

## **(Re-)Assessing Political Careers Patterns in Multi-Level Systems. The Case of Wallonia in Belgium**

### **ABSTRACT**

Most studies on political careers adopt a macro perspective to establish career patterns which brings the risk of overlooking the importance of transfers between parliaments in the establishment of career patterns. As movements between levels often hides a more complex empiric reality of political careers, this research suggests to adopt a micro-longitudinal perspective through the systematic analysis of individual political careers. Based on an in-depth case study of Walloon trajectories in Belgium, this article demonstrates that this approach permit to uncover other patterns. Contrary to the conclusions of previous studies, the findings conclude that Wallonia is not only characterized by the integrated career, but completed by three other robust career patterns, the alternative pattern with the regional and federal careers and the discrete pattern.

**KEYWORDS:** Political Careers, Political Class, Wallonia, Multi-Level Systems

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**\*\*\*\**Note for the readers*\*\*\*\***

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## Introduction

With the process of regionalization in formerly unitary Western European democracies, there is renewed interest for conceptual and empirical studies on political careers in recent federal political systems (Real-Dato, Rodríguez-Teruel, and Jerez-Mir 2011; Rodríguez-Teruel 2011; Edinger and Jahr 2012; Vanlangenakker, Maddens, and Put 2010; Stolz 2010; Pilet, Fiers, and Steyvers 2007; Best 2007; Fiers 2001) but also in established federations (Docherty 2011; Detterbeck 2011; Borchert and Stolz 2011a). The professionalization of the regional political spaces directly challenges the conventional assumption that ambitious politicians move on the political ladder from the substate to the national level (Schlesinger 1966). Recent findings demonstrate that political careers are sometimes characterized by opposite movements (from the national to the substate level, i.e. “inverse springboard”), by clear-cut divisions between levels (“alternative careers”) or, simply suggest a lack of hierarchy between territories (“integrated careers”) (Stolz 2003).

When such patterns are used to label a whole region or a country, the pitfall is that it might sometimes lead to a biased picture or even worse, could lead to a misleading conclusion. The risk is really present when movements between national and regional parliaments are overlooked to determine career patterns. In this case, some might be tempted to identify an integrated careers based on the proportion of regional MPs who moved to the national Parliament and national MPs who left the parliament to take a seat in the regional parliament. Those movements may nonetheless hide another reality: a political class that displays a strong ‘integrated’ careers pattern may exist along a second class of politicians who have ‘alternative’ career at the regional and/or the national Parliament. In other words, the possibility of multiple patterns should be *a priori* considered and assessed by adopting a microscopic point of view through the systematic analysis of individual political trajectories. “Legislative careers: why and how we should study them?” asked Hibbing (1999). The why and how are without a doubt connected, the way the ‘how’ question is answered influence responses to the ‘why’ question. Beyond the need of accurate descriptions in research on political careers, it is critical thus to uncover all patterns since careers are often used as core indicators in research on parliaments or political class. This paper relies on the analysis of a comprehensive analysis of all the 419 Walloon political careers since the institution of the regional Parliament in 1995 in Wallonia, the French-speaking region in the south of Belgium. The latter is often presented as a good example of integrated careers (Pilet, Fiers, and Steyvers 2007; Vanlangenakker, Maddens, and Put 2010), a microscopic analysis demonstrates however the existence of three additional robust careers patterns in Wallonia.

In this article, the first two sections introduce the literature review on political careers and expose to what extent this microscopic approach of political careers is required. Next, the case selection and the methodology are presented while in the fourth section give the empirical findings that corroborate the co-existence of four careers patterns in Wallonia. Finally, the interest of the empirical results political careers and political class are discussed before concluding.

## Political Careers in Multi-Level Democracies

In the wake of Schlesinger (1966)’s seminal work on American political careers, the substate legislative institutions were extensively considered as simple stepping stones toward the na-

tional level which is assumed to be the top of the hierarchic divisions in multi-level systems. From the viewpoint of these rational studies, candidates fuelled by their “political ambition” aim to reach higher positions with superior prestige and greater influence. Based on a cost-benefit calculation, US local politicians evaluate thus their interest to run for elections at the state legislatures while the most ambitious and successful politicians consider entering the Congress and the Senate. Definitely, “political careers do not proceed chaotically. There are patterns of movement from office to office” (Schlesinger 1966, 118). The emergence of these patterns is thus not the product of chance but results from evaluation and anticipation by ambitious political candidates in a given structure of political opportunities. Following Borchert (2011), the cost-benefit calculation of this institutional environment is based on a threefold evaluation (the three A’s): political careers are determined by the “availability” of offices (e.g. what are party internal rules and legal provisions reserving quota?), “accessibility” (what is the ease to access offices in terms of intra-party selection and inter-party electoral competition), and “attractiveness” (mainly measured through the degree of professionalization regarding income and career maintenance as well as prestige and influence).

Until the end of the 1990s, the unidirectional hypothesis towards the national level was yet more often assumed than really empirically investigated because of two main reasons. First, national bias in most research tended to integrate a normative predominance of the state level; second, most studies focused on a single legislative institution, be it the national or the substate Parliaments. Paradoxically, there was more cross-sectional comparative research on national Parliaments than intra-case studies. Even in established federations with strong substate institutions – e.g. Germany, Australia, Canada, and US (Gallagher and Marsh 1988; Rush 1994; Norris 1995, 1997; Best and Cotta 2000) – there was no comprehensive analysis of the linkages between levels. In other words, “the state structure is taken for granted, together with the centrality of the federal level” and “the direct link between federal states and career studies [...] is missing” (Deschouwer 2001, 4-10).

Since the 2000s, this gap has been considerably reduced. In formerly unitary states such as Belgium, Spain and the UK, the creation of institutions with strong regional authority has indeed profoundly altered the structures of political opportunities in Western democracies. Contrarily to long-established federations in which the substate legislatures co-exist with the national Parliaments since the creation of the federation, the regional Parliaments are the result of nationalist and regionalist claims. Scots, Welsh, Irish, Walloons, Flemish, Catalans, Basques... all fought to witness the establishment of ‘their’ Parliaments. Furthermore, far from being arenas for political amateurs, the regional levels constitute genuine spaces for professional politics (Borchert 2001, 5; Carter and Pasquier 2010). Therefore, it is now assumed that “regionalism matters for professional careers” (Stolz 2001; 2011, 224), although regionalism is a necessary but not a sufficient condition. This is the analysis of the effects of the structure of opportunity that permits to understand how careers patterns emerge.

