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Individual Ambition and Institutional Opportunity: A Conceptual Approach to Political Careers in Multi-level Systems

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ABSTRACT The article develops a conceptual framework for the analysis of political careers in multi-level systems. Political careers are seen as being shaped by the interplay of individual ambition and the institutional structure of opportunities. Under the conditions of political professionalism, career decisions are made comparing the costs and benefits of attaining the various offices given in a certain polity. I argue that the availability, accessibility, and attractiveness of offices provide the most important clues for career-planning. The article develops a conceptual framework for the analysis of political careers in multi-level systems. Political careers are seen as being shaped by the interplay of individual ambition and the institutional structure of opportunities. Under the conditions of political professionalism, career decisions are made comparing the costs and benefits of attaining the various offices given in a certain polity. I argue that the availability, accessibility, and attractiveness of offices provide the most important clues for career-planning. These in turn are shaped by the institutional structure. Within multi-level systems, the article finds that the relationship between offices on different territorial levels may be organized in one of three ways: there may be a clear hierarchy, there may be separate alternative arenas largely sealed off against each other, or there may be one large integrated playing-field. Finally, the article discusses the repercussions career patterns may have for the political system in which they occur by linking certain political institutions but not others.

KEY WORDS: Ambition, structure of opportunity, political careers, multi-level systems, career types, political office

Careers, Movement, Linkage

Political careers imply movement and linkage. Professional politicians *move* within a prestructured hierarchy of offices. They hold different offices both simultaneously and successively. Their political ambition leads them to pursue higher office. The ensuing career moves cut across institutions and levels of government. Politicians may move

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from party office to a legislature to a government to an interest group. They also move from the local to the national level or from the national to the regional. Moreover, they do so in patterns that vary systematically between different places, patterns that are reproduced through the knowledge of actors about the path taken by their predecessors and these and other actors' anticipation that established pathways might be a good guide for their own career plans.[1]

Political careers also *link* different offices according to prevalent patterns. They do so in two ways: Horizontally, or institutionally, they link institutions such as legislatures, parties, interest groups or governments. Vertically, they link territorially bounded levels of government, from the local though the regional or state level[2] to the national and sometimes the supranational. The fact that a political institution at a given level of government is staffed by people who typically might hold some other office concurrently, who generally have held some (particular) office before, and who expect to hold yet another office in the future cannot remain without implications, neither for these people's behaviour nor for the institutions affected.

Movement and linkage then characterize political careers. But how are we to systematically study political careers in multi-level systems? What are the central categories in such an endeavour? It is to these questions that I will try to give a theoretical and conceptual answer in this article and thereby develop an analytical framework which the following case studies will then apply to real-world cases. First, I will reconsider Joseph Schlesinger's concept of ambition and propose that the advent of political professionalism creates three distinct interests among ambitious politicians. Career decisions are then made comparing the costs and benefits of attaining the various offices given in a certain polity. I will argue that *availability*, *accessibility* and *attractiveness* of offices provide the most important clues for career-planning. These, in turn, are shaped by the way the state, institutions, the representational relationship and political organizations are structured. Turning to the specific conditions of political careers in multi-level systems, we will then find that the relationship between territorial levels may be organized in one of three ways. There may be a clear hierarchy, there may be separate arenas largely sealed off from each other, or there may be a large playing field with very little hierarchy or a hierarchy that cuts across levels of government. Finally, I will discuss the likely impact specific career patterns may have for the political system in which they occur by linking certain political institutions but not others. This is followed by a conclusion

Political Ambition

"Ambition lies at the heart of politics". With these memorable words, Joseph Schlesinger (1966: 1) forty years ago opened the first major effort to systematically study political careers. This simple contention still has to be the starting-point for any analysis of political careers today. Politicians tend to be an ambitious crowd. Few content themselves with a short stint in political office and then happily return to their prior occupation. This pattern of a 'discrete political ambition', as Schlesinger termed it, seems to apply only to a few places like Switzerland—and even there it is more an ideal than reality.

Professional politicians—who in that regard do not differ markedly from practitioners in any other distinguished profession—want to stay on and they want to rise. The chances of entering political office, of staying on, and of rising further through the ranks depend (a) on a number of structural conditions that differ in time and place as well as (b) on the degree to which the personal traits of political hopefuls match the requirements posed by those structural conditions. The most obvious constraint of a political career is its continuous dependence on democratic elections. Even though not all political offices (and not even all public offices) are elective, political offices in general are subject to electoral competition in one form or another. As a consequence, job security is notoriously dismal compared to other occupations.

Yet the struggle for political survival does not occur in some impenetrable jungle. There are clear patterns that arrange political offices along a more or less structured hierarchy. These patterns can be readily mapped for each polity. Politicians themselves not only know which offices do exist, but also what one's individual chances of obtaining a particular office are and what comparative value that office has in relation to others. The playing field is as clearly defined as are the rules of the game and potentially successful tactics and strategies. As Joseph Schlesinger has established in his modern classic of political career research, political ambition occurs within a given 'structure of opportunity'. Superior knowledge of that structure is one resource in pursuing a career. That does not preclude individual preferences that for some good reason deviate from the generally accepted hierarchy of offices. Individual politicians may evaluate offices differently—based on further career plans, preferred policy fields or purely personal considerations. Deviance in this regard may also make it easier to attain one's goals as competition is lower.

Ambition and opportunity are closely related. Career choices are shaped by the given structural opportunities *and* the individual ambition one might harbour. The goals that drive political ambition are very diverse: power, social status, interest representation, 'good' policy, the common good—all of these motivations to enter politics are usually combined in some individually specific combination. However, whatever else motivates professional politicians, they all share three common interests that are a direct corollary of their pursuing a *professional* political career:

- income;
- career maintenance or continuity; and
- career advancement.

These motivations are considerably stronger for political professionals as compared to amateurs. As Max Weber (1992) made so forcefully clear in his famous—if often misunderstood—lecture on politics as a profession, the professionalization of politics[3] was both a necessary result of democratization and a transformatory force in the political arena.

The *income* aspect has always received most public scrutiny and criticism. But striving for a higher income is endemic to capitalist societies and should not surprise us in professional politicians. Political actors' common motivation to enter politics is, among other things, usually the conviction that politics is an important arena that wields power and a high social status. The expectation that these traits will be

combined with a comparatively high income follows quite naturally. On the other hand, it might occasionally lead to hubris, as when members of parliament find their income wanting in comparison to leading managers of transnational corporations—which they aren't after all. The public's disdain for higher salaries works as an effective check against politicians' tendency to use the power of self-regulation excessively to their own material advantage. On the other hand, of course, the ambition to enter politics is also regulated by the salaries that can be made. In some countries politics is just not very attractive economically to some professional groups that usually have an affinity with politics—for example, lawyers in the Scandinavian countries—even if power and status can compensate for some loss of income. Furthermore, the compensation generally has to be at a somewhat attractive level—otherwise Weber's classical observation on the choice between payment of politicians and plutocratic rule still does apply. If politics is not adequately paid, political actors will be those who can afford it.

