattern might exist within a region, my analysis of the Walloon case also proves that the co-existence of multiple careers profiles should not be *a priori* underestimated. Adopting a microscopic analytical point view of political careers, which implies an individual and diachronic approach, enables therefore to get a more nuanced and diversified picture of the political classes.

In this respect, the Walloon alternative and integrated profiles are the two parliamentary-oriented professional classes but constitute a minority of politicians in the overall 420 indi-
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individual careers. The politicians who form on the contrary a discrete local-oriented professional class represent the large majority of the Walloon politicians. According to Borchert (2011, 137) quoting Matthews, “legislative institutions change along with the types of people attracted to serve in them”, we might then find that political institutions and political systems change along with the types of careers they provide”. Then, it is vital to acknowledge and assess the (possible) co-existence of distinct careers patterns and thus political classes, within the same region, that serve these institutions. As they constitute the main fuel of political systems, understanding political elites’ (multiple) path of careers is vital to understanding the past, the present and the future of regions and nations in Western European democracies. Political careers are not only objects to be studied as such, they are strong evidences of the dynamics of the broader institutional and socio-political environment.
References


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