Stolz (2003)’s research was the first cross-sectional comparison to truly integrate the territorial dynamics of political careers. If anything, climbing the political ladder is not the *only* road to offices. Even though the unidirectional hierarchical pattern is still pertinent in some regions and countries in the world, and other models exist. Based on the magnitude and direction of movements between territories – be it centrifugal (from the national to the regional) or centripetal (from the regional to the national) – the author identified four distinct patterns (see

figure 1)<sup>1</sup>. The “classic springboard” or “unidirectional pattern” constitutes the most famous category of career patterns and corresponds to the ladder metaphor: ambitious candidates climb up the political ladder towards the national offices that represent the top positions. The “inverse springboard” is its counterpart and is also characterized by a clear-cut division of prestige and influence but toward the substate legislative institution. In this respect, the two patterns expose a high centripetal ratio (classic springboard) and a high centrifugal ratio (inverse springboard) associated with low movements towards the inferior positions. With 49.6 of state legislators in the 2012 American Congress<sup>2</sup>, the US is still a good illustration of the classic springboard while examples of the inverse springboard are harder to find in the long run.

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

	High centripetal ratios	Low centripetal ratios
Low centrifugal ratios	Classic springboard	Alternative Careers
High Centrifugal ratios	Integrated Careers	Inverse Springboard

*Source:* Stolz (2003, 2010)

The alternative careers are also hierarchically oriented but in both directions with the substate and the national levels evaluated as professionalised spaces for politics. The main characteristic is thus a strong territorial divide associated with a very low ratio of movements between regional and national institutions. This is for instance observed in Scotland (Stolz 2010, 2011) and several Canadian Provinces (Docherty 2011)(Dodeigne, Forthcoming). Finally, the integrated careers pattern is the only pattern that does not expose a clear-cut hierarchy but, on the contrary, is characterized by an imbrication of levels. This absence of strong territorial boundaries explains the large proportion of legislative transfers in both directions, i.e. high centripetal and high centrifugal ratios. In this respect, Spain and Belgium are often cited as good empirical examples of the integrated careers pattern (Fiers 2001; Vanlangenakker 2009; Stolz 2010, 2011; Pilet, Fiers, and Steyvers 2007). These studies have unquestionably advanced the understating of the territorial dynamics in multi-level systems. Yet, the focus on the mere level-hopping movements prevents from providing a comprehensive understanding of political careers.

### **(Re-)Assessing Political Careers Patterns**

Regions and countries are now labelled according to those careers patterns. It is however a common challenge for all researchers to propose analytical and conceptual tools that aggre-

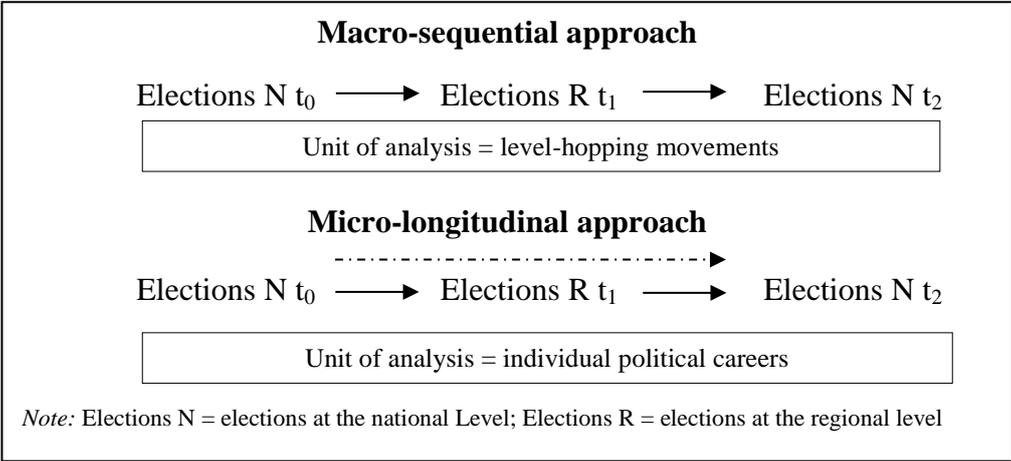
gate individual and complex behaviours without distorting the individual phenomena. In other words, the careers pattern should not hide the plurality of political actors' behaviours. This is substantially one of the Borchert and Stolz (2011b, 276)'s conclusions based on the comparative analysis of political path in six countries in a recent special issue of *Regional & Federal studies*:

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

The fact that the unit of analysis remains extensively based upon level-hopping movements in the literature does not permit to fully meet the internal validity of the findings. The lack and/or presence of inter-territorial movements is a necessary but not sufficient condition to characterize political careers. Concretely, are alternative careers really alternatives when the assembly is made of a huge proportion of newly elected MPs at almost all elections? For instance, there are low centrifugal and low centripetal ratios of transfers between Westminster and Scotland as well as between the Canadian House of Commons and several Canadian Provinces, but the turnover is generally low at the Scottish elections while Canada has one of the largest turnovers in advanced democracies (Matland and Studlar 2004). In the case of high ratio of inter-territorial movements (integrated careers), it is even tempting to overlook the primacy of movements whereas it is also possible that alternative and integrated patterns are observed simultaneously. One does not exclude the other and it requires moving beyond the mere analysis of movements and adopting a microscopic standing point of view. The internal validity of career patterns is thus not limited to variances between political parties, and complementary to Borchert and Stolz precautionary advice, it entails the observation of variances among *individuals*. In order to evaluate whether regions and countries expose distinct patterns, two methodological precautions are required.

Firstly, researchers should recourse to individual political careers as units of analysis (microscopic approach). It implies switching from the current *macro perspective* that use a more *sequential* approach (description of level-hopping movements from one election to the next one) to a systematic *micro-longitudinal* approach (diachronic analysis of all the individual careers, see figure 3).