Career maintenance likewise is not very popular these days. The term limits movement has been quite successful in the USA and the idea is popular elsewhere, too. Yet again the attempt to safeguard one's career against any outside forces that may endanger it is a natural trait of any profession, as the literature on the sociology of professions has amply demonstrated. You must have a reasonable chance of staying on. Otherwise the investment that is linked with switching from whatever you did before to politics is not justifiable. Therefore, political ambition, or rather, the ambition to enter politics and to strive for certain offices and mandates is regulated by the chance to maintain one's career against challenges. The major challenge in politics, of course, is not economic competition, but electoral competition for public office, which is competition over a limited commodity.

While safeguarding one's professional career is considered perfectly legitimate in other occupations, all attempts at reducing the risk of electoral defeat and increasing professional tenure are by definition in tension with the democratic promise that every office-holder may be voted out of office by the voters. What is a central tenet of democratic accountability is a manifest threat for professional politicians. They have reacted to that threat by devising various safety mechanisms. These range from formal institutional rules that increase the hurdles for any challenger over informal advantages for incumbents to creating fall-back positions should the case of electoral loss indeed happen.

Formal rules are mostly institutionalized in the electoral system. Plurality systems limit partisan competition. The same goal is present in percentage thresholds for parliamentary representation in PR systems which function as an effective barrier against the entry of new competitors. The most effective electoral mechanism, however, to restrict competition is the closed-list systems most countries with PR practice. Once you secure a good place on your party's list, you are safe unless a major electoral landslide should happen.

Where competition cannot be restricted that way, as in constituency-based plurality or open-list PR systems, name recognition and providing superior resources (staff support, campaign finance, franking privilege, power of patronage, etc.) for incumbents may serve much the same purpose. This is generally acknowledged to be the major reason for the otherwise stunning re-election rates of about 90% in the US

House of Representatives. In PR systems the career-maintaining effect of closed lists is informally re-enforced by the parties' practice of placing incumbents on the top of the lists and leaving the unsafe seats mostly to newcomers.

Alternative options are important to provide a safety-net. Different electoral cycles for different levels of government are one way to accommodate the losers of elections faster than could otherwise be the case. But, more important, are appointive positions under party control. The parties' highly successful "colonialization of state and society" (Beyme, 1993: 39) that we find in so many party democracies has one of its root causes in the desire to have a portfolio of alternative positions available for party faithfuls who have fallen victim to the merciless hands of the voters.

Career advancement is another universal goal in professional careers that also applies to politics. Few persons would be willing to enter a career that has a dead-end character from the outset. If you cannot hope to proceed from where you enter, it is very unlikely that you will enter at all. It is this element which makes the careerization of a field a precondition for its lasting professionalization. Only when there are 'career opportunities' (Squire, 1988), a way up, does it make sense to put energy and resources into the effort over an extended period of time. The option of advancement has a second prerequisite: a hierarchical layering of positions. It is above all the *unequal* value of offices that renders careers meaningful. While actual career patterns may have a downswing at the end, career goals are always upward-orientated by definition. The notion of career implies that the most prestigious and sought-after positions are usually unattainable for the political novice and are rather the ultimate step on a long route towards the top.

The interest in career advancement also has its repercussions in the institutional outlook. A career hierarchy first of all requires a critical mass of offices that are available in a given system. Thus, we can expect a pattern of *proliferation* of politicized offices open to career politicians over time. This is particularly true for professional offices. Second, a certain *stratification* is required to allow distinction. Not only are different offices valued differently—there is a strong tendency to create new offices within political institutions which allow some office-holders to hold a higher position than others within the very same institution. It is here that careerism and institutionalization partly coincide (Polsby, 1968). An increasing division of labour within institutions leads to the creation of leadership positions that then attract those looking for career advancement. In legislatures, for example, over time we find a growing and further differentiated party leadership as well as a proliferating committee (and in some cases, subcommittee) system providing a great number of distinguished positions *within* the institution.[4]

The Institutional Setting and the Structuration of Ambition: Availability, Accessibility and Attractiveness

Given these fundamental interests of political professionals, the institutional structure of opportunity may, from the perspective of the ambitious candidate, be translated into the availability, accessibility and attractiveness of the various offices. *Availability* denotes the offices for which any given candidate can run. First, availability refers to the sheer existence of certain offices. More levels or government and a greater

institutional and organizational density tend to increase the number of available offices within the realm of professional politics. Thus, federalism or the regionalization of the political system clearly increases the number of available offices, as does bicameralism.

In a second step, existing offices may be rendered unavailable because of legal restrictions or informal norms. Legal restrictions such as minimum age, residency requirements or incompatibility rules may severely limit the number of offices that are in fact available to a would-be candidate. Informal norms can lead to much the same result. For example, in recent decades parties in many countries have introduced gender quotas effectively limiting the number of available offices for male contenders. Also in constituency-based electoral systems residency requirements may apply as an informal mechanism in some polities but not in others. While candidates are perfectly free to shop around for suitable districts in Britain, the same behaviour would be considered outrageous in the USA or in Germany. In list-based systems certain slots on the list might be reserved *a priori* for candidates from certain regions or with a certain ethnic or religious background. In that case they are unavailable for all others by all practical means, although there is no legal restriction.

Yet, even available offices may be harder to attain for some than for others. *Accessibility* describes the relative ease with which a certain position can be obtained. Thus, it makes a difference if there is a strong incumbent or not, for example. Indeed, *being* the incumbent usually is the single most important predictor for electoral success in most democracies. Offices that have a high turnover rate are obviously more accessible to non-incumbents than others. As the knowledge about the chances of being elected will strongly influence challengers' decision to run or not to run, there is a downside even to vulnerable incumbents and open seats, however. If an office is available and seems well accessible for many people, it might turn out to be in fact less easily accessible, as competition is heightened. Strong parties make more offices accessible to a candidate since they are able to co-ordinate candidacies for a multitude of offices across levels of government and types of institution. Depending on how much they intervene in the selection process, this easier access might again mean more competition for any one office.

From another perspective, accessibility is also about time and timing. Offices come up in a certain electoral rhythm. For their accessibility, it makes a great difference if it is possible to run for another office while keeping the present one, or if it is legal and considered appropriate to run for several offices at a time (as, for example, in Belgium; cf. Fiers, 2001). In a multi-level system, the order of national, regional and local (and in Europe: European) elections is highly important.

