

WORKSHOP

‘VICES AND VIRTUES OF DECENTRALIZATION:

CHALLENGES IN EUROPEAN MULTI-LEVEL DEMOCRACIES’

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Regionalism Does Matter but Nationalism Prevails.

A Comparative Analysis of Career Patterns in Western Multi-Level Democracies

Abstract. The processes of regionalization and federalization are unquestionable trends in Europe considering the flow of powers from states to subnational levels. In multi-level systems, the patterns of regional and national careers reflect this structural evolution. In the literature, two positions oppose each other about the effects of regionalism. Some authors argue that it does affect career patterns while other scholars found little evidence of the regionalism hypothesis. Unclear results in the literature are partly due to the limited number of comparative research across countries and across time, bias in case selection, and the choice of the unit of analysis. For the first time, this article aims to offer such analysis assessing empirically the regionalism hypothesis based on an original comparative dataset of 4.991 regional and national political careers in Belgium (Flanders, Wallonia, and Brussels), Canada (Ontario and Quebec), Spain (Catalonia and Castilla-La-Mancha), and the UK (Wales and Scotland). The intranational and international comparison of cases of strong and weak regionalism proves that regionalism does matter – regional politics attracts more professionalized MPs where regionalism is stronger – but the national parliament remains ultimately the most attractive political arena across regions.

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Introduction

In representative democracies, the study of elected politicians has always drawn the attention of various scholars producing an extensive literature on political careers. As fully acknowledged by previous scholars, “methodological nationalism” (Schakel and Jeffery 2012) has yet overlooked the relevance of regional politics. Until the early 2000s, most studies focused on national parliaments whereas in many federal political systems, regional politicians start and develop professionalized careers at the regional level – without ever moving to the national parliament (Stolz 2003). Indeed, regions across the world have become major centre of politics and regional politicians enjoy powers and fiscal resources affecting citizens’ daily life in various policy areas (Marks, Hooghe, and Schakel 2008): education, employment policies, economic development, energy, trade and commerce, immigration, road and transports, housing and, in some regions, the constitutional authority for ratifying international treaties.

The processes of regionalization and federalization are unquestionable trends in Europe considering the flow of powers from states to subnational levels (Keating 1998, Swenden 2006, Fitjar 2010). Formerly unitary states like France, the United Kingdom (UK), Italy, Belgium, and Spain have created regional tiers of government that enjoy large scope and depth of powers. Besides, in established federations, processes of professionalization have taken place at the regional level (e.g. Germany and Austria). Overall, “the process of political decentralisation has elevated the standing of regional governments in the constitutional architecture of European states and represents one of the single most important transformations in the structuring of political authority” (Toubeau and Massetti 2013). Institutionalization and professionalization of regional tiers of government have also been observed in Northern America and most particularly, in the Canadian provincial legislatures and the U.S. State Legislatures (Squire 1988, Atkinson and Docherty 1992, Moncrief 1994, 1998, 1999). In other words, far from being reserved to a sub-category of powerless political elites, regional political arenas matter and political careers reflect this structural evolution.

In the wake of those transformations, research on political careers in multi-level systems has significantly increased over the last 15 years, especially in newly regionalized European states (Fiers 2001, Stolz 2003, 2001, Pilet, Fiers, and Steyvers 2007, Botella et al. 2010, Real-Dato, Rodríguez-Teruel, and Jerez-Mir 2011, Rodríguez-Teruel 2011, Vanlangenakker, Maddens, and Put 2013), but also in established federations, notably in Germany, Canada and the U.S. (Borchert and Stolz 2011a, Docherty 2011, Squire 2014). The time when the springboard model (Schlesinger 1966) – where the national parliament is assumed to be the

main political arena – prevailed as the dominant framework for analysis is over. It has been showed that other career patterns exist – where regional politics prioritizes over national politics – and better explain political trajectories in multi-level systems (Stolz 2003).

Most efforts having been devoted to the identification and conceptualization of career patterns, it is now necessary to assess more systematically and comparatively the factors causing distinct political paths. This article interest is in one but crucial determinant of career patterns, namely the strength of regionalism. While regionalism is at the source of the establishment of regional parliaments, its effects on political careers remain unclear. A literature review shows two confronting positions on the regionalism hypothesis. On the one hand, some authors argued that the stronger the regionalist cleavage, the more attractive the regional political arena for ambitions candidates (Stolz 2001, 2003, 2010, Botella et al. 2010). On the other hand, other studies found that regionalism is a poor predictor of career patterns (Vanlangenakker, Maddens, and Put 2013, 365, Comeche-Pérez and Oñate 2012, Botella and Teruel 2010).