**Figure 3.** Models of Analysis for Political Careers



In the macro-sequential approach, studies are certainly not reduced to the counting of movements between levels but the political careers tend to be analysed through aggregate indicators such as the turnover or the ratio of incumbency. Using the latter from one election to another provides valuable information but prevents to really apprehend the rationale of careers path for instance, are career transfers between levels caused by the same or distinct MPs? What are the exact MPs' political experiences after each election and not just the ratio of turnover/incumbency? Those questions are hitherto not systematically answered and the fact that the collection of comprehensive longitudinal data is extremely time-consuming is certainly one of the reasons. Adopting a micro point of view with individuals as the unit of analysis constitutes nonetheless a very promising path of research (see however Herzog 1975; Vanlangenakker 2009; Vanlangenakker and Maddens 2011; Real-Dato, Rodríguez-Teruel, and Jerez-Mir 2011; Kjaer 2011). Furthermore, such in-depth investigation of individual career paths is also helpful for later looking at movements and pattern construction under fresh eyes, ones that take the more complex picture of political career patterns into account.

The second condition relates to case selection. Until very recently, the limited numbers of legislatures prevented from corroborating the (non-)existence of various careers patterns in the newly regionalized and federalized democracies. Indeed, presuming that a regional alternative careers pattern co-exists with an integrative careers model requests a substantive number of legislatures to simply 'permit' the development of careers pattern. A critical mass of observations is necessary to identify career patterns that reflect real trends and not just conjunctures<sup>3</sup>. In this paper, the case-study of Wallonia demonstrates that the microscopic approach enables to uncover several careers patterns that co-exist within a region.

## **Method and Data**

### *Case selection: Wallonia*

A recent study stated (Vanlangenakker, Maddens, and Put 2010) that there is indeed "strong evidence that career patterns in Belgium are in line with the 'integrated careers' model" (see also Fiers 2001; Pilet, Fiers, and Steyvers 2007). In this respect, this is a good case to assess the existence of other patterns as the findings apply for the country as a whole but also for Wallonia which is the French-speaking Region of 4 million inhabitants in the south of the Belgian federation. The Walloon Parliament exists since 1980 but it was initially composed of national MPs elected in the Walloon electoral districts at the national elections. Since 1995, Walloons directly elect their regional members (MRPs) at the Walloon Parliaments while they still vote for federal representatives (MFPs) at the Chamber of Representatives and the Senate. The establishment of substate parliaments in Belgium is the result of a process of regionalization launched in 1970 under the pressure of the regionalist and nationalist parties in Flanders – the second and larger community in Belgium – and Wallonia.

The historic Walloon regionalist party – *Rassemblement Wallon* (RW) – is yet not represented anymore in any legislative institutions since 1981. "Victim of its own success", the regionalist Walloon movement (and its 'political personal') has been "structurally and programmatically" absorbed by traditional political forces (Van Haute and Pilet 2006, 310) – i.e. mainly by the socialists (PS), but also by the liberals (MR), and the Christian Democrats (cdH) while the Greens (Ecolo) replaced (at that time) the RW as the major 'protest' party in Wallonia. There are thus four major parties regularly represented in the assembly while the

extreme-right and populist formation obtain more sporadically federal and regional MPs<sup>4</sup>. It is worth noting that there is thus no distinction between the federal and regional area regarding the party system since there is a single – regionalized – party system in Wallonia (Brack and Pilet 2010). An additional particularity is that political parties are not internally divided along the territorial division of the country: there is no distinction between a Walloon and a federal party branch<sup>5</sup>.

#### *Data and method*

The dataset is composed of every single Walloon individual politician that, at one time or another, held an office in the Walloon Parliament, the federal Parliament (Chamber and Senate) and the European Parliament<sup>6</sup>. For the sake of brevity, European elections are not presented. However, there are carefully taken into account to measure level-hopping movements from and towards the European level. For instance, European careers are not mixed with federal and regional alternative patterns but form a specific kind of careers. Overall, 13 Walloon politicians present integrated careers between the European and the federal or regional Parliaments, three had alternative European careers (minimum two mandates) while two have very short European experiences. In total, the dataset encompasses all the 419 individual political careers (316 men and 103 women) that existed since the 1991 national elections. For each individual career, the six following variables are coded: the legislative as well as the executive offices at the regional, federal, and European level. Four MPs' socio-political attributes are furthermore included in order to control internal validity of the career patterns: political party, gender, electoral district, and local offices.

**Table 1.** Walloon Political Careers Analysed<sup>7</sup>

<b>Walloon Parliament (75 seats)</b>		<b>Federal Parliament (variable Walloon seats)</b>		<b>European Parliament (variable Walloon seats)</b>	
-	-	91-95	68 S/74 CH	-	-
95-99	89 MRPs	95-99	19 S/56 CH	94-99	10 MEPs
99-04	98 MRPs	99-03	12 S/62 CH	99-04	14 MEPs
04-09	92 MRPs	03-07	14 S/72 CH	04-09	11 MEPs
09-14	89 MRPs	07-10	16 S/74 CH	09-14	9 MEPs
-	-	10-	13 S/58 CH	-	-

*Source* : Author's own compilation of electoral results and include successions until June 2012 to integrate movements after the 2010 federal elections and after the formation of the federal Government in December 2011. The local offices of MPs are completed with the biographical encyclopaedia of Walloon Parliamentarians (Delforge 2010).

The 1991 national elections constitute the starting point of the inquiry as several MFPs left their national office to take up a seat in the Walloon Parliament at the 1995 first regional elections. During the 1991-2012 period, all movement within and between assemblies have been carefully registered and three specific moments are scrutinized:

- At the federal elections, the possibility of federal alternative careers is considered. Since the first 1995 regional elections, political actors play indeed with the new 'rules of the games'. After five federal elections, how many MPs did pursue a career at the federal Parliament without ever moving to the Walloon and the European Parliament? And, for

how long did they hold a seat at this level of government? Besides, only MFPs who had a federal office during at least two (entire) mandates are considered. The definition of this duration is based on the average duration ( $M=2.29$ ) of the 419 careers under scrutiny.

