Jens Borchert

Movement and Linkage in Political Careers: Individual Ambition and Institutional Repercussions in a Multi-Level Setting

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1. Introduction: Careers, Movement, and 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 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.

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 through the regional or state level 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 for neither these people's behavior nor for the institutions affected.

This paper will first give a cursory overview on the neglect of a career perspective in institutional studies of federalism and parliaments and the lack of an institutional relations perspective in political career research (2). I will then develop a typology of political careers (3) and discuss their meaning for different levels of government and their relationship (4). In the fifth part I will try to apply that framework to a case-study of regional, national, and European legislators from Lower Saxony (Germany). Finally, I will try to spell out some of the connections between individual careers and institutional analysis (6).

2. Federalism, Regionalism, European Integration: New Opportunities for Political Careers

The impact of political careers for inter-institutional linkage and members' behavior has hardly been studied – neither from a political careers nor from a institutionalist perspective. Generally, institutions are studied as bounded entities and their memberships as distinct. In the academic division of labor, party research is a field

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¹ In this paper subnational, regional, and state politics are used synonymously.
apart from legislative research, and national politics is the domain of other people than regional politics or local politics. Even if the focus is on the relation between institutions or between different levels of government as in research on federalism, the link that exists by way of the experiences or progressive ambition of part of the political personnel is generally excluded from the analysis.

This is a very obvious feature in studies of federalism. From the classics in the field to the most recent writings (cf. inter alia Friedrich 1968; Elazar 1987; Burgess/Gagnon 1993; Watts 1999), intergovernmental relations involve actors who seem to be nailed to a particular level of government. The relations between these levels and the institutions they consist of are purely structural. There are no experience, no ambition, no interests apart from institutional ones. In short, there are no actors worthy to talk of. This understanding clearly does not stand the test of empirical reality. As a result studies of federalism – or more generally: of multi-level governance (Marks 1993) – would do better by developing an understanding of how political careers affect institutions and their relations.

The benign neglect of individual careers also still figures prominently in European legislative analysis. The idea that careers of individuals tell us something about the political system has never been held in high regard in Germany, for example. Some notable exemptions from the rule (for example, Molt 1963, Kaack 1971, Herzog 1975) notwithstanding, German political science has always doubted the thesis that individuals matter in a system that is so clearly dominated by collective interests, especially by parties. If MPs almost always vote the party line, why study them and their career paths? Quite tellingly, Klaus von Beyme titled his analysis of the Bundestag “The Legislator” (1998) – in the singular.

Studies of political careers, on the other hand, have two major problems that prevent them from understanding the relationship between careers and institutions. Both problems involve a perspective that is overly static – somewhat surprising in a field that per definition studies movement. On the one hand students of political careers mostly focus on the national level and, more precisely, on the national legislature (cf. Hibbing 1991; Prinz 1993, 34-42; Borchert 1999; Best and Cotta 2000). The connection seems natural but if we take a closer look in fact it is quite peculiar. If a career implies movement – usually movement perceived as upward – then it would seem strange that we look at only one place. True – there are careers to be made within national parliament, from freshman to Speaker, from rookie to committee

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2 For an exception to the rule see Lehmburuch 1998 (86-8) who briefly considers career patterns as a possible moment of political integration across levels of government, but then denies their relevance in the German case – which at the time of his original writing (1976) was a somewhat premature (or prescient) finding.

3 The German original would even be translated as “The Lawmaker.”
chair, from backbencher to party leader or government minister. Yet that is only part of the story.

Careers start much earlier than with the entry into the national parliament. Usually, they involve local politics, often they include regional or state politics. Recruitment into political office is followed by recruitment into professional political office. This is a very important step indeed, as professionalism breeds careerism. It is with professionalization that things like a guaranteed and regular income, the chance to maintain a political office, and the chance to rise within the hierarchy of offices become major considerations for political actors. Nor do careers end with the voluntary or involuntary decision to leave the national legislature. Often enough there are other positions in or near the political realm that former MPs go into (cf. Hibbing 1999, 150-1). Yet this is a point we know preciously little about, as there are not many studies on the whereabouts of former legislators in any country. All in all there is a strong national level bias in studies of political careers.

This bias is far less pronounced in the U.S. compared to Europe. After all, studies of state legislatures and their personnel are a growth industry (cf. Moncrief and Thompson 1992, Rosenthal 1998, Squire 1988, 1993). I wish we would know nearly as much about European state and regional legislatures as we know about the state legislatures. Yet the latter are treated for the most part as a thing apart from positions on the national or on the local level. In that they mirror the limited focus of Congressional research analyzing only those moving into the orbit of their studies and only as long as they remain there.