Finally, *attractiveness* refers to the properties of the office itself. This clearly separates professional offices from non-professional ones. It includes the three potential properties described above—high income, good job security and good chances to rise further—plus things as diverse as power,[5] prestige, public visibility, policy influence, personnel, technical support etc. Generally, for example, a presidential system with a clear-cut separation of powers increases the independence and hence the attractiveness of the legislature (compare the USA to Brazil, for example). The same is true for a developed committee system with committees being relatively powerful in relation to party groups.

As might be immediately clear, too high a level of attractiveness might seriously impede accessibility. If office-holders want to stay on because they consider their present office very attractive—Schlesinger's static ambition—that will make it much harder for everybody else to get in. Thus, there are complex interactions between the 'three A's' that are the basis for individual calculations to seek a certain office or to forego it.

While the availability or unavailability of an office is a given, accessibility and attractiveness are relative and may differ significantly for different potential candidates. Therefore, we would expect individual calculations weighing the relative costs (accessibility) and benefits (attractiveness) of running for a certain position. These individual calculations, of course, always have to take into account the organizational frame as well: If parties place candidates as strictly as they do in Spain, for example, there is not much use for political professionals to engage in elaborate cost–benefit analysis. They will more or less be told where to go (cf. Stolz (2011, this issue) on Spain and Britain). Usually, however, there is such a thing as individual career-planning in politics, despite the ritual denial of practitioners.

As stated above, careers are pursued within a predefined institutional setting in which every ambitious political hopeful has to manoeuvre. The given institutional structure of opportunity which determines availability and defines the relative accessibility and attractiveness of offices may, for analytical purposes, be fruitfully divided into four different aspects (Borchert, 2003b):

- the structure of the state,
- the structure of political institutions,
- the structure of representation, and
- the structure of political organizations.

The Structure of the State

The structure of the state above all refers to the number of levels of government and their competencies. Federal systems do not only differ from unitary ones in terms of their system of government, they also provide radically different kinds of career chances. First, federal systems tend to have *more* political offices for which one might choose to compete than unitary systems. Hence, they increase the number of available offices. Also these offices tend to be arranged in a hierarchical way, which traditionally has followed the territorial structure marking some offices as typical points of access to a political career while others are reserved for the more experienced politician. The classical assumption here is that the higher-ranking offices are those that are situated at a higher level of government and have a larger constituency (electorate/clientele; Francis and Kenny, 2000). Thus, local politics is considered the typical point of entry, with the state level taking an intermediary role and the federal level being the ultimate goal. Following this logic, many observers expected the European Parliament, and EU politics more generally, to quickly form a fourth layer of the career structure above the classical three. As we shall see in this issue, this was as premature an assumption as the notion of a clear-cut territorial hierarchy more generally.

Yet, the territorial structure of the state clearly does influence career chances and career decisions by providing one decisive dimension of the playing field. As a wave of regionalization and decentralization has swept over the advanced industrialized countries, particularly in Europe, in recent decades (Keating, 1998), the opportunity structures, too, have been altered dramatically. In formerly unitary countries like Belgium, Spain, some parts of the UK and, to a lesser degree, in France and Italy, whole new levels of government, complete with parliaments and governments, have been formed. The regional level thus has provided absolutely new career routes for the political personnel (Stolz, 2003). Today, the prototypical polity that centres purely on the national capital and thus may be legitimately considered a one-arena game has virtually disappeared from the scene in all but the smallest democracies. Simultaneously, the office of mayor has gained in strength and democratic legitimacy in a number of countries (Italy, the Netherlands, parts of Germany and Britain). Again, the options for political careers have been increased and diversified.

One other important point to take into consideration here is the varying degrees to which the regional and local level have been professionalized in terms of income and time demands. Here we find great variation between countries. For example, regional legislatures are not always professionalized. In Germany and Spain they are, in the USA some are, while in Austria or Australia they are only partly professionalized. Sometimes differences within one country are tremendous, too, as Squire (1988, 2007), in particular, has pointed out for US state legislatures. Of course, it makes a great difference in terms of career considerations if an available office is fully professionalized or not.

Besides its territorial outlook, the structure of the state also entails its internal organization and its relationship with society. For example, the degree to which the bureaucracy is (a) developed and (b) politicized makes a great difference for career chances and particularly for the career security of politicians. Bureaucratic positions might serve as a fall back in the case of electoral defeat or just as additional *de facto* political office. The German bureaucracy, for example, which—contrary to its traditional image going back to Weber's analyses—is highly politicized, offers a great array of fall back or waiting positions for politicians (cf. Beyme, 1993: 60–74). Party patronage within the bureaucracy has traditionally been very strong in South European and Latin American countries but also in the USA before the Progressive Era (cf. Shefter, 1994: 21–97). In France, a career move from the bureaucracy into professional party politics is one of the main routes and has been labelled *parachutage* (Kreuzer and Stephan, 2003: 132–133). On the other hand, the British civil service is, with some minor exceptions, virtually exempt from any political career considerations, as it is understood—and perceives itself—as politically neutral. As a result, the availability of bureaucratic positions for political career purposes is vastly different.

The Structure of Political Institutions

The institutional structure of a political system provides for the second dimension of the playing field. Polities may be more or less institutionally differentiated on each level of government, thus providing more or less opportunities for careerism. The sheer number of available institutions is one point of consideration. Some major

differences here occur as a result of politicization. While a legislature and an executive are part of the standard menu for any democratic system, the degree to which judicial, bureaucratic and law enforcement positions are politicized—and thus are available as part of a political career—differs greatly.

The relative power of different institutions, of course, also makes them more or less attractive to serve in. We would expect to find a powerful legislature more attractive for politicians, for example, than a pure rubber-stamp parliament. Similarly, the internal differentiation of a legislature may enhance its attractiveness—both as an elaborate committee system might give members meaningful roles in policy making to fill and as a clearly developed power structure warrants the investment to stay and collect capital to eventually rise.[6] Bicameralism, on the other hand, provides an exit option for a move to the other chamber—usually with one chamber being considered more prestigious. Attractiveness then is different and one chamber may serve as a point of access to the other. With a differentiated internal structure in place, strategic considerations may well become more complex: There is an obvious trade-off between either staying longer in one place in order to rise through the ranks or switching to the more prestigious chamber with the risk of playing a minor role there.

Of particular importance are the connections between legislatures and governments. Is legislative office a stepping-stone to the executive, or are not only the institutions but also the career paths strictly separated? In many parliamentary democracies, legislative and executive office are typically held concurrently with ministers (and sometimes junior ministers or parliamentary secretary of states) by custom or even by law being recruited from within the legislature. Here executive office clearly is most attractive, with access being parliamentary and legislative seniority usually an asset rather than a baggage. There are exceptions, however: Canada's institutional pattern is similar, only that parliament is rather weak and governments are rather big. The result is a radically different career pattern. It does not make much sense to wait too long for a position in the government. Either you get it rather early in your career or you will not get it at all and may just as well leave parliament—which indeed is the case (Docherty, 1997, 2003).