- At the Walloon regional elections, the proportion of MRPs with a regional career is calculated in line with the criteria used for the federal alternative careers (at least two legislative terms).
- During the 1991-2012 period, the conventional wisdom about Belgium's integrated career pattern is re-evaluated. Following Vanlangenakker, Maddens, and Put (2010), a level-hopping movement is defined as "resigning an office on one level to take up one upon the other level" not only for legislative but also governmental positions. For instance, a representative elected at the federal Parliament who is called into the Walloon government is considered to cause a level-hopping movement. Since the end of vertical simultaneity between the federal and regional elections in 2003 (Fabre 2010, 180-1), the electoral cycle has produced five inter-territorial 'corridors'. Level-hopping movements are furthermore likely during legislatures because MRPs and MFPs are called into the regional and federal executives after government formation.

### **Career Patterns in Wallonia**

What are the career patterns in Wallonia? Before analysing in details all political trajectories, the first composition of the Walloon legislature (1995) has to be presented individually considering the effects that first direct regional elections produce as a specific political 'momentum'. At that moment, 54 deputies left indeed the national Parliament to take a seat in Walloon Parliament. And to really understand the weight of the latter, it is worth distinguishing the "institution-oriented import" perspective (the ratio of former national MPs in the regional parliament) and the "actor-oriented export" perspective (the ratio of MPs who left the national Parliament for a regional office) (Stolz 2011, 229). From the import point of view, 69.3 per cent of all the regional seats were occupied by representatives with former national experience. In comparison to other Western regions, this percentage is in fact considerable: they were for instance only 12.6 and 18.6 per cent of former national MPs in Catalonia (1980) and Scotland (1999) at the first regional legislatures. And, the Walloon exception still prevails from the 'export' perspective with 44.6 per cent of national representatives who left the Chamber and the senate to get elected in Namur (the seat of the Walloon Parliament)<sup>8</sup>, which is again higher than in Catalonia (24.6) and in Scotland (20.6).

The explanation has to be found in the analysis of the structure of opportunity. Particularly, the relative availability of seats at stakes between the federal and the regional Parliaments is determinant. For example, in Scotland, there were 72 Scottish Westminster seats and 129 at the Scottish Parliament which is a ratio of more or less 1:2 for the first 1999 Scottish elections. In other words, even though all the Scottish MPs had moved to the Scottish Parliament, the latter would have been composed at the maximum of a short majority of level-hopping MPs. In comparison, there were 112 Walloon federal seats – 69 deputies and 43 senators, including the provincial (5) and the co-opted (4) members – but only 75 regional seats in 1995. The ratio is thus completely reversed, around 3:2. Furthermore, because the total number of Walloon federal seats was reduced by around 50 per cent at the same period (see data), there was at that moment a national political class representing almost twice the size of the Walloon

Parliament. The availability of seats between the two parliaments explains therefore the massive presence of national MPs in the Walloon Parliament in 1995 and this is why level-hopping movements that occurred during the first 1995 regional elections has to be carefully distinguished from the others.

### *Integrated careers*

There are nonetheless 78 additional level-hopping movements identified after the 1995 elections (i.e. 131 in total including the 54 of the first Walloon legislature). Regarding their *magnitude*, such movements are certainly not an epiphenomenon but rather a common trait in Wallonia: in the average, 8.7 movements occurred at each legislature for both the federal and regional parliaments. In terms of *direction*, it appears that there are no clear-cut territorial divisions towards a specific level, although there are substantially more transfers from the federal to the regional level. 31 MRPs left the Walloon Parliament to take a seat in the federal Parliament while 47 moved in the opposed direction. The last anticipatory 2010 federal elections have however affected the proportion of movements resulting in an uneven balance of transfers in favour of the Walloon Parliament. At that moment, most political parties decided to reselect an unusual high proportion of incumbent federal MPs and did not have time to organise a genuine internal candidate selection process due to the limited period of electoral campaign (40 days in the case of anticipatory elections). Overall, the magnitude and the direction of level-hopping movements are thus perceived as strong evidence to label Walloon careers as integrated. This is furthermore enhanced by the ‘integrated’ electoral strategy of political parties. Since the 2003 national elections, Vanlangenakker, Maddens, and Put (2010) calculated for instance that between 38.7 and 49.3 percent of all the Walloon MRPs were candidates at the federal elections even though only a few of them got elected and even less decided to switch offices.

**Table 2.** Alternative and Integrated Careers for the 1991-2012 Period

Legislatures	Federal		Regional	
	Alternative	Integrated	Alternative	Integrated
1995-1999 Federal	13	9 ←		n.a
1995-1999 Regional		→	60*	
1999-2003 Federal	12	2 ←		
1999-2004 Regional		→	16	15
2003-2007 Federal	9	10 ←		
2004-2009 Regional		→	23	18
2007-2010 Federal	4	10 ←		
2009-2014 Regional		→	2	17
2010-... Federal	27	←		
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Total but the 1995 R</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>50</b>

*Note:* \*54 with a former national experience and 6 movements during the session due to federal MPs called into the regional government. *Source:* Author’s own calculations.

Students of political careers should not however stop their analysis at this stage if they seek to appreciate the rationale of all political careers. Beyond the inter-territorial movements, researchers have to pay attention to representatives that pursue a career in the same legislative institution. Those two observations are often investigated simultaneously in the literature since high turnover tend to favour movements due to the seats availability that turnover causes while on the contrary high incumbency reduces the possibility of switching levels. What is proposed in this paper go one step further: beyond the aggregated indicators such as turnover and incumbency, individual political careers are also scrupulously investigated within each assembly.

#### *Alternatives federal and regional careers*

Based on observations from table 2, 115 politicians exhibit the characteristics of the alternative careers pattern. The latter consists of 65 politicians with federal alternative careers and 50 politicians with regional alternative careers. For these alternative careers, the representatives are identified in the table 2 according to the latest office they held in order to not present double-counting. Considering the high frequency of resignations during legislature in all Belgian parliaments, two additional aspects of the political career have to be controlled: the number of elected offices per MPs and the effective duration that MPs serve in office. And once those two variables are controlled, there is clearly a robust pattern of federal alternative careers. Despite the frequent opportunities of switching levels, 65 representatives have a career at the federal level only where they successfully stood for elections at least twice. An overwhelming majority (86.1 per cent) were actually successful at three elections and even half of them were elected after four electoral campaigns. In practice, they however did not keep their offices for the entire legislative term (be it as MPs or members of the government). The effective duration of these offices is indeed slightly shorter but does not cast doubt on the existence of a consolidated alternative federal career.