We do know about the important distinction between springboard legislatures and career legislatures (Squire 1988), but not about the full course of the careers that are being made in both cases. This is somewhat surprising, since the one classic study that in many ways triggered the interest in political careers, avoided the national bias as much as it did avoid another fallacy I will turn to in a moment. Joseph Schlesinger’s "Ambition and Politics" (1966) looked at the careers of people who made it to the national level, but he did not restrict the scope of his analysis to this level. He wanted to know where Senators (and Governors) came from and on what way they came into that office.

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4 As I laid out elsewhere (Borcher 1999a), in analyzing professionalization we should be careful to distinguish between individual, office, institutional, and system-wide professionalization. All of these phenomena clearly are related to one another but they are not the same as is often assumed. By distinguishing the different aspects of professionalization we are better able to analyze anachronistic constellations such as professional politicians in an amateur institution or vice versa. Also careerism is not the same as professionalization, as the two may exist independently of each other (cf. the discussion in Moncrief 1999, 187).
And that precisely points to the second fallacy that many analyses – even if they look at the state level – trap into: they have a clearly defined institutional focus and hence are static in their conception of careers. The underlying assumption is a close connection between careerism and institutionalization. As some pathbreaking articles like Polsby’s (1968) found an empirical correlation between increasing length of service in the U.S. House of Representatives and the institutionalization of that body, the tacit inference was that careers and the development of one institution were always inextricably linked. From that perspective it made perfect sense to first choose an institution and then study the behavior of its members. (Plus it’s much easier to do empirically.)

Thus while the difference between American and European research on legislatures is often portrayed as one between an individualist and an institutionalist perspective, we have to amend that idea: American legislative studies concentrate on individuals within an institution – ‘careerism in one institution,’ so to speak. This particular perspective is based on a correct observation: that many American politicians tend to make a choice of institutions quite early in their careers and then stay on. Yet this was far from a universal law even before term limits – and is much less so now. Viewed either historically – taking into regard nineteenth century political careers in the U.S. – or comparatively – looking at other countries – careerism in one institution does not help us much to understand the dynamics and specific patterns of political careers (Hibbing 1999, 157-160).5

Yet there is another European research tradition that by definition focuses on the regional level: the regional politics ‘school.’ While American state politics analysis is largely self-contained and happily restricts itself to its universe of the 50 states for purposes of comparison (for an exception see Moncrief 1994), that is a luxury Europeans (and Canadians) cannot afford. Regional politics is a field that covers subnational politics in federal as well as in unitary systems. Its growth was induced mostly by regionalist social movements and their political success. That is why questions of cultural identity and of socio-economic disparities loom particularly large in the study of regional politics. The study of political institutions on the regional level is far less developed – partly because regionalism was a field of choice for those political scientists who deliberately shunned an institutionalist perspective and who were not particularly eager to have it enter through the backdoor. On the other hand the pro-regionalist bias of most researchers led them not to put the issue of political careers high on the agenda. Regionalist movements were seen as idealist collective actors; studying them with Schlesinger’s laconic theory that “ambition lies at the heart of

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5 Thus, for example, in the era of party machines American politicians frequently had long sustained professional careers – yet they moved from one institution to the other and served relatively short terms (cf. Borchert 1997).
politics” (1966: 1) simply did not seem a promising approach to students of regional politics.

For a number of reasons, then, we know very little about political careers on the sub-national level and about the relationship between careers and levels of government more generally. If we want to study career movements and institutional linkage, however, the regional level is a particularly suitable point to start. In some ways the subnational level is emblematic of the implications of political careers for actors and institutions. Being situated in the middle ground of systems of government and most career hierarchies alike, regional political offices display a particularly large variety of functions they serve for their holders: point of entry, springboard for higher office, alternative career path, fallback position, safeguard in order to secure another office.

As the regional level has greatly benefited from a whole wave of decentralization and federalization efforts in formerly unitary states (Spain, Belgium, Great Britain, Italy), the territorial organization of advanced industrial democracies has changed from a bipolar pattern to one that more resembles a continuum, a change signifying the convergence of federal and formerly unitary systems (Keating 1998: 112-7). At the same time, the meaning of the regional level for political careers has been greatly affected by the progressive professionalization of regional parliaments and regional politics more generally, transforming regional politics from an appendix of local amateur politics to an arena in its own right.