Under the US system of a clear separation between the branches of government, few legislators serve with an eye on an executive post. Being a secretary in the US executive may be attractive after you have lost a re-election bid or if you are close to the end of your political career anyway. The reason is that secretary has to be considered the dead-end of regular political careers in the USA. Tenure typically is very short and there are few places to go within politics from there. Thus, the position is more attractive for political outsiders, particularly from the professional arenas of business and law looking for a short stint within politics.

The one exception in terms of executive attractiveness—besides the presidency—is that some federal legislators consider a bid for the governorship of their home state. This pattern may also be found—and even more regularly so—in Argentina and Brazil.[7] These old federal systems give regional executives a lot of power over policy as well as over patronage, rendering the regional executive a comparatively attractive place to be. In Germany (Italy and Spain are similar to some extent) the regional premiership is attractive primarily for federal ministers as this is seen as a step up on a career ladder which might eventually lead to the federal chancellorship or prime ministership.

In Germany, recently, candidates for the chancellorship of both major parties have most often been recruited from among the regional prime ministers and not from within the federal legislature (Ms Merkel being a rare exception to the rule).

The Structure of Representation

The way the representative relationship is structured also influences career opportunities in a given polity—in particular the accessibility, but also the attractiveness of different electoral offices. The most important factor here is the electoral system. If politicians want to be elected and re-elected, they are tied to a particular electorate that holds their fate in their hands. This electorate is composed of two distinct groups, the people selecting candidates—the 'selectorate'—and the electorate proper (Gallagher and Marsh, 1988; Norris, 1997).

Candidate selection usually is a partisan affair, giving party bodies or party members the role of career gatekeepers. Party selection has its own rules. These rules on the one hand determine which party body is—officially or *de facto*—responsible for candidate nomination. Candidate selection for the national parliament, for example, may be a local, a regional or a national affair. Also, horizontally on each level of government, the power to nominate may rest with the party board, a convention or the membership by ballot. A vote by the local membership will most likely favour a different brand of candidates than decision making by the national party board or the regional leadership. Candidate selection rules determine to which intra-party constituency a political hopeful has to cater. They also make certain offices particularly important to hold—or, at least, to control, if concurrent holding of public and party office is either prohibited or deemed unfit by custom.

The electoral system very often also presupposes certain rules of selection. Thus, a closed national party list in a pure PR system gives the national party leadership virtually unrestricted control over its personnel. Thus, the allegiance of candidates will be to the national leadership (or to inner-party factions controlling a certain share of seats on the list). Under such a system political competition for electoral office largely is intra-party competition decided by the selectorate. Interestingly, much the same is true for the safe seats in a first-past-the-post (FPTP) constituency system. Once you have the party nomination in the district—or a safe spot on the list—there is not much harm the voters may do to you short of a landslide loss for your party. Hence, there are several electoral formulae that give a strong priority to accountability *vis-à-vis* the party selectorate as compared to accountability towards the voters. Under these conditions, one would expect the professional career politician to carefully watch potential competitors within one's own party and also to consider the party one's prime constituency.

If there is no such safety net between representatives and voters, maintaining close ties to one's constituency within the electorate becomes paramount. This is the case in open-list PR systems, single transferrable vote (STV) systems and in potentially marginal seats in plurality systems. Politicians then are expected to cultivate their electorate by being highly responsive in political terms as well as by offering non-political services as the constituency services and case-work so successfully pioneered by US members of Congress.

Different structures of representation may, however, not only be distinguished according to the question of whether they give primacy to the electorate or to the selectorate. They also differ systematically in the way public office-holders legitimate themselves and thus further their careers. We can typically distinguish three ways of legitimation: geographical, social or clientelistic (also Piattoni, 2001). Geographical legitimation takes a certain territory as its point of reference. This, of course, corresponds to a district-based plurality system in which the representative "claims credit" (Mayhew, 1974) for bringing state money into his or her district and generally favouring policies that are in tune with the material interests prevailing there. This is the model mostly followed in the American Congress.

Social legitimation refers to socially defined groups that are targeted by certain policies. As these groups tend not to be geographically concentrated in only one area, representation is not territorial and needs parties and/or interest groups as 'clearing-houses' for the definition and aggregation of interests. This is the classical model of the continental European party democracies, usually combined with a closed-list PR system. Here the party takes responsibility for maintaining the support of key groups in the electorate. The individual political career in turn is guaranteed and safeguarded by the party.

Clientelistic legitimation is based on an individualized linkage between a representative and his/her voters. Clientelism requires both a particularized form of legislation and administration that allow for special favours and an electoral system that gives voters the opportunity to express their gratitude. This can either be a plurality system or a PR system with preferential voting (including STV). Brazil, Argentina and Italy (before and after the reform) present examples of institutionalizing clientelistic relations with different electoral systems. In any case, the personal support of his/her clientele is what the politician's career is based on.

In reality, of course, we find all kinds of mixtures between these ideal-types. The German mixed-member system may be interpreted as an attempt to instil some measure of geographical representation in what otherwise is a socially defined and party-dominated structure of representation. Great Britain has an electoral system that would seem to favour geographical representation, but in fact the UK comes closer to the social representation model. In France one might even detect traces of all three models of representation. In some cases the choice of a new electoral system may also be seen as a conscious attempt to overcome older social structures of representation. Thus, the Spanish closed-list PR system is an attempt to do away with clientelistic relations.

The Structure of Political Organizations

The peculiar system of interest intermediation provides the fourth quintessential pillar for any political opportunity structure governing political careers. As political office-holders are potentially vulnerable to the electoral threat, they are badly in need of organization. It is only organization that provides a reasonable measure of career safety and continuity. Organizations recruit candidates, support and co-ordinate their campaigns and provide fall-back options should electoral politics show its ugly face in denying one's supposedly deserved seat. Using the categories developed here,

strong organizations make offices more (or less, if the organization decides against you) accessible and more attractive.

The logical candidates for this co-ordinating role are, of course, political parties. Career politicians tend to need parties because these are ideal vehicles that combine individual career interests under a common tent and for common benefit. The reason for party organization, as Max Weber (1992: 200, my translation) observed, is "the interest in inter-local electoral compromise".