**Table 3.** MPs-Alternative Careers' Experiences

	<b>Federal Alternative Careers</b>		<b>Regional Alternative Careers</b>	
	Nb. of Elections by MPs	Effective duration by MPs	Nb. of Elections by MPs	Effective duration by MPs
<b>≥ 2 mandates</b>	9	34	21	32
<b>≥ 3 mandates</b>	24	9	20	18
<b>≥ 4 mandates</b>	8	12	9	-
<b>≥ 5 mandates</b>	8	6	-	-
<b>≥ 6 mandates</b>	8	3	-	-
<b>≥ 7 mandates</b>	5	1	-	-
<b>≥ 8 mandates</b>	2	0	-	-
<b>≥ 9 mandates</b>	1	0	-	-
<b>Average</b>	4.03	3.35	3.06	2.55

*Note:* Effective duration is based on the effective duration in months the MPs hold their legislative/executive offices. At the federal level, the mandates last four years. At the regional level, the mandates last five years except the first four-year regional legislature.

*Source:* Author's own calculations.

Solid proofs also exist for the identification of a regional alternative profile with 49 politicians who pursued a career at the Walloon Parliament only. And similarly to their federal colleagues, most of them were quite successful at the regional elections. In the average, a large majority of them were elected at least three times and they occupied their seats during 2.56 legislatures which represents all the same 12.8 years in Namur. This proportion is really significant considering that 1995 Walloon Parliament was mostly composed of former national representatives. And because most of the latter had a long political experience prior to enter the Walloon Parliament while they were physically aged (the average age is 57.32 years), it is not surprising to observe that 38.6 per cent did not even stand again for elections. In other words, although the political and electoral context of the first regional legislature significantly diminished the possibility of having numerous MRPs pursuing a long regional alternative career, 50 politicians still managed to stay at least 10 years in the Walloon Parliament.

#### *Discrete and other careers*

If anything, the integrated model is only one piece of the puzzle in Wallonia. There is a patchwork of careers patterns in which the integrated careers actually concerns hardly 13.4 per cent of all the 419 Walloon politicians. In this respect, the proportion of politicians with alternative careers is very similar, respectively 15.9 and 12.2 percent of federal and regional careers. The most important pattern is actually made of 112 individuals (26.8 per cent) who never caused a single level-hopping movement and have a parliamentary experience for duration shorter than two mandates. This category represents the “discrete career” with very short legislative experience at the regional level (average of 2.2 years), federal level (1.7 years)<sup>9</sup>. This duration appears especially short in view of the MPs’ alternative and integrative experiences before mentioned. Finally, there are two last categories with methodological challenges: the current careers and the ‘other’ category (table 4a). The 78 current careers are still indecisive because it would be difficult to assess whether those on-going careers will turn into integrated, alternative or even discrete careers profile. Only forthcoming elections would permit to qualify them. The other category also concerns MPs for whom the classification is more ambiguous as they had a national experience until 1995 but were not subsequently re-elected or for a very tiny period (a few months): they thus did not experience the multi-level rules of the game. In the rest of the paper, only the first four main patterns are thus investigated in details concerning the internal validity of the findings.

**Table 4a.** Distribution of All Walloon Political Careers

<b>Political Party</b>	<b>Integrated Career</b>	<b>Federal Career</b>	<b>Regional Career</b>	<b>Discrete Career</b>	<b>Current /‘others’</b>	<b>Nb. MPs</b>
Christian Dem. (cdH)	16.3	16.3	13.8	23.8	30.0	80
Greens (Ecolo)	6.2	7.7	6.2	49.2	30.8	65
Liberals (MR)	13.6	20.4	14.6	26.2	25.2	103
Socialist (PS)	15.1	16.4	11.9	14.5	42.1	159
Extreme right (FN)	-	-	8.3	75.0	16.7	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>13.4</b>	<b>15.9</b>	<b>12.2</b>	<b>26.8</b>	<b>33.9</b>	<b>419</b>

*Source:* Author’s own calculations.

### *Internal validity of career patterns*

Last but not least, MPs' socio-political attributes have to be controlled in order to speak of robust career patterns. And, party variance is certainly among the most critical to control: are political careers patterns the results of certain political parties or are they observed across party? Based on the chi-square tests, there is indeed a significant variation of pattern across parties ( $p < .0001$ ). However a rapid glance at the descriptive statistics of table 4b helps to understand that the greens and the populists and extreme-right formations are outliers. And this is not surprising in the light of the parties' history. In the absence of charismatic leaders, clear manifesto and organisation, the only extreme-right party – the *Front National (FN)* – that managed to obtain a parliamentary representation in Wallonia obtain generally low electoral scores at all levels (Jamin 2012)<sup>10</sup>. Actually, endless internal disputes finally led to the recent dismantling of the FN while the party is not represented anymore in any legislative institutions since the last federal regional elections. In this context, the few FN-MPs always had discreet careers except one of them who were elected twice.

**Table 4b.** Distribution of Walloon Political Careers by pattern

<b>Political party</b>	<b>Integrated Career</b>	<b>Federal Career</b>	<b>Regional Career</b>	<b>Discrete Career</b>	<b>Current /'others'</b>	<b>Nb. MPs</b>
Christian Dem. (cdH)	23.2	23.2	19.6	33.9	-	56
Greens (Ecolo)	8.9	11.1	8.9	71.1	-	45
Liberals (MR)	18.2	27.3	19.5	35.1	-	77
Socialist (PS)	26.1	28.3	20.7	25.0	-	92
Extreme right (FN)	0.0	0.0	10.0	90.0	-	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>19.6</b>	<b>23.2</b>	<b>17.9</b>	<b>39.3</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>280</b>

**Chi-square tests ( $\chi^2$ )** between the four main patterns and political parties.

$\chi^2$  with all political parties (n=280): Pearson  $\chi^2 = 40.3973$  (df=12;  $p < .0001$ )

$\chi^2$  without Ecolo and others (n=225): Pearson  $\chi^2 = 3.1910$  (df= 6 ;  $p = 0.785$ )

*Source:* Author's own calculations.