European integration and the institutionalization of the European Parliament have simultaneously shifted the focus to the supranational level. As a result, studying political careers in Europe now means to analyze four levels of government, the career moves between them, and the impact on multi-level governance implied. Yet while including the European level makes perfect sense, I will turn against the fashionable tendency to declare the European level the Mecca and Medina of politics and, by inference, political careers in Europe. As I hope to show, the major difference between the two new levels for (professional) political careers is that while the regional level may form an autonomous, self-contained arena, the European supra-national level hardly can do so leaving careers in Europe as something else than 'European careers'.
3. Types of Careers

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 by asking three questions:

- how much movement?
- movement in what direction?
- linkage by way of office cumulation or through established patterns of office 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\(^6\). 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 trigger the office-holders flight instinct and let him or her move on to what might be a safer haven.

At this point it is useful to introduce the notion of the three As regulating the structure of opportunity in a given polity: availability, accessibility, and attractivity. Availability refers to the offices that any given candidate can run for. 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. Also the way candidates are selected obviously makes a difference for availability. For example, if legislative candidates are selected in constituencies, only one mandate is available

\(^6\) Which implies that, initially, all careers are progressive.
per election per legislature. In PR systems with national lists each promising place on the list is available to any candidate (if that is not prevented by other formal or informal rules such as gender or regional quotas).

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. Also, other people's availability structures regulate individual accessibility: If an office is available for many people it might well be less easily accessible, as competition is heightened.

Finally, attractiveness refers to the properties of the office itself. This includes things as diverse as power, prestige, public visibility, job security, chances for a further rise, remuneration, personnel, technical support etc. As might be immediately clear, a high level of attractiveness might seriously impede accessibility. Thus, there are complex interactions between the three As that are the base for individual calculations to seek a certain office or to forego it. As a consequence political career moves may be better understood in these terms.

Thus, 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 effected either way by the presence of coordinating organizations like parties or interest groups: On the one hand serving as a clearinghouse 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, 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 => patterned rise
- high volatility with a high risk of involuntary turnover => easy entry, dangerous life
- a great number of appointive fallback positions (political control of patronage positions in state/society) => low overall risk of deprofessionalization

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7 These concepts are developed in Borchert 1999a.
8 Drawing the boundary is somewhat arbitrary, but I would consider it a low pace of movement, if changes of position occur less frequent than every ten years, and a high pace if on average more than two positions are held within a time-span of ten years.
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 behavior.

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 U.S.: "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).

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 clear cognitive, legal, or political boundaries between either levels of government or types of institutions.

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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 cross-overs between the offices of legislators and judges or district attorneys and secretaries or ministers. These career patterns focused on particular types of institutions are not considered in detail here. Note that for the purpose of the present paper focusing on levels of government a purely legislative career with a clear
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. Alternative career paths may theoretically also include different levels of government and different types of institutions. 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. In this paper I focus on careers that combine different levels of government, however.

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. 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 fallback 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 coordination in order to limit competition and guarantee professional survival in the midst of that terrible mechanism of job evaluation democracies provide for: elections. Thus, the integrated circuit model should be connected to a strong coordinating role for clearinghouse 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.

direction, for example from the local to the national to the European level, would be considered unidirectional and not alternative.
Figure 1:
Types of Political Careers

levels of government

- national
- regional
- local

unidirectional careers
alternative careers
integrated careers

career types

Linkage Mechanisms

Our premise was that career moves of politicians in some way link the institutions through which they pass during the course of that career. They bring their experiences from institution A to institution B, and they anticipate their future candidacy for office C while they still act in office D. But linkage may occur in two different ways.

Succession of offices is the type most often thought of in connection with political careers. The ambitious politicians seeks opportunities for career advancement. Once he or she detects such an opportunity, the costs (especially if the office is elective) and benefits 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 ambition.

The cumulation of offices is a more defensive strategy geared at least as much towards career maintenance than to career advancement. One person may hold several offices concurrently in order to combine several incomes, to increase his or her

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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 favoring succession between offices.
job safety by preempting 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 cumulation of offices typically is cross-institutional (party-legislative, legislative-executive) and often also transcends different levels of government.

We might also find specific combinations of succession and cumulation. 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 cumulation, but rather offices that are being held over a long time and being combined with a string of different offices.