The recruitment and training of candidates by parties may take any of a number of patterns. One extreme, of course, is practised in the USA where parties basically have no control over who is running on their ticket. The strong party machines of old have been eroded to a large extent as a consequence of their losing control over their personnel running for public office. This was due to the introduction of the direct primary (Ware, 2002). But even where parties are stronger, patterns differ. While some parties—the British Conservatives come to mind here—just provide a sort of label and exclude those persons they deem unworthy of carrying that label, others are much more active in selecting and training their personnel. A more active role for the party is facilitated if it provides jobs itself. Positions in the party staff are a typical training ground for future candidates for public office in many countries. These positions often serve as mechanisms of socialization into the party culture. Some parties also have more deliberate institutions of vocational training—they run party schools devised to train and retrain party workers for public office.

Controlling jobs also is important for creating a durable bind between office-holders and the party. If a party cannot provide jobs in its own apparatus, in the bureaucracy, in affiliated interest groups, or in other institutions and organizations that it controls, that bind is solely based on the electoral success of the party and thus tends to be weaker. Jobs that are at the disposal of the party provide a possible fall back and thus increase the dependence of politicians on their party.

Strong party organizations are also able to delimit intra-party competition. They will generally prefer to choose candidates for public office themselves and also to decide over their relative chances to be elected. Thus, electoral reforms giving that control to the voters may be interpreted as an indicator of partisan weakness. It is no wonder then that those countries commonly referred to as party democracies tend to have closed-list PR systems giving the parties maximum control over candidates.

Interest groups are also able to play an important role for the recruitment and careers of political hopefuls. Historically, that role was often based on the fact that in many instances they were older than parties and had access to superior financial resources (cf. more generally on the 'functionary', Cotta and Best, 2000: 525). In countries where parties remained comparatively weak organizationally (such as Switzerland or France) or were fought back into an inferior role (like in the USA), interest groups stepped in and took over part of their role. That may include personnel selection and training, the supply of candidates from the ranks of interest group officials, the 'adoption' of established politicians and, last but not least, providing campaign finance or other resources. The stronger interest groups are in relation to parties the more of these functions they usually take over.

The USA once again is the outlying case in this regard, as interest groups play a highly active role in almost all of the fields named above. The only exception is that

interest group officials are not usually running for public office themselves. However, this pattern may be found in other countries, for example in Switzerland, where interest group offices and public mandates are customarily combined.

Thus, we may say that there is an inverse correlation between the relative influence of parties and interest groups on political careers. The need of candidates for financial backing and organizational resources leads to a zero-sum relationship. Yet parties have a structural advantage. Even in the USA, there has been a resurgence of parties which, under the leadership of the Congressional campaign committees, have successfully attempted to regain lost ground. The reason is simply that—national differences notwithstanding—both party recruitment of candidates for public office and party control over non-elective positions in state and society is perceived as being much more legitimate then a similar role taken over by particularized interests. What differs greatly is the degree of safety and the number of additional options parties are able to provide.

Structure of Opportunity and Types of Careers in Multi-level Systems

As Schlesinger so clearly pointed out, the prevalent career patterns in a political system are heavily influenced by the structure of opportunities that both restricts and channels individual ambition for political office. Going back to my initial statement about movement and linkage as two key ingredients of political careers, I will try to develop a typology of multi-level political careers and the opportunity structures that favour them by asking three questions:

- how much movement?
- movement in what direction?
- what type of linkage (office accumulation or succession)?

How Much Movement?

As Schlesinger (1966: 10) noted, political ambition may be discrete, static or progressive. If we look at the impact of successful ambition for careers, discrete ambition translates into a career so short that we might even refrain from calling it that. Static ambition—if fulfilled—implies an extended stint in a particular office—and thus no movement at all after the initial success. Progressive ambition would point at a career marked by a greater number of moves between different offices, possibly at different levels of government. Thus, progressive ambition would appear to increase the pace of career moves.

On the other hand, movement is a function of career security and the political opportunity structure. Career security and the opportunity structure for new recruits, however, are inversely related, as Schlesinger pointed out: less career safety means more points of entry—more points of entry mean less career safety. Thus, if a politician holds what Schlesinger (1966: 70–88) called a "base office"—the office that most often serves as point of entry to a political career in a given polity—he or she may not be inclined to move mainly because of his or her own ambition, but also because there are simply too many competitors. Then it would be other people's

ambition that triggers the office-holders flight instinct and let him or her move on to what might be a safer haven.

Going back to the three As—availability, accessibility, attractiveness—we may conclude that, individually, the pace of movement should be slowed down by the relative *attractiveness* of the office currently held and increased by the general *accessibility* of that office. It should also be increased by the *availability* and *accessibility* of other offices. Finally, movement can be affected either way by the presence of co-ordinating organizations, such as parties or interest groups. On the one hand, serving as a clearing house they make it easier to move between offices with different territorial or functional constituencies. On the other hand, they are able to reduce competition, that is, the risk of losing, and thus might also reduce the necessity to move on.

If we conceptualize a high degree of movement as a great number of political offices acquired per time unit,[8] we should expect a lot of movement under the following conditions:

- a great number of available professional positions in the political system (measured against the number of possible candidates) => great choice;
- established career pathways and multi-level hierarchies of attractiveness => clear hierarchy of offices;
- high volatility with a high risk of involuntary turnover => easy access, dangerous life;
- a great number of appointive fall-back positions (political control of patronage positions in state/society) => low overall risk of deprofessionalization.

A low number of available offices, high entry costs, a safe job, but an unsafe career beyond that particular job would, on the other hand, seem to enhance a rather static career behaviour.

Movement in What Direction?

The pace of career moves does not tell us much about the direction of movement. Theoretically, politicians could move freely between levels of government and types of institutions and offices. If they do so in practice, the political analyst has a problem at hand. Careers then do not follow any discernible pattern and thus there is no generalizing. But most often there is a pattern to career moves. As Schlesinger noted for the USA: "Political careers do not proceed chaotically. There are patterns of movement from office to office; as the office becomes more conspicuous, the patterns become clearer" (Schlesinger, 1966: 118). The general assumption is that politicians want to move "up the political ladder" and that this ladder is largely pre-given by the territorial organization of the state (Francis and Kenny, 2000: 2–6). Thus, the typical career would be from local to state to national (to supranational) office. Exceptions should only be expected if the jurisdiction of a lower-level office is larger than that of a higher-level one, for example in the case of a state governor vs. a federal legislator representing a local constituency. This rather schematic way of thinking no longer reflects the reality of political careers (if it ever has). In many

polities we find career moves that seem highly unlikely by the standard just developed. Thus, we need to rethink the universe of political career patterns.

In principle, we can distinguish three such patterns. The first is a *unidirectional* pattern. Positions in this type are clearly organized along a hierarchy. As everybody wants to move up, the direction of all career moves is the same. Of course, not everybody does succeed in moving up. But there should hardly be any change of positions in the opposite direction. Rather than moving down, we should expect politicians to either stay at their place or opt out of the system once further career advances are blocked.