Ecolo, the French-speaking green party in Belgium, was created in 1980 and sent ecologists in the Chamber of Representatives and the Senate after its first electoral participation. During almost 20 years, the party managed to secure a permanent representation in the national Parliament without participating to government until the 1999 elections. Ecolo achieved exceptional results with a bit less than 20 percent at the joint regional and federal elections. Electoral results strong enough to press the Socialists and the Liberals to invite them to join the Walloon and the federal governmental coalitions (Delwit and Pilet 2005; Buelens and Deschouwer 2002). However, this exceptional success was followed by the dramatic defeats in 2003 (federal elections) and in 2004 (regional elections) while they managed to come back latter to their historic electoral scores of the 1990s and even to perform at the last recent regional elections an electoral score similar to 1999.

Overall, these uneven electoral performances, with ups and downs, produced a large amount of discrete careers for the ecologist and extreme-right formations. This is furthermore reinforced by Ecolo's internal regulation that formally limits the number of parliamentarian offices per individual to two – even though derogations are often granted (Bouhon, Reuchamps, and Dodeigne 2012). On the contrary, the three other Walloon 'traditional' political parties have a rather stable share of MPs between the four patterns. In the second chi-square test that only encompasses the Socialists, the Liberals and the Christian Democrats, i.e. those 225 careers represent all the same 80.4 percent, there is no statistically significant relationship between party and careers pattern ( $p = 0.7845$ ). In other words, keeping in mind that

the ecologists and the extreme-right formations have clearly outnumbered discrete careers, career patterns are however not restricted to a specific party among the traditional political forces that produce most of the careers under examination.

Finally, two additional MPs' attributes – gender and electoral districts – are complementary controlled to ensure the robustness of the career patterns. A simple look at the proportion of women in the sample (the 66 female MPs represent 23.6 percent) demonstrates there is a plausibility that distribution in the career patterns are influenced by gender and do not reflect the parliamentary class as a whole. However, the introduction of the gender quota in the Belgian electoral law in 1994 (one-third of the candidates of the list have to be of another sex) and even stricter in 2002 (introduction of the gender parity including for the 'eligible' positions at the top of the list) (Meier 2012) certainly contributed to a balanced representation of women among the four patterns. There is no statically relations between gender and career patterns ( $\chi^2=4.08051$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p=0.1866$ ), even when controlling Ecolo and the Extremist-right that strongly influenced the discrete career pattern ( $\chi^2=5.0481$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p=0.1683$ ).

Regarding the prominence of "localism" in Wallonia, i.e. the local political 'Barons' who keep under their control the distinct sub-regional territory<sup>11</sup>, it is worth assessing the impact of territorial origins upon career patterns. While gender is easy to operationalize, territoriality is a bit more complicated. Not only electoral districts are different between the federal and the regional elections, but they also differ over time for the federal elections (Dodeigne and Binard 2012). Nonetheless, all federal and regional electoral districts follow (almost perfectly) all the administrative borders in Wallonia and, therefore, the larger electoral districts (e.g. the provinces are used as the federal electoral districts since 2002) encompass the smaller administrative divisions (e.g. the "arrondissements" are used, albeit sometimes merged, for the Walloon regional districts since 1995 and the federal districts before 2002). Taking the most common denominator, the province is thus controlled for careers pattern. And here again, there is not any statistically relations ( $\chi^2=9.7894$ ,  $df=12$ ,  $p=0.6344$ ), even without the ecologists and the extreme-right ( $\chi^2=8.7279$ ,  $df=12$ ,  $p=0.7260$ ).

### **Discussion: political careers and political class**

What is to be learned from these findings? Firstly, when a genuine microscopic approach of political careers is adopted, three additional careers pattern are identified in Wallonia instead of the unique integrated careers pattern: the federal alternative career, the regional alternative career and the discrete parliamentary career. In the case of region and country with a significant of percentage of integrated career, there is a risk to overlook the importance of transfers that hide a more complex reality as proved by the re-evaluation of the Walloon case. The risk is also present when regions and countries are labelled as alternatives careers on the basis of absence of level-hopping movements. Alternative careers are genuinely alternative when no movement is observed whilst the career at the federal and regional levels are 'long' enough. To briefly evoke those two examples, Scottish careers in United Kingdom (Stolz 2011) meet the two criteria with the quasi non-existence of transfers between levels while regional and national MPs have significant career at Westminster and Holyrood. In several Canadian Provinces, level-hopping movements are also sporadic but the high turnover (Moncrief 1998) brings doubt on the existence of alternative careers. In this situation, it is probably more appropriate to conceptualize careers as 'discrete'.

Secondly, the relevance of these findings is not just important for political scientists interested in career per se but it brings indispensable comprehensiveness for other of research in which political careers are central concepts. And among them, the fact that political careers are one the essential dimensions of political class. Following (Weber 1958: 84)'s seminal distinction based on the professionalization of politics, there are indeed individuals who live "for