**Movement and Linkage**

If we connect the criteria discussed above – speed and direction of movement and pattern of linkage –, we get closer to a typology of political careers. All in all, there are six likely career types:

Table 1:

**Types of Political Careers: Movement and Linkage**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career Type</th>
<th>Direction</th>
<th>Linkage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: &quot;climber&quot;</td>
<td>unidirectional</td>
<td>succession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: &quot;guardian&quot;</td>
<td>unidirectional</td>
<td>cumulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: &quot;bouncer&quot;</td>
<td>integrated</td>
<td>succession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: &quot;collector&quot;</td>
<td>integrated</td>
<td>cumulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: &quot;loyalist&quot;</td>
<td>alternative</td>
<td>succession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6: &quot;baron&quot;</td>
<td>alternative</td>
<td>cumulation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first career type ("climber") could also be termed the classical political career. Offices employ clear spaces within a fixed hierarchy, in which actors try to move up as fast as possible, giving up one office as they gain a new one. This comes closest to a common-sense understanding of a career ladder (cf. Francis and Kenny 2000, 2-6). The second type ("guardian") differs from this classical pattern only in that old offices are not abandoned but kept alongside newly won assignments – mostly to safeguard higher positions from challengers. Of course, there may be legal or simple time restraints as to the number of offices thus combinable. Yet what is important is the pattern of accumulation that implies a different, more defensive posture towards
the offices won earlier in one's career and also has ramifications for the institutional linkage.

The third career type ("bouncer") would seem anarchic to the casual observer. Politicians gain and give up offices seemingly without any clear direction, moving freely – bouncing back and forth – between levels of government and types of institutions in the process. This implies a rather flat hierarchy between different offices. The fourth career type ("collector") is based on an expansive strategy accumulating offices across levels and institutions. This would imply a rather small pool of office-holders dividing up positions among themselves.

The fifth type ("loyalist") encompasses several competing career patterns each of which is limited to a certain playing-field within the polity at large. Hence, the politician makes a choice of the level of government early on in his or her career and then remains loyal to it. Finally, the sixth pattern ("baron") describes the progressive resurrection of little fiefdoms of influence by politicians slowly expanding their sphere of influence within clearly demarcated territorial or institutional boundaries.

4. Career Types and Intergovernmental Linkage

Looking back at levels of government and their relationships, what does this typology mean? The different career types, for example, imply different roles given to the regional level, that is, they connect individual careers and regional politics in different ways. Yet they also provide different links between the regional level and other levels of government as well as between different institutions on the regional level. This is particularly true for the connection between party office and public office.

The pace of career moves is, of course, related to the time potentially spent on the regional level. If the pace is particularly high, chances are that the time spent in regional political office is rather short. Slower careers might mean more time spent on the state or regional level.

The direction of career moves also has an impact on the importance given to the regional level: Within an unidirectional career pattern the regional level is but a springboard to the national capital. Also, who departs 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 behavior quite different from those who say farewell for good.

The question of succession or cumulation 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, cumulation is the adequate response (if not explicitly or customarily ruled out). Cumulation in turn affects the linkage of the individual politician to the institution in which maintains a presence even though he or she spends greater amounts of time for another position.

Thus, we get the following picture of the link between individual careers and regional politics in the different career types:

Table 2: 
*Career Types and Regional Politics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career Type</th>
<th>Function of Regional Level</th>
<th>Strength of Individual Linkage to Regional Politics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: &quot;climber&quot;</td>
<td>springboard, goal</td>
<td>weak or strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: &quot;guardian&quot;</td>
<td>springboard, goal, home base</td>
<td>medium - strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: &quot;bouncer&quot;</td>
<td>always an option</td>
<td>weak - medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: &quot;collector&quot;</td>
<td>always an option, home base</td>
<td>medium - strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: &quot;loyalist&quot;</td>
<td>potential career goal</td>
<td>strong or non-existent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6: &quot;baron&quot;</td>
<td>potential career goal, 'personal fiefdom'</td>
<td>extremely strong or non-existent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 career of the "climber": If national politics is the goal, the regional level is but a springboard. On the other hand, at least in theory, it might the ultimate prize if the regional level is considered as top of the hierarchy. Cumulation (even-numbered types) is 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.

Table 3:  
Career Types and European Politics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career Type</th>
<th>Function of European Level</th>
<th>Strength of Individual Linkage to European Politics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: &quot;climber&quot;</td>
<td>goal, springboard</td>
<td>weak or strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: &quot;guardian&quot;</td>
<td>goal, springboard</td>
<td>weak or strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: &quot;bouncer&quot;</td>
<td>always an option</td>
<td>medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: &quot;collector&quot;</td>
<td>always an option</td>
<td>medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: &quot;loyalist&quot;</td>
<td>potential career goal</td>
<td>(strong) or non-existent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6: &quot;baron&quot;</td>
<td>impossible on the European level</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Looking at the European level, we find significant differences to the results for the regional level. For one, the differences between succession or cumulation do not exist. MEP is the only office that may be combined with some other office on another level, and that mandate can hardly serve as a means of career maintenance. Therefore its function is the same as for somebody who does not hold other offices concurrently.