Despite the respective merits of previous studies, the uncertain effects of regionalism are related to limits in terms of comparative design, cases selection and unit of analysis. Firstly, the number of comparative analysis across regions and countries is relatively limited in a field dominated by case studies (Patzelt 1999). Secondly, there is a “selection bias” because regions studied are strong or extreme cases of regionalism (Geddes 1990). The latter must nonetheless be compared with examples of weak regionalism in order to evaluate its effects on career patterns. Finally, findings are almost exclusively based on level-hopping movements between political arenas. This unit of analysis does not however permit to evaluate the majority of political careers in a region, namely individuals with careers at a single level of government.

Therefore, this article proposes an empirical comparative analysis of political careers in four multi-level democracies based on a systematic examination of cases of strong regionalism (Catalonia, Scotland, Quebec, and Flanders) and cases of weak regionalism (Castilla-La-Mancha, Wales, Ontario, and Wallonia & Brussels). The regionalism hypothesis is assessed on an original dataset of 4.991 careers regional and national parliamentary careers. The findings confirm that regionalism does matter – regional politics attracts more professionalized MPs where regionalism is stronger – but the national parliament remains ultimately the most attractive political arena across regions. The article proceeds in three parts. Firstly, I discuss the two positions found in the literature about the regionalism hypothesis. Secondly, I develop in the methodology section the comparative research design, the importance of the unit of analysis

as well as issues in data collection and data analysis. Thirdly, I present the results and then conclude on the implication of the findings for future research.

The Regionalism Hypothesis

Any students of legislative recruitment cannot bypass the seminal model of the classic springboard theorized by Schlesinger (1966). Based on a rational choice theory, where ambitious candidates seek to obtain the highest positions in the U.S. political systems, Schlesinger found that Congressmen use their State Legislature office as a ‘springboard’ to the Congress. Although this ‘ladder model’ has long served as the dominant framework for analysis, it proved to be of little use once exported to other political systems. In particular in multi-level systems where regional political arenas represent more than a mere stepping stone towards national offices, e.g. where regionalism is stronger than in the U.S. mononational federation.

Stolz (2003) identified four career patterns that better explain political trajectories in multi-level systems. First of all, regional offices can prioritize over national offices in the “inverse springboard model”, e.g. Brazil (Samuels 2003). Secondly, regional and national arenas can be equally attractive inducing movements in both directions in highly integrated political systems, e.g. Belgium and Spain (Fiers 2001, Stolz 2010, Vanlangenakker, Maddens, and Put 2013)(XXXX). On the opposite, regional and national political arenas have their own dynamics and are ‘compartmentalized’. Level-hopping movements are thus quasi absent, e.g. Canada and the United Kingdom (Stolz 2010, Docherty 2011)(XXXX). Regionalism was one of the hypotheses put forward to explain the variety of career patterns. In this context, “[r]egionalism refers to a process which leads territorial subunits within or across existing sovereign states to increase their influence. That process may have a socioeconomic, political or cultural driving force or may be a combination of all these factors. As such regionalism is in part a bottom-up process, but the consent of the centre is needed to increase the levels of regional autonomy” (Swenden 2006, 14). Because regionalism is a *process* that entails political and cultural driving forces, regional and national identities as well as the strength of ethnoregionalist parties are among the core cultural and political expressions of regionalism.

The effects of regionalism remain nonetheless unclear as two positions oppose each other in the literature. On the one hand, some scholars have argued that regionalism directly influence the emergence of career patterns; on the other hand, others have found that regionalism is a poor predictor of career patterns. The first position is defended by Stolz (2001, 90) who hypothesised that “[t]he existence of a regional identity, a regional culture and a

regional public arena often constitute incentives for staying in regional politics”. He defends that, under the condition that regionalism espouses a process of professionalization of regional politics, regionalism matters for political careers: “two of the most important factors that strengthen the attractiveness of regional parliaments vis-a-vis national parliaments are the existence of a strong regional identity (expressed in an active regionalist cleavage) and high levels of professionalization. Without a regional identity, politicians’ motivation to live for politics tends to be dominated by a national perspective” (Stolz 2003, 243). In his comparative work that includes an extensive number of regions from traditional and new federal systems, he found clear evidences in the cases of the Basque country, Galicia, Flanders, Quebec, some northern Italian and eastern German regions (Stolz 2003, 243).