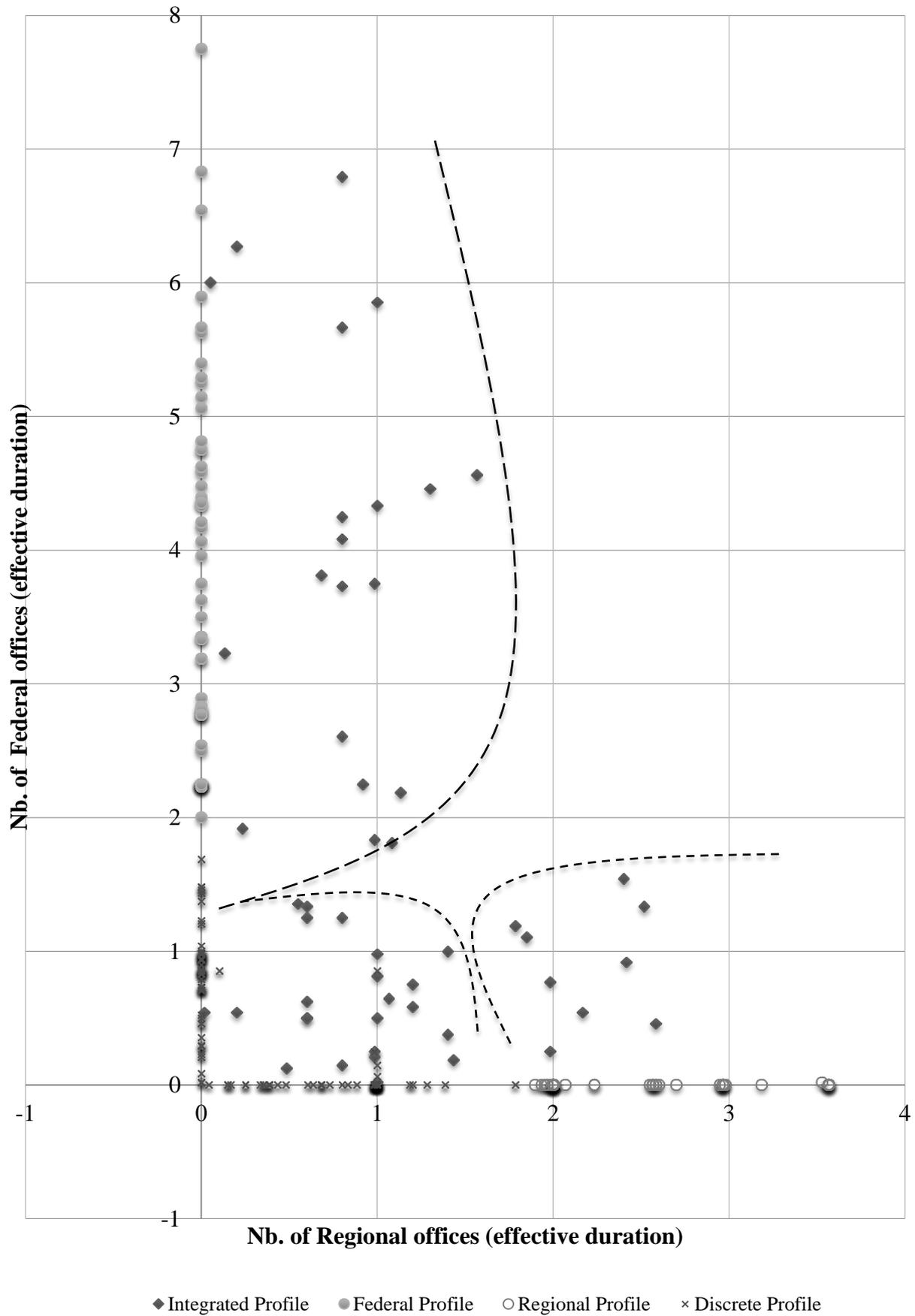
politics” and those who seek to live “off politics”. And it is “this collective interest of a regular income and the maintenance of the chosen professional career, that constitutes the political class” (Borchert and Golsch, 1995, p. 612 translated in Stolz 2001, 82). This is why accurate measures of political careers are decisive to assess whether there is solely a national political class (e.g. in the hierarchic careers patterns, all MPs converge toward the national level), only a regional political class (e.g. in the inverse springboard, all candidates seek a regional positions), or even a national and a regional political class (e.g. with alternatives careers, there is clear-cut distinction between two classes of politicians). Wallonia, but Belgium in general, is a good illustration of this potential problem. With the clear presence of alternative federal and regional careers, there are strong clues for the existence of a regional political class and the federal political class (more precisely in this case, the Walloon Component of the federal political class<sup>12</sup>).

Even in the case of politicians with an integrated careers, a closer look at the level-hopping movements permit to have a better description of the Walloon political class. Representatives with an integrated careers form indeed the most heterogeneous group as presented in on the scattergraph (figure 6). Each individual who belongs to one of the four career patterns has been positioned on the graph with the vertical axe constituting the number of federal mandates while the horizontal axe describes the number of regional mandates. The integrated politicians share a very specific characteristic distinguishing them from all the others: they are the only one who left a parliament to take up a seat at another level since 1995.

However, it is also clear from the scattergraph that integrated careers tend to belong either to a ‘more’ alternative or discrete career. This observation do not jeopardize the classification, “the logic of gradation belongs to the logic of classification” (Sartori 1970, 1038-1040). Classification is indeed the first necessary step to make scientifically sense of complex political and social phenomena. But once the taxonomical stage is processed (with criteria creating mutually exclusive profiles), the sign “plus-minus” is introduced for each various profile. An individual analysis of who caused the 78 level-hopping movements is eloquent: only 50 individuals caused the 78 transfers and actually most of these transfers are restricted to a certain number of politicians: 18 individuals caused 59.7 per cent of level-hopping movements. It is thus clear that the latter are the most ‘integrated’ while the remaining 31 MPs with an integrated career tend to be part of the national and the regional political class, although they once a parliamentary experience at another level of government (see scattergraph). Therefore, this is those 18 individuals that really express the rationale of Walloon level-hopping movements.

Unsurprisingly, they are the ‘big names’ of the political parties and, except for three parliamentarians, they all became ministers at a level of government where they were not primarily elected (e.g. federal minister but elected at the Walloon Parliament). The party’s electoral strategy is here relatively clear. The Belgian open-list system permits to express preferential vote (Bräuninger, Brunner, and Däubler 2012) which encourages the party to place these ministerial figures to attract voters’ ballots even when they do not plan to sit in the assembly. Consequently, the more often the parties are in government, the likelier they tend to produce integrated profiles: the PS in government at all levels without any interruption since 1995 has 53.2 percent of all the integrated careers, the MR (23.4) and the cdH (16.9) that often participated to the regional and/or federal coalitions are the following contributors to the integrated pattern while Ecolo represent 6.5 percent of the integrated careers.