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 'loyalist' career on the European level focusing on that level only is bound to be rather short-lived. As to barons, there is simply no aristocracy in Europe.

As a result, the role of the European level for politicians in Europe is 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 is preserved.

What do these results for the regional and supranational levels imply for the linkage between levels of government?

Table 4:

Career Types and Intergovernmental Linkage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career Type</th>
<th>Strength of Individual Linkage to Regional Politics</th>
<th>Strength of Individual Linkage to European Politics</th>
<th>Form of Linkage between Levels of Government</th>
<th>Strength of Linkage across Levels of Government</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: &quot;climber&quot;</td>
<td>weak or strong</td>
<td>weak or strong</td>
<td>Experience, Ambition</td>
<td>medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: &quot;guardian&quot;</td>
<td>medium - strong</td>
<td>weak or strong</td>
<td>Experience, Ambition, Cumulation</td>
<td>medium – strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: &quot;bouncer&quot;</td>
<td>weak - medium</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>Experience, Ambition, Return Option</td>
<td>medium – strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: &quot;collector&quot;</td>
<td>medium - strong</td>
<td>medium</td>
<td>Experience, Ambition, Return Option, Cumulation</td>
<td>strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: &quot;loyalist&quot;</td>
<td>strong or non-existent</td>
<td>(strong) or non-existent</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6: &quot;baron&quot;</td>
<td>extremely strong or non-existent</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The strongest linkage that amounts to an interlocking of institutions should occur in career type 4 ("collector"). Here levels of government are linked in four different ways. Politicians usually have experiences on other levels and they harbor 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 ambition. Finally, they accumulate offices in different institutions at different levels of government.

Only slightly weaker is the linkage effect in the careers of guardians and bouncers, that is, an unidirectional career with office cumulation and an integrated career without cumulation, 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. But the opposite is not true: It is not a weak orientation towards any one level that produces strong institutional linkage, but rather a type with a fairly strong orientation towards multiple levels.

**Political Careers, the Subnational Level, and the Political Class**

We can only speculate at this point about the likely political implications the different form and intensity of institutional linkage may have for regional politics. However, it seems logical to infer that autonomous career paths should favor 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 coordination, whereas interlocking favors coordination at the expense of political accountability.

In regional politics, the alternative career path is one that is very close to the aspirations of regionalist movements. Hence we should expect regionalism to develop a close affinity to alternative career paths where the regional level is an arena apart (cf. Stolz 2001). However, it remains to be seen how actors in successful regionalist movements reconcile the goals of their movements with their own career hopes. What is clear is that the preferences they develop while professionalizing politically will have an impact beyond their own careers.

In this context it might be fruitful to introduce the notion of political class (cf. Beyme 1993, 1996, Borchert and Golsch 1995, Borchert 1999a). This concept – originally developed by Italian political sociologist Gaetano Mosca (1939) in a predemocratic 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).

An 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 cumulation of offices which establishes regular contacts between the levels. An integrated career pattern favors a political class that is quite homogenous 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.

**Ideal Types and Real Types**

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

One divide we will most certainly find is that between countries with a pattern of office cumulation and those which do allow only for office succession. The latter case seems to be closely related to a Westminster heritage, as the group includes Australia, Canada, the U.S. and Great Britain. The cumulative pattern on the other hand can be found in Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Switzerland – that is, in continental European party democracies. The Netherlands seem to be some exception to the rule as here office cumulation is rather rare.

The types of offices that are combined at the same time vary, however. Thus, at first sight we find a pattern of mandate/local office/party office in Belgium, Germany, Italy, and Spain. In Austria, many politicians additionally hold positions in interest groups which are closely wedded to the two major parties. In Switzerland, mandates at the federal and cantonal level are frequently combined with either local office or a position within an interest group thus reflecting a mixture of territorial and functional representation characteristic for the Swiss political system. Party offices are less important here. In France, national mandates are combined with local or regional office whereas party and interest group offices do not figure prominently. How often the level of government on which the professional office is situated is changed within these cumulative patterns remains to be seen in a closer analysis. Of course, even within the cumulative patterns we find office succession, that is, some offices are given up for others in the course of a career.