In a more recent analysis of Catalonia and Scotland, Stolz (2010) also showed that regionalism create stronger regional career orientations, although career patterns shape differently (i.e. “alternative pattern” in Scotland and “integrated pattern” in Catalonia). In his in-depth analysis of Brazil, (Samuels 2003) also demonstrated that most national politicians are not nationally-oriented but regionally-oriented. In another comparative study of France, Spain and the UK, Botella et al. (2010) also produced interesting findings that tend to validate the regionalism hypothesis. They argued that regional institutions have generated their own and specific values leading to the development of a regional *cursus honorum* (Botella et al. 2010, 57). Yet, they focused on regional prime ministers and, therefore, their conclusions have to be put into perspective because the road to government differs from the road to parliament.

On the opposite, other scholars have argued that regionalism is a poor predictor of career patterns. Vanlangenakker, Maddens, and Put (2013, 365) who analysed Flanders and Wallonia clearly refuted the regionalism hypothesis. “In Belgium, regionalism is undeniably stronger in Flanders than in Wallonia. Yet, it is the Walloon Parliament that consistently appears the more attractive one [...] The authors are at a loss to find an explanation for this difference”. In their study of the political careers of national and regional Spanish MPs, Comeche-Pérez and Oñate (2012) also tested the regionalism hypothesis based on the importance of self-identification to the Spanish state and to the *Comunidades Autónomas*. They concluded that “MPs develop different careers paths, but without clear-cut regional peculiarities” (Comeche-Pérez and Oñate 2012, 10). Finally, Botella and Teruel (2010, 22) found counter-intuitive that the Spanish regional premiers who develop the stronger regional career orientation are politicians from state-wide political parties (PSOE and PP) and originate from *Comunidades Autónomas* where regionalism is weaker.

In conclusion, the literature is clearly divided on the regionalism hypothesis. Despite the respective merits of existing studies, inconclusive results are partly due to research limits regarding (1) the comparative design across regions and across time, (2) cases selection, and (3) the unit of analysis. First of all, the field remains largely dominated by case study analysis (Patzelt 1999, 241). And when studies are cross-sectional, this is the time scope that tends to be limited. For instance, Stolz (2003)'s research is highly comparative across countries but his analysis focuses on a single legislative term. The in-depth analysis of particular cases excludes this temporal bias but another kind of limitation emerges, namely a selection bias (Geddes 1990). Most case studies are "extreme cases" of regionalism in Seawright and Gerring (2008)'s words¹. Assessing the effects of regionalism requires however to analyse regions where regionalism varies and, in particular, comparison with cases of weak regionalism. Finally, level-hopping movements – e.g. regional MPs moving up to take a seat at the national parliament, and vice-and versa – remain by far the main unit of analysis used to label career patterns. In a recent article, I nonetheless demonstrated the methodological consequences of this choice (XXXX). Among other reasons, I showed that level-hopping movements overlook the vast majority of regional and national MPs who develop professionalized careers at a single level of government. This article seeks therefore to move the debate forward by addressing these three issues through the adoption of a specific research design developed in the following section.

Research design

Comparative research design

Assessing empirically the regionalism hypothesis requires a comparative research design covering distinct countries and where, 'all other things being equal', the strength of regionalism varies across regions. Intranational comparison constitutes in that context a strategic research choice. As wisely wrote by Lijphart (1971, 689): "comparative intranational analysis can take advantage of the many similar national characteristics serving as controls". Selecting systematically cases of weak and strong regionalism within country, the regionalism hypothesis can be assessed while keeping (almost) fixed the effects of other intervening variables. Regions are compared in national political systems that have their own political culture, and above all, candidates from all regions compete under (quasi-) identical national electoral rules. In addition, the selection of regions across various countries increases the power of generalization of the findings. In other words, the intranational and international comparison permits to reduce two

¹ Some authors have yet very good methodological reasons according to their own research agenda.

limits previously mentioned, namely that prior findings are primarily based on case studies and that selection bias overlooks cases of weak regionalism.