Typically, the unidirectional pattern should follow the organization of the state from the local over the regional to the national level. However, the criterion of unidirectionality does not require a particular route. If most politicians in a polity value regional office higher than national office and arrange their careers accordingly, this still would qualify as a unidirectional career pattern. Hence, the question of what constitutes the highest level of government in terms of political careers is, and has to remain, open to empirical scrutiny.

A second type of career movement would be one where there are several *alternative* and equivalent career patterns. In this case there is not one hierarchy of attractive offices but several that apply according to the varying backgrounds and/or preferences of actors. We would expect alternative career paths to develop most often when there are clearly defined cognitive, legal or political boundaries between either levels of government or types of institutions (legislative, executive, etc.).[9]

If there is a high degree of autonomy between levels of government and if constituencies and selectorates differ a great deal in composition, movement between levels, even within the same institutional sphere, is hindered. Also, actors may form preferences that link them to one level of government making the others less attractive for them.[10] Alternative career paths may theoretically also include different levels of government *and* different types of institutions. In this case career arenas transcend territorial and/or institutional boundaries, yet are sealed off against each other. It is, for example, feasible to have one career path from the national legislature to the regional executive and another one from the local executive to the regional legislature. Finally, below the national level we might also have cases of purely lateral career moves within the same level of government and the same kind of office, for example members of the state or local executive moving from one state or city to the other.

The third type of movement is one within *integrated circuits*. Here the boundaries between levels of government and/or types of institutions that are constitutive for the alternative career paths model do not exist. Neither is there a clear-cut hierarchy as in the unidirectional model. Political offices constitute opportunities among which actors choose according to the situational costs and benefits they perceive as being attached to them (or, alternatively, are being placed according to the costs and benefits perceived by some co-ordinating actor, such as a party controlling nominations; cf. the case of Catalonia in Stolz (2011, this issue). The sheer number of opportunities encourages movement, but there is no clear top or bottom and career paths, therefore, vary a lot. Also, one should find more options for politicians who have passed the zenith of their career. Rather than being forced out of the game altogether, they can still find fall-back positions within the political profession that are acceptable as they are not being perceived as a degradation.

Such a wide-ranging marketplace of political job opportunities is in need of some form of organization and co-ordination in order to limit competition and guarantee professional survival in the midst of that terrible mechanism of job evaluation that democracies provide for: elections. Thus, the integrated circuit model should be connected to a strong co-ordinating role for clearing-house institutions (such as parties or interest groups) that organize political candidates for a great number of offices, limit competition among them and make sure nobody is being left out in the dark.

Direction of movement is also associated with pace of movement. Overall, there is a certain affinity between high pace and integrated or unidirectional careers on the one hand and between low pace and alternative career paths on the other, as there the number of available positions is much more limited.

Once we get into the analysis of real existing cases (a.k.a. countries), we will inevitably find out once again that the ideal types of individual career patterns as developed above are only a tool to understand reality and not reality itself. Thus, political careers in the countries mentioned above will fall between ideal types. Yet these types should serve as yardsticks against which to measure the peculiarities of national or regional variations.

In sum, real cases should fall somewhere within the triangle in Figure 1. If we want to name cases that are closest to any one corner, we could see the USA, Switzerland and France relatively close to the unidirectional corner. It might be more than a mere coincidence that three old democracies should have precisely that career pattern which is still widely perceived as 'natural' (Francis and Kenny, 2000: 2–3). Spain and Belgium would be rather close to the integrated model (cf. Fiers, 2001; Stolz, 2011, this issue). Again, these two countries have something in common that may have had an impact on their prevalent career patterns: the recent decentralization and federalization efforts that have created a new, very attractive playing field. Finally, the alternative route is most clearly travelled by Canada (cf. Moncrief, 2003; Docherty, 2011, this issue; but also by Scotland, cf. Stolz, 2011, this issue), where even parties as major institutional underpinnings and clearing houses for political careers have developed separate organizations for the federal and provincial levels. However, Germany—traditionally closer to the unidirectional model (without being an 'old democracy')—has recently moved much closer to this type. The professionalization of state legislatures has enhanced the attractiveness of the regional level. At the

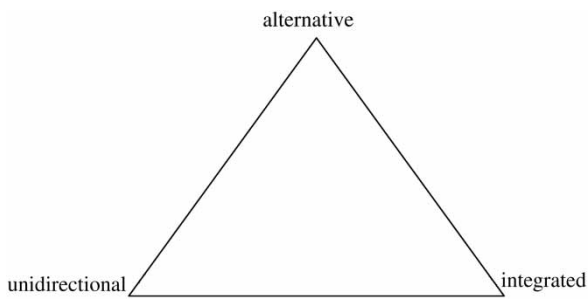

Figure 1. Career types and cases: a tentative scheme.

same time, easier access than to a federal mandate has turned the European Parliament into something of an alternative track for political hopefuls.

Careers and Institutional Linkage

Forms of Linkage

Our premise was that career moves of politicians in some way link the institutions through which they pass during the course of that career. This may occur in three different ways. Politicians first might bring their *experience* from institution A to institution B (on this cf. Berkman, 1993, 1994). They might also be influenced by their *anticipation* of running for office C while they are still holding office D. Finally, there may be a *co-ordination* effect because of their holding offices E and F concurrently.

Thus, linkage may involve two different career patterns: office succession (leading to experience or anticipation) or office accumulation (leading to co-ordination). *Succession* of offices is the type most often thought of in connection with political careers. The ambitious politician seeks opportunities for career advancement. Once he or she detects such an opportunity, the costs (especially if the office is elective) and benefits—office accessibility and attractiveness—are weighed and a decision is reached. The linkage between the offices and the institutions to which they belong is reached by way of experience and anticipation.

The *accumulation* of offices is a more defensive strategy geared at least as much towards career maintenance as to career advancement. One person may hold several offices concurrently in order to combine several incomes, to increase his or her job safety by pre-empting potential competitors, or to create options for further career moves. Probably, the second motive is the strongest of the three. If an office is generally perceived as an ideal springboard into the position you currently occupy and you are not legally or otherwise barred from holding that office, too, chances are that you will prefer doing so. The same might be true, if the constituencies of the two offices are largely the same. In that case, representing both will not cost much extra effort, but keep possible challengers at bay. Also, offices may be accumulated in order to keep control of the selectorate in charge of renomination. The accumulation of offices typically is cross-institutional (party–legislative, legislative–executive) and often also transcends different levels of government.

Another possibility is the combination of several semi-professional offices in order to reach a professional income—as in the case of the French *cumul des mandats* on the local and regional levels. Otherwise typically one fully professionalized position is combined with several amateur positions that may serve different purposes for their holder. This includes the 'balancing' of one office which reflects the policy interests of the holder with one that provides a sizeable income.