Within the group of countries that emphasize office succession rather than cumulation, there is the least dynamic in UK careers. You have got to get to Westminster and, once there, you hope to reach the government ranks. This pattern may change, however, with devolution in Scotland and elsewhere (see Stolz 1999). In Canada, the provincial and the federal level are quite autonomous from each other. The existence of separate party organizations both underscores and reinforces the boundaries between the levels of government that structure political careers.
In the U.S., state and federal politics are fairly integrated, and the state level may serve as a springboard to national office. This it does in some U.S. states but not in others as Squire and others have pointed out. Looking at the regional level, we also find greatly varying degrees of professionalization in different offices. This entails greatly different chances to make a living off these offices and thus directs career moves. For example, regional legislatures are not always professionalized. In Germany and Spain they are, in the U.S. some are, while in Austria or Australia they are only partly professionalized.

Figure 2:
Career Types and Cases: A Tentative Scheme

In sum, real cases should fall somewhere within the triangle in Figure 2. If we want to name cases that are closest to any one corner, we could see the Unites States, 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' (cf. Francis and Kenny 2000, 2-3). Spain and Belgium would be rather close to the integrated model (for a more differentiated argument along regional lines see Klaus Stolz' paper for this workshop). 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, 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 same time, easier access than to a federal mandate has turned the European Parliament into an alternative track for political hopefuls.
5. Careers in a Multi-Level Setting: The Case of Lower Saxony

In order to gain an impression of what an analysis of political careers in a multi-level setting might look like, I have done a very rough analysis of political careers in the Germany state of Lower Saxony. More specifically, I have looked at the careers of the 161 members of the state legislature (1994-98), the 67 members of the Bundestag elected from Lower Saxony (1994-98), and the 9 members currently representing the state in the European Parliament (1999-).

Starting with the members of the "Landtag," the state legislature, let us first take a look at the political experience of members before they were elected. Only six of the 161 (= 4 percent) had no prior political experience, at least according to the information they gave in the Biographical Directory. The great majority – 150 (93 percent) – had had offices on the local level. 21 (13 percent) had experiences on the state level before joining the legislature, six (4 percent) on the national level, and two on the European level. 22 (14 percent) representatives had experiences on two levels of government before joining; afterwards a full 146 (90 percent) had.

These numbers show a clear hierarchy between the different levels of government. Obviously, the local level is the point of entry, and the state level is the logical next step. Yet the system seems to be permeable enough to allow for some careers that move in other ways. Nor are these necessarily dead-end careers: One of the politicians who chose to go from the federal to the state level was Gerhard Schröder who subsequently became Prime Minister of Lower Saxony and then Chancellor of the Federal Republic. He in a way circumvented career obstacles in Bonn via the state detour.

If we distinguish between types of institutions and offices – namely parliamentary, executive, party, interest group, and staff – 53 members (33 percent) drew their prior experience only from type of office, whereas 79 (49 percent) had occupied two types of office, and 23 (14 percent) even three or more. This accounts for an average experience in 1.8 different types of offices (the number of offices is much higher). The most common single experiences were member of a city or county council (129 – 80 percent) and local party office (78 – 48 percent) with local executive office (20 percent) and staff experience (11 percent) following at some distance.

Thus, we may conclude that newcomers to the state legislature of Lower Saxony are experienced politicians already, although only 23 of them clearly had a professional political job (mainly staff positions) before joining. But what about their careers after joining? Is there an cumulation of office? Indeed there is. Among them, the 161
members held (at least) 361 offices besides their mandate. This is an average of 2.3 offices per member – or 2.5 if we exclude those twelve legislators who do not have any other offices.

Among those offices, three types emerge as most important:

- local public office with 120 members being simultaneously a member of a city and/or county council and 33 being mayor or county executive ("Landrat"),
- party office (101) with most of them (77) on the local level\(^{11}\),
- positions on the boards of companies in the public sector or under public control (89)\(^{12}\).

The functions of these offices seem somewhat different. While local public office and party office serve as safeguards against possible inner-party challengers, the board positions provide a certain financial windfall.

Overall, state legislators in Lower Saxony operate within an extremely dense institutional network. Being recruited from local and party politics, most of them enter their first professional political job in the state legislature. Yet they maintain the institutional ties that brought them there, yes, they in some cases even intensify their activities on the local level and within their party. State and local politics are closely linked, indeed seem to be part of one political arena. The same is true for different institutions: representative assemblies, executive positions, party functions, staff positions on these levels, economic enterprise boards close to the state and to a somewhat lesser degree also interest group jobs all form part of a pool of positions that are held concurrently and successively. Yet there is also movement between the state and the national and European levels.

Table 5:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>State Legislators</th>
<th>Federal Legislators</th>
<th>European Legislators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>local</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>state</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>national</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{11}\) One member may hold party offices on different levels which were counted separately.