In term of case selection, it is common to read that we live in a world of ‘multi-level governance’. This study is yet more specifically concerned with multi-level systems where there is a regional tier of government between the decentralized local bodies and the national government, excluding mere decentralized local administrations. Marks, Hooghe, and Schakel (2008, 113)’s dataset of 42 democracies over the world has the advantage to not only identify those regional units, but also to rank them based on their “regional authority index” (RAI). The eligible cases can firstly be reduced to countries where regional assemblies are directly elected assemblies (e.g. it excludes *Trentino-Alto Adige-Südtirol* in Italy) and where candidates are elected under democratic rules (e.g. it excludes the Russian federation where corruption arguably alter the electoral process). I furthermore rule out cases with low RAI (score equal or under 10, e.g. *Todofuken* in Japan and *Fylker* in Finland) where regions have no significant authority alike mere decentralized bodies. Finally, I select countries where regionalism is unmistakably at stake in order to identify evident cases of strong and weak regionalism, which is at the core of the demonstration of this article. It thus excludes countries such as Italy where a referendum for extended regionalization (*Devoluzione*) was rejected in 2005 by two thirds of the voters (Keating and Wilson 2010, 13). Likewise, despite its constitutional decentralized features, the German federation has in practice social demands for state-wide policies while it presents limited claims for increased regional autonomy (Erk 2008). Similarly, the Swiss and the U.S. federations are good examples of mononational federalism (Dardanelli 2007, Béland and Lecours 2008). Overall, case selection is reduced to four multi-level democracies: Canada, Belgium, Spain, and the UK. They constitute a manageable number of regions that can be analysed across time and which have the additional advantage of sharing a Western political culture (albeit covering diversified political systems). All in all, it produces a trade-off between scope and depth of analysis, considering the methodological reasons advanced above.

The selection of regions within these countries follows the two main criteria in line with Sweden’s definition of regionalism, namely the strength of ethnoregionalist parties as well as multi-level identities. For the regions of strong regionalism, the choice is relatively straightforward: Catalonia (Spain), Flanders (Belgium), Quebec (Canada), and Scotland (the UK). In the four regions, ethnoregionalist parties are strong political parties – if not the strongest – even though their electoral success might have evolved over time and across regional and national elections (Hepburn 2010, De Winter and Türsan 1998, De Winter, Gómez-Reino, and Lynch 2006). Moreover, citizens’ self-identification with their region

instead of the central state is (among) the highest in comparison to other regions of the country (Henderson 2005, Moreno 2006, Lachapelle 2007, Frogner, De Winter, and Baudewyns 2008, Deschouwer and Sinardet 2010). Last but not least, the fact that three of the four regions (Quebec, Catalonia, and Scotland) have or are going to organize referenda on independence is surely the best illustration of the strength of regionalism (see table 1). In contrast, Castilla-La-Mancha (Spain), Wallonia & Brussels (Belgium), Ontario (Canada), and Wales (the UK) are cases of weak regionalism. I decided to include Brussels (the third Belgian region) because of the common candidacy of Walloon and Flemish MPs at Brussels regional elections.

In selected cases of weak regionalism, ethnoregionalist parties have no representation in regional nor national parliaments (Wiseman 1997, Van Haute and Pilet 2006, Magone 2009, 230). There is however the notorious exception of Wales (*Plaid Cymru*) and Brussels (FDF). The FDF (Federation of the Democrat French-speaking) is yet a party primarily based on the defence on the French-speakers in the (Flemish) surroundings of Brussels and not a party promoting independence for Brussels. In the UK, the *Plaid Cymru* is an ethnoregionalist party that advocates an independent Wales but it constitutes nonetheless a case of weak(er) regionalism. The *Plaid Cymru* has considerably poorer electoral results than its Scottish counterpart (the Scottish National Party), ranking second or third far behind the first Welsh party (Labour). Last but not least, *Plaid Cymru*'s explicit commitment to independence is a very recent evolution (at the 2011 party conference): the party used to promote the idea of 'self-government' during decades instead of pure and simple independence (Christiansen 1998, 130-2). Regarding the second criterion (regional/national identities), previous studies have demonstrated that in those cases of weak regionalism, citizens self-identify more frequently and more intensively with the central state instead of their own region (Drummond 1987, Cameron and Simeon 1997, Moreno, Arriba, and Serrano 1998, Frogner, De Winter, and Baudewyns 2008, Deschouwer and Sinardet 2010). Although Welsh people self-identify much more with Wales, it is once again not as developed as in the case of Scotland proving that Wales is definitely a case of weak(er) regionalism in the UK (Curtice 2013).