We might also find specific combinations of succession and accumulation. In that case we can infer that certain offices are kept as a kind of homebase for the successive rise through other offices. Hence, we should see not successive patterns of accumulation, but rather offices that are being held over a long time and being combined with a string of different offices.

While, in some countries, like in Germany, patterns of office accumulation are the norm, others only know succession. Some of this difference may be attributed to legal rules of incompatibility and a strict doctrine of separation of powers. But some notable variation is based more on custom than on anything else. The combination of public and party office, which is very common in most of continental Europe, is highly unusual in Great Britain and North America.

Career Types and Intergovernmental Linkage

Moving from career patterns to levels of government and their relationships, what does this mean? Different career patterns, for example, imply different roles given to the varying territorial levels, that is, they connect individual careers and territorial politics in different ways. Yet they also provide different links between the levels of government as well as between different institutions on one level. This is particularly true for the connection between party office and public office.

The direction of career moves also has an impact on the importance given to any one level. Within a traditional unidirectional career pattern the regional level, for example, is but a springboard to the national capital. Also, those who depart for the national level will, by definition, not come back. If the predominant direction varies between several alternative paths, the importance of the subnational level might be either nil or extremely high, the latter being true once this is the level of choice. If careers integrate different offices on different levels of government, the weight of the regional level is contingent, but on a relatively high level—and remains so throughout the career. After all, one always *might* want to come back, inducing a behaviour quite different from those who say farewell for good.

The question of succession or accumulation being the predominant mode of acquiring new offices is a reflection of the need to retain a home base on a lower level of government or in a different institutional sphere—usually parties, but occasionally also interest groups. If such a need is perceived, accumulation is the adequate response (if not explicitly or customarily ruled out). Accumulation in turn affects the linkage of the individual politician to the institution in which he or she maintains a presence, even though he or she spends greater amounts of time in another position.

Not surprisingly, the importance of the subnational level is potentially highest if that level is the unrivalled focus of careers. On the other hand, it is precisely under these conditions of autonomous career paths that the regional level might not play any role at all. Much the same is true for the classical upward or unidirectional career. If national politics is the goal, the regional level is but a springboard. On the other hand, at least in theory, it might be the ultimate prize if the regional level is considered to be top of the hierarchy. Accumulation has a strong positive effect on regional politics considerations in career planning, as it allows for the development of a regional home base that is maintained throughout the course of one's career.

Looking at the European level, we find significant differences to the results for the regional and national levels. As party organizations on the European level do not lead a life of their own, they cannot serve as a home base for further career moves. Given that the selectorate for the MEPs may be situated on a number of levels, yet never on the European level itself, the European level cannot be autonomous. Hence, a career

focusing on the European level only is bound to be rather short-lived. As a result, the role of the European level for politicians in Europe should be the strongest if that level is established as the top layer in a unidirectional career pattern. But even then Europe simply cannot be an autonomous arena, as institutional linkage to other levels necessarily is preserved.

What do these results imply for the linkage between levels of government? The strongest linkage that amounts to an interlocking of institutions should occur in an integrated career pattern with accumulation of offices. Here levels of government are linked in four different ways. Politicians usually have experience of other levels and they harbour career plans that could bring them to other levels. Even when they have left a certain institution they might consider coming back—thus combining the motives of experience and anticipation. Finally, they accumulate offices in different institutions at different levels of government.

Only slightly weaker is the linkage effect in the case of either a unidirectional career with office accumulation or an integrated career without accumulation, respectively. What is more noteworthy is the near lack of institutional linkage in the alternative career type. Alternative career paths preclude linkage mechanisms almost by definition. As a result, levels of government in this case tend to be largely autonomous career-wise.

The inference here is that a strong orientation of careers towards one level leads to weak intergovernmental linkage. On the other hand, strong institutional linkage is produced by divided loyalties—that is, by a type with a fairly strong orientation towards multiple levels.

Political Careers, Multi-level Systems and the Political Class

While the effects of these patterns on public policy making are beyond the scope of this Special Issue, they clearly are an important and yet under-researched field of study. Maybe, on the basis of findings presented here, we will be able to find out more about the mechanisms by way of which career patterns impact on the workings of the political system and thus also influence its output.

At this point we can only speculate about the likely political implications the different form and intensity of institutional linkage may have for politics and policy making. However, it seems logical to infer that autonomous career paths should favour an autonomous politics, whereas an interlocking of institutions by way of political careers should produce a political system that is closely knit together and where political institutions are strongly interwoven. The advantages and disadvantages of either option are obvious. Autonomy includes independence of decision making but impedes political co-ordination, whereas interlocking favours co-ordination at the expense of political accountability.

In this context it might be fruitful to introduce the notion of political class (Beyme, 1993, 1996; Borchert and Golsch, 1995; Borchert, 2003a, b). This concept—originally developed by Italian political sociologist Gaetano Mosca (1939) in a pre-democratic context—refers to the group of professional politicians acting consciously in their own collective self-interest. Thus, the concept is able to grasp the trans-institutional reality we have pointed to above. Using the typology of political careers developed above, it might be possible to distinguish between different forms of political class(es).

A unidirectional career pattern corresponds to a political class with a common territorial focus. The integration of the more peripheral parts of that class is enhanced by the accumulation of offices, which establishes regular contacts between the levels. An integrated career pattern favours a political class that is quite homogeneous in terms of its arena and hence its consciousness. If everybody can, in principle, obtain any office during the course of his/her career, it is much easier to establish a common perspective. Hence, the political class should be more united and stronger in its capacity to regulate its own affairs in this case. An alternative career pattern, by contrast, could lead to a number of political classes of professional politicians within one country that are distinct entities in terms of their perception of their interests as well as in terms of their acting.

Conclusion

Why and how study political careers?, asked John Hibbing (1999). The second question already assumes that we have found a satisfactory answer to the first. Hibbing's answer to this first question is that studying political careers may give us important insights into political institutions. While this is certainly true, based on this article I would like to amend and specify that answer. Institutions exist in a highly structured and hard-to-change system. Studying political institutions thus most often is analysing relatively stable entities. And yet they do change which gives political scientists much of what they are puzzling about.

If, on the other hand we look at actors, at politicians and their careers for example, we expect dynamics. People have their own sets of priorities and they are hardly ever content with what they have. Plus people differ. Yet when we look at political careers we find clear patterns transcending individual preferences. These patterns are a reflection of the institutionally defined structure of opportunity. Thus, institutions structure political careers via the AAA structure of opportunity involving selective incentives and restraints. Yet we can also understand institutional change as the result of attempts to alter the boundaries of action, to mould the rules of the game according to one's own interests. And even external pressure for change has to pass through that eye of the needle that is constituted by the collective interests of those privileged players, elected politicians.