\(^{12}\) Some representatives held several such positions which were counted separately. On the other hand only positions in local and regional utility companies, local and regional banks, local housing corporations, local tourism companies, radio and TV stations, and state lottery corporations were included as these accounted for the bulk of board positions. There were, however, other positions which were not counted.
This becomes even clearer once we take a look at the Bundestag members from Lower Saxony. 43 of the 65 members who gave information in the directory had a background in local politics (66 percent), 16 in state politics (25 percent), five in national politics (8 percent), and one on the European scene. 15 (23 percent) had experiences on more than one level before being elected into the Bundestag.

As to institutional experience, the most common background was in party politics (77 percent) and representative assemblies (66 percent). Offices in interest groups, staff positions, and executive positions had each been held by about ten percent. Eleven members of the Lower Saxon federal delegation (16 percent) had before been members of the state legislature as compared to only two state legislators taking the opposite way. This again confirms the existence of a hierarchy corresponding roughly to the levels of government. Yet note that the large majority of German federal legislators do not have a background in state politics, but rather take the direct route from local to federal politics.

The same is true for European legislators. Even though we cannot make general judgments based on the extremely low number of cases, it is quite striking how important local party politics is for the recruitment of politicians on the European level. Experience in local councils plays a somewhat lesser role than for federal MPs. Rather, MEPs tend to be rooted in state parties as their second base. This makes perfect sense given the role of state parties in candidate selection. By and large, European representatives have less experience before they enter the European Parliament than their national counterparts. This could be interpreted as a European

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Levels</th>
<th>Lower Saxony</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>National</th>
<th>European</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>at least two levels</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>city/county council</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>local party office</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>67</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>local executive</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>state party office</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interest group function</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>staff</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no prior office</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one type of office</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>two types of office</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>three or more types of office</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
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<th>National</th>
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<td>city/city/country council</td>
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<td>local executive</td>
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<td>state party office</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>44</td>
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<tr>
<td>interest group function</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>staff</td>
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<td>no prior office</td>
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<tr>
<td>two types of office</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>57</td>
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<tr>
<td>three or more types of office</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
fast-track career for those very ambitious and talented politicians who succeed in bypassing the usual need for a slow rise within the party ranks. It could also point to the still unquestioned dominance of the national over the supranational level in German political careers, however, and the latter explanation seems to be more plausible.

What about cumulation of offices? This is less of a point in the Bundestag (and in the EP) than on the state level. However, on average each Lower Saxon MdB holds 1.3 extra offices and each MEP 1.6 offices. This may underestimate their extraparliamentary activities because information given in the directories I used is by far less comprehensive than for the state legislature. The great bulk of offices by members of the Bundestag is held on the local level (63 percent – 44 percent in the EP) with 16 percent maintaining a presence on the state level and 10 percent having a second office nationally. The strong preference for local and state offices can be attributed to motives of career maintenance.

This is confirmed by the institutional distribution of offices. 48 of the 63 deputies for whom we have adequate information hold at least one party office concurrently (76 percent), 40 of these on the local level, ten on the state level, and four nationally. This reflects the nomination process where renomination in the constituency is the critical first step handled by the local party and the composition of party lists by the state party is the second eye of the needle for legislators seeking renomination. The other important office saving the same purpose is membership in city and county councils which 18 MdBs (29 percent) keep besides their parliamentary duties in the capital. Otherwise there are only two other offices that are combined with that of federal deputy: four members are parliamentary secretaries of state and three hold positions within interest groups. While this picture almost certainly underestimates the density of network relations, it does show the intensity of inter-level and inter-institutional linkage.

Table 6:
Cumulation of Office among State, Federal, and European Legislators from Lower Saxony
(in percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>State Legislators</th>
<th>Federal Legislators</th>
<th>European Legislators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>no cumulation</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>local party</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>local council</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>local executive</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MEPs tend to give up some of their offices. The ones they usually keep are in local and state party politics. State parties are particularly important here, because they have a crucial influence on the selection of candidates for state and federal party lists. Thus, European representatives want to maintain some control over state party boards and hence try to keep (or even gain) a seat there. Their presence in federal party office is rather dim as is their presence in local (non-party) politics. Only one of the nine European representatives from Lower Saxony concurrently holds a local council mandate. While this is easily explainable with time restraints and the distance between home town and Brussels or Strasbourg, the lack of representation on federal party boards is more noteworthy. I would suggest that this reflects the lack of power and influence among MEPs within national parties. The issue at stake here is not career maintenance but rather political power – which is still centered in Berlin rather than on the European level.