**Figure 6.** Scattergraph of Walloon Political Careers



A final consideration regarding political careers and political class is the situation of discrete careers<sup>13</sup>. With an average length shorter than the mid-legislature, those parliamentarians cannot be integrated into the parliamentary political class. While they are certainly not parliamentary-oriented professionals, their discrete experience at the parliamentary level should not be confused with Schlesinger (1966)'s "discrete ambition": they form a genuine local-oriented professional political career (on this aspect, see also Stolz 2010, 70-71). Accumulation of offices is here a major explanatory factor since a large proportion of MPs with a discrete profile has indeed a local executive office – with often strong grassroots – *prior* to their election in the Walloon and federal Parliaments. A local position they held *during* their parliamentary mandate (simultaneity of offices) while most of them return to these municipal offices *after* their Parliamentary experience. Once we exclude the Greens discrete careers (largely caused by the electoral volatility while this party prohibits the accumulation of an executive local office with a parliamentary position), 54.96 per cent of the MPs with discrete careers effectively return to an executive local office after their Parliamentary experience. Executive local offices provide a relatively well-professionalised status in terms of income, local popularity, and personal as well as political rewards (60.9 per cent of them have a position in the local executive cabinet in municipalities bigger than 15.000 inhabitants, see table 5). The percentage is relatively high since the executive position also depends on local elections, not appointment, after which local coalitions are often put out of office.

In conclusion, from this brief overview of the discrete and integrated careers, it appears that Wallonia is more accurately described as presenting four careers patterns as well as four political classes. The first two political classes are parliamentarians that form the "nucleus of the Walloon federal and regional political classes" and include a significant proportion of MPs who had a former parliamentary/executive experience at another level. The third political class is composed of the party elites who have integrated careers and hold most of the executive positions. Finally, the last political class is locally-oriented and just in 'transition' in the legislative institutions.

## **Conclusion**

"Legislative careers: why and how we should study them?" asked Hibbing (1999). The why and how are without a doubt connected, the way the 'how' question is answered influence responses to the 'why' question. Over the past decades, empirical and conceptual researches have reviewed crucial assumptions on political careers, notably through a better understanding of movements between levels. However, with the widespread use of macro-sequential approach in the recent studies, there is a clear risk that too much attention paid on the mere legislative transfers which ultimately hides a more complex picture of political careers. As demonstrated in the case of Wallonia, only a micro-longitudinal approach permits to bring comprehensive and accurate responses. In this respect, not only are Walloon careers constituted of four career patterns (instead of a unique pattern as previously presented by the literature), but a closer look at individual trajectories permits to greatly refine Walloon political classes. In conclusion, this paper suggests that current answers to Hibbing's 'how' question be re-assessed towards a more microscopic approach in order to bring comprehensive understanding to Hibbing's 'why' question.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup>Alternatively, the four boxes in Stolz's matrix can be grouped into three categories as the classic springboard and the inverse springboard form conceptually the same model: the unidirectional model towards the sub-state or the national levels (Borchert 2011, 132).

<sup>2</sup>Data on <http://www.ncsl.org/legislatures-elections/state-federal/former-state-legislators-in-congress.aspx>, accessed in November 2012.

<sup>3</sup>It does not imply that career patterns are fixed over time. On the contrary, career patterns evolve along changes of political actors' behaviours and perceptions. However, the notion of political trajectories embodies a certain notion of duration that cannot be satisfied after one or two elections.

<sup>4</sup>Populists and xenophobic political parties are the fifth kind of regularly political parties represented in the federal Parliament and, although to a lesser extent, in the Walloon Parliament.

<sup>5</sup>It does not mean that there is no internal party division but the latter does not follow a 'federal-regional' line and reflects a more administrative division.

<sup>6</sup>Contrary to other studies that use a dataset with French-speaking MPs from Brussels and Wallonia, this research is strictly restricted to Walloon political careers which explain slight variations in the findings. In our opinion, using French-speaking politician trajectories while Brussels has its own regional Parliament tends to bring confusion. For the sake of clarity, it is better to treat Brussels and Walloon political careers separately.

<sup>7</sup>These movements precisely explain that the number of MPs per legislature exceeds the number of available seats but there is a second reason. While there are a fixed number of offices in the Walloon Parliament (75 seats) and at the House of Commons for the Walloon constituencies (48 seats)<sup>7</sup>, the repartition for the senatorial seats is more complicated: it is hence impossible to define *a priori* the number of seats that will be granted to Walloon Senators. Indeed, among the 15 Francophone 'directly elected senators' and the four 'co-opted' senators<sup>7</sup>, some are Walloon and others come from Brussels. Depending on the confection of the list of candidates by the political parties at the senatorial elections, there are more or less Walloon candidates elected in the upper chamber of the federal Parliament. The variance in the number of Walloon members at the European Parliament (MEPs) equally depends on political parties and electors' behaviours

<sup>8</sup>This picture is nevertheless slightly different when the composition of the Parliament is considered at the end of the legislature rather than at the elections time. They were 41 instead of 54 from the import perspective and 38 instead of 50 from the export perspective. The reason was essentially due to ministerial appointments and successors who replaced ministers in their parliamentary offices.

<sup>9</sup>At the European level, discrete careers have a 2.75 years duration.

<sup>10</sup>Since the 1995, the FN had a weak electoral weight except for the 2004 regional elections where. However, this electoral success was more the results of a

<sup>11</sup>Wallonia is a small but divided territory. On the one hand, there are the two biggest provinces of Liège (at the extreme East of Wallonia) and the Hainaut (at the extreme West) and, on the other hand, there are the three small provinces of Namur, Walloon Brabant and Luxembourg (forming a middle line) with each of them representing around a third of the demographic weight of Liège or Hainaut. Although they concentrate some of the economic resources (Brabant) and the capital of Wallonia (Namur), the fact that these three smaller provinces are presented as the "Lotharingia" of Wallonia surrounded by Liège and Hainaut is not only illustrative of the Walloon geographical configuration but also reveals the relevance of territory in politics.

<sup>12</sup>Besides its 'material' dimension, the concept of political class integrates furthermore a 'cognitive' and 'habitual' dimension. "Once their class consciousness (cognitive dimension) arises and they begin to act collectively according to their common interest, they develop into a 'class for itself' (habitual dimension)." (Stolz 2001, 82).

<sup>13</sup>Discrete careers have to be explained by the centralisation of the candidate selection process. Despite formal party members rights to select candidates through 'polls' in Belgium, the eligible seats (the top position of the list) are controlled by the party leadership that places and replaces candidates according to its electoral strategy. In PR systems, party elite "tend to have a virtually unrestricted control over [their] personnel" (Borchert 2011). And even though, Belgium has an open-party system that permits a certain degree of personalization, most of the candidates have to be in favor with the party leadership to be well positioned on the list.

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