[Table 1 about here]

Our focus was to gather similar regions, but intranational differences remain inevitable. Because regionalism is precisely more developed in some regions than others, regions like Catalonia, Flanders, Quebec and Scotland always try and obtain specific institutional demands leading to asymmetrical federalism (McGarry 2005, Zuber 2011). For instance, Catalonia – like other Spanish historical nations – followed a fast-track route for the implementation of its

regional institutions (based on the art. 151 of the Spanish Constitution) whereas Castilla-La-Mancha was granted autonomy on a slow route process with lower authority (art. 143)(Magone 2009, 194-5). In Belgium, Flanders merged its Community and Regional institutions into the Flemish Parliament whereas Brussels and Wallonia share a common Community institution apart from their regional parliaments. In the UK, the denomination of the “Scottish *Parliament*” reflects its greater authority in comparison of the “National *Assembly* for Wales”. In Canada, Quebec has developed its own judicial system, disposes of a wider scope of fiscal capacity and can carry out its own policies in pension and immigration areas for instance (Burgess 2006). Although the scope and depth of regional authority may vary across the ‘sister regions’ selected, it does not lead to notorious unbalanced powers. More importantly, intranational selection offers undoubtedly advantages (i.e. limiting effects of other variables) to inevitable institutional divergences. The ‘sister regions’ are therefore to be considered as “relatively similar” polities (Dogan and Pelassy 1990, 132-3), except on the notorious strength of regionalism. Let us now turn to the final element that deserves a special attention to test the regionalism hypothesis, namely the unit of analysis.

Unit of analysis

By using level-hopping movements as the unit of analysis, most research investigates – explicitly or implicitly – the *links* between national and regional political arenas (Borchert and Stolz 2011b, 111). However, this approach provides few information about the dynamics *within* political arenas. Based on an individual and longitudinal perspective, where the unit of analysis is the individual political career per se, I proposed in a recent article a new typology of career patterns. It is based on a matrix that accounts for duration of political careers at the regional and national levels (XXXX). The matrix distinguishes four ideal-types of career pattern in multi-levels systems: the national career pattern, the regional career pattern, the multi-level career pattern and the discrete career pattern.

[Figure 1 about here]

The national and regional career patterns are self-explicit: they include MPs who served respectively in the national and the regional parliaments and never moved to another tier of government. The discrete pattern is also formed of regional and national MPs who conducted careers at a single level of government but who were in office for a (very) short amount of time. Contrary to the regional and national patterns that are formed of professionalized parliamentarians, MPs with discrete careers are ‘amateurs’ or ‘citizens-politicians’ (Stolz

2001). The threshold adopted to distinguish discrete careers with professionalized careers is that MPs served (at least) two complete legislative terms, i.e. about a decade of political experience in most advanced democracies. The limit of two legislative terms is adopted because it is similar to the rules fixed by political parties that seek to ensure the rotation of offices to restrict professionalization of politics (see for instance the Green parties in Europe, Burchell 2001). Finally, the multi-level pattern represents a particular group of MPs as they are the only ones who acquire political experience at both levels of government.

Hypotheses

Based on the above career patterns classification, two kinds of results are expected in terms of intranational and international differences. On the one hand, if regionalism matters for career patterns, level-hopping movements should be more important from regional to national political arenas in cases of weak regionalism, and vice-and-versa in cases of strong regionalism as supported by the defenders of the regionalism hypothesis (see above).

H 1a. Weak regionalism: Level-hopping movements towards national \geq towards regional level

H 1b. Strong regionalism: Level-hopping movements towards national \geq towards regional level

Secondly, where regionalism is stronger (Flanders, Scotland, Catalonia and Quebec), it is expected that regional politics prioritized over national politics. Not only the regional career pattern should be more represented than the national career pattern, but regional discrete careers are expected to be fewer than national discrete careers. Where regionalism is weaker (Wallonia and Brussels, Wales, Castilla-La-Mancha and Ontario), the opposite is expected. Yet, assessing differences between regional and national patterns makes little sense without integrating the availability of positions at the two political arenas. Although the difference of national and regional offices is relatively small in some cases (in Wallonia, Flanders, and Castilla-Mancha, the ratio of national/regional seats available is below 20 percent) or even null (Ontario), the gap is much greater in all other regions analysed (from 33.3 percent until 77.5 percent)². In other words, the emergence of career patterns must be evaluated in light of the relative availability of seats at each level of government. For that reason, I use two ratios based on the four career patterns presented below:

(1) Regional ratio = Regional careers/Discrete regional careers

(2) National ratio = National careers/Discrete national careers

² Percentages are indicative of the situation at the latest elections. Seat evolutions are yet frequent over time.