Thus, studying political careers provides a particularly fruitful approach to understanding institutional stability and change. At the same time it reminds us that the political actor's world is not defined primarily by any one institution. In that sense, the pragmatic research decision to study one institution and its members is a distortion of the actors' perspective. If one wants to pursue a political career, at least initially one is not bound by any one institution. Accepting this perspective (which implies taking careers as unit of analysis, as advocated by Herzog, 1975) allows for an analysis of the interplay between different institutions as constituted by political careers. In that sense an institutionalist approach paradoxically better be not institution-centred—that is, centred on any one institution).

The first lesson then would be not to focus on legislative careers, but to look at political careers as they exist in any given polity. The subject of research then would be politicians and not legislators. This is a prerequisite for drawing the second lesson:

study political careers comparatively. One result of this turn of perspective would be giving up the obsession with institutionalization which is present even in Hibbing's extremely thoughtful and critical article. As I have tried to outline in this article, an integrated career pattern, which would mean no or very little institutional boundaries, can itself be highly institutionalized. Only then is the point of reference for political careerists much larger than the institution under review. The result, however, would not be de-institutionalization but very dense institutional linkage. It is to these kinds of issues that research on political careers might contribute quite a bit.

More generally, one might also study problems of governance arising in multi-level polities using a political career approach. After all, we have seen that there are three ways in which political institutions might be linked by way of political careers:

- through anticipation (due to progressive ambition or the establishment of a fall-back position),
- through learning (due to experience in other offices),
- through co-ordination (due to personnel overlap, accumulation of offices).

Thus, the third lesson I would like to draw brings us back to where we started: an emphasis on the territorial dimension of political careers. Here, careers, in a nutshell, provide very valuable information about the relational structure of a polity. Thus, we should pay special attention to the ways in which political offices on different levels of government are sought successively or held simultaneously.

Overall, papers for this Special Issue could provide the beginning of internationally comparative research on political careers that, indeed, takes individual political careers as its unit of analysis and follows them over time, through different institutions and across territorial boundaries, understanding the dynamics of movement and linkage in the process. Echoing Matthews' (1985: 43) insight that "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.

Notes

[1]There has been surprisingly little research on careers in multi-level systems and even less conceptual work. Schlesinger (1966) is still an indispensable point of reference, as is Herzog (1975) from a European perspective. The idea of movement between institutions and levels of government has not been studied much. For the US, cf. the works of Squire (1988, 1993), Prinz (1993) and the contributions to Williams and Lascher (1993), more generally. Recently, there has been more interest in the topic. See Samuels (2003) on Brazil, Moncrief (2003) on Canada, Jones *et al.* (2002) on Argentina, and Siavelis and Morgenstern (2008) on Latin America. Good general reflections on career research may be found in Matthews (1985) and Hibbing (1999). A very interesting discussion of careers in multi-level systems is Deschouwer (2001). Studying Belgium and Denmark, respectively, Stefaan Fiers (2001) and Ulrik Kjaer (2001) have focused on career moves across territorial levels, coining the notions of 'level-hopping' (Fiers) and 'stepping-stones' (Kjaer) in the process. Most work on careers, however, still focuses on careers *within* one institution (cf. *inter alia* Epstein *et al.* (1997), Hibbing (1991), Moncrief and Thompson (1992) and Price (1998)). If other institutions are considered it is mostly as recruitment pool—cf. *inter alia* the contributions in Norris (1997) and by Moncrief (1994, 1999).

[2]In this paper subnational, regional and state politics are used synonymously.

[3]The term 'professionalization' is rather ambiguous, especially as related to politics. It connotes the historical development of an occupation, the turning of an occupation into a special kind of endeavour ('the professions', such as medicine and law), the individual acquisition of the capabilities required in that occupation, and sometimes the quality of the work that is performed (professional as opposed to 'amateur'). These ambiguities notwithstanding, professionalization is an analytically fruitful concept that cannot be simply given up. Here it is understood in terms of politics becoming an occupation. The yardstick for professionalization in this understanding is twofold: the income that may be earned and the time that has to be spent. A full-time activity with an income that is comparable to, for example, that of judges or leading bureaucrats is considered professional. For institutions, a third criterion for professionalism is the institution's budget (cf. conceptually, Squire (1988); for an elaboration with international comparisons, Z'graggen (2009)). I have dealt with some of the other implications of the term elsewhere. For a discussion of to what extent the sociological concept of the 'professions' may be fruitfully applied to politics, cf. Borchert (2003a: 133–201). On the conceptual distinction between a professionalization of an individual, an office, an institution and a political system, cf. Borchert (2003a: 25–29).

[4]This is not to ignore that, of course, there are other factors that have shaped the institutional structure. The growth of state interventionism, for one, clearly has played an important role. My point simply is that not only do institutional features of the polity provide incentives and restrictions to political careers—they are also themselves the object of reform proposals that, to say the least, take the career interests of professional politicians into account.

[5]The power one might have, of course, depends heavily on the political constellation of the day—for example, on the question of whether one's party is in government or in opposition. Usually, the government benches are clearly more attractive. Yet, planning a career-step based on the current constellation before an election, or even on one's predictions about the election outcome, is bound to lead to disappointment in many cases. Thus, career steps should be influenced more by the realistic chance to see one's party assume the government while one is a member of a legislature, for example. As accessibility is greater during times of opposition while attractiveness is in times of government, it makes sense to gamble on time and hope for a change of government in the future. Only if there is little chance of that ever happening will there be a clear-cut influence on career decisions.

[6]The former was the prime motivation behind the 1979 reform of the British House of Commons, introducing standing (select) committees (Judge, 1981), while the latter may be interpreted as being the driving force behind the development and institutionalization of the US House of Representatives, as described by Polsby (1968) and others (cf., for example, Brady *et al.*, 1999; Schickler, 2001).

[7]In Brazil legislators also frequently take a leave of absence from the Chamber of Deputies in order to serve as state ministers (Santos, 2003: 128–130). Should they resign from their state executive post within the federal legislative term, they can then take back their seat in the chamber.

[8]Drawing the boundary is somewhat arbitrary, but I would consider it a low pace of movement, if changes of position occur less frequently than every ten years, and a high pace if, on average, more than two positions are held within a time-span of ten years.

[9]Thus, it is for example easily conceivable that the branches of government recruit their personnel from different pools of candidates resulting in three clearly demarcated career pathways that may or may not transcend different levels of government but that do not allow for crossovers. These career patterns focused on particular types of institutions are not considered in detail here.

[10]A similar thought can be found in Schlesinger (1966: 99–100), who considers similarity of the electorate, similarity of institutions and unity of political arena as the three major factors favouring succession between offices.

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