By comparison the major difference between the political backgrounds of state, federal, and European legislators is a stronger rooting of state legislators in elective local politics and a stronger presence of federal and European legislators in party politics. The extent of experience in different territorial and institutional contexts especially of state and federal MPs remains striking – as does the degree of similarity between these experiences. Looking at the cumulation patterns in comparison this impression is confirmed:

To sum up our findings in this little case study, we find movement from the local level mostly (but by no means exclusively!) populated by amateurs into the professionalized state, federal, and European arenas. While the national arena still is the highest prize, higher pay and good working-conditions have established state legislatures such as that of Lower Saxony as a goal in themselves\(^{13}\). Thus, there is further movement between the levels, but it is rather limited. Instead, we find a pattern of office cumulation geared mostly towards career maintenance, but also to the mining of extra income sources and the option of further career advancement. The strategic

\(^{13}\) On average, the 39 members (24 percent) who left the state legislature voluntarily or involuntarily in 1998 had served 10.3 years. The 21 members who left the Bundestag in the same year (31 percent of the Lower Saxon delegation) had served an average 13.0 years.
positions for these goals rest in local government and party politics which serve as a link between the levels of government.

Hence the three highly professionalized levels of government within the German polity are linked less by career experience and anticipation than indirectly through local and party politics. This peculiar way of institutional linkage is bound to cause a special mode of politics and might even explain some of the problems Germany has faced recently with regard to its brand of interlocking federalism.

6. Conclusion: Individual Careers and Institutional Linkage

Why and how study political careers, asked John Hibbing (1999) in a recent article. 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 paper I would like to amend and specify that answer.

Institutions exist in a highly structured and hard-to-change system. Some of them are constitutionally defined, all of them are legally restrained. Studying political institutions thus most often is analyzing 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 dynamic. People have their own sets of priorities and they are hardly ever content with what they got. 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.

But on the other hand we can also understand institutional change as the result of attempts to alter the boundaries of action, to mold 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 perspective to understand institutional stability and change. At the same time it reminds us that the political actor’s world is not primarily defined 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 I want to pursue a political career, at least initially I am
not bound by any one institution. Accepting this perspective (which implies taking careers as unit of analysis, as first being practiced 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-centered (centered 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 paper. As I tried to outline in this paper, an integrated career pattern which would mean no or very little institutional boundaries can itself be highly institutionalized. Only then the point of reference for political careerists is 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.

The link between career structures and institutional reform might be another issue to which this kind of research could make a contribution (also cf. Matthews 1985, 42). Within U.S. political science one very promising attempt to do just that is provided by Michael Berkman's studies on the movement of state legislators to Congress with their integration of a collective learning perspective (Berkman 1993, 1994, Berkman et al. 1995; also cf. Dodd 1994). Another thread well worth taking up again is provided by Peter Swenson's article (1982) on changes in political careers and their effect on institutional reform in the U.S. House at the beginning of this century (also see Epstein et al. 1997). Analyses like this could quite nicely be combined with the approach to institutional reform developed by Davidson and Oleszek (1976) and by Dodd (1977, 1981). This precisely is the goal of the political class approach that acknowledges both the institutional linkage provided by careers and career expectations and the potential effects on institutional reform granted by legislators' privileged access to the means of reform.

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 fallback position),
- through learning (due to experience in other offices),
- through coordination (due to personnel overlap, cumulation of offices).
While a thorough analysis of this point is beyond the scope of this paper, it might well be worth asking what the effect of a change in career patterns for the institutional architecture of a multi-level polity might be. For example, if a polity has been characterized by a comparatively high degree in all three linkage patterns like the German system, and this strong institutional linkage via careers was a functional ingredient of a system of interlocking federalism (cf. Lehmann 1998) – what does a development towards alternative career path then imply? To make things even more complicated, the increased autonomy of regional careers is accompanied by a loss of decisional autonomy for that level of government. As a result, we have a widening gap between career patterns and type of federalism – a kind of hollow regionalism.

Thus, the third lesson I would like to draw is 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.

The regional level may be a particularly suitable focus of study without neglecting the other levels. This is partly because outside the U.S. we know so little about subnational political careers. Secondly, chances are that in any hierarchically structured polity the ambitious somehow hold regional office at some point in their careers. Thirdly, in an era when the subnational level seems to gain in prominence and power it would be all the more important to have a clear conception of its links with other levels.

Overall, this and other papers for this workshop could provide the starting-point for an internationally comparative research endeavor 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.

Bibliography