The higher the ratios, the greater the professionalization of regional and national politics. On the opposite, the lower the ratios, the greater the development of ‘citizens-politicians’ at national and regional levels. In line with the regionalism hypothesis (see above), the regional ratio is thus expected to be higher than the national ratio when regionalism is stronger. Indeed, regional politics should prioritize over national politics and the regional parliament should attract the most ambitious candidates conducting lengthy careers at the expense of the national parliament.

H 2a. Weak regionalism: National ratio \geq Regional ratio

H 2b. Strong regionalism: Regional ratio \geq National ratio

Finally, because regionalism is primarily promoted by ethnoregionalist parties, *ceteris paribus*, candidates from those parties are more likely to conduct regional careers instead of national careers. Regional politics is the *raison d’être* of these parties and the “administration of powers and resources allocated to ‘their’ region for its wellbeing and in its exclusive interest” is one of the two missions of regionalist parties according to Massetti and Schakel (2013, 801). The other mission is that “these parties aim to exert pressure on the state in order to extract transfers of powers from the centre to the periphery”. Yet, I argue that even though this ‘national’ mission was paramount before devolution, its function has decreased after the establishment of regional parliaments. As it is observed in many regions, media attention has switch to the regional level while the decision to organize referendum on independence is sometimes taken without the agreement of the national government (e.g. Catalonia). In other words, the second mission of ethnoregionalist party can be achieved from regional institutions, and not exclusively from national institutions. It follows that:

H 3. Ethnoregionalist candidates: regional career pattern \geq national career pattern³

Data

Data is collected for all candidates who were once elected in regional and/or national assemblies. Although the paper is primarily about parliamentary careers, I furthermore take into account government positions as it is common to observe regional MPs called into national government (and vice-and-versa) in Belgium and Spain. At the national parliament, I also recorded offices in the upper house but only for directly elected senators. The starting point for data collection is the last national elections prior to the establishment of regional parliaments.

³ The ethnoregionalist parties are the N-VA, VU (-ID), VB, spirit and LLD (Flanders), SNP (Scotland), Plaid Cymru (Wales), CiU, ERC, and CUP (Catalonia), BQ and PQ (Quebec).

In Canada, where federal and provincial assemblies were created in 1867, the time scale is however reduced to the early 1990s. The 1993 federal elections were selected because it constitutes a rupture in Canadian political life: “[n]ational parties, national politics, and national electoral competition no longer existed in a Canada that was deeply divided and regionally fragmented” (Carty, Cross, and Young 2000, 14). Hence, the score for the Pedersen (1979) index, which assesses the net change of seats between political parties, is exceptionally high in 1993 in Quebec and Ontario (respectively, 62 and 62.5) while it drops to scores between 2.0 and 28.5 afterwards⁴.

Overall, 4.991 careers are coded for Spain (1.530), Belgium (1.685), Canada (1.237), and the UK (539)⁵. Career duration is recorded in number of positions held but more importantly according to the effective duration in office (number of months). Indeed, changes during session are very frequent creating very short careers that the number of offices cannot accurately describe. The sources are official electoral results and parliamentary acts for changes during legislative terms (available online except for the mid-1990s in Spain and Belgium where archives were consulted). Data collection was completed until April 2014 (Quebec), May 2014 (Scotland and Wales), July 2014 (Ontario) and August 2014 (all regions from Belgium and Spain). Although I focus on regional and national careers, the analysis takes furthermore into account level-hopping movements from and towards the European level: I made sure that regional and national careers had no interaction with the European Parliament. For the latter, I use the Høyland, Sircar, and Hix (2009)’s database which I updated from November 2011 until July 2014.

[Table 2 about here]

All careers are classified according to the four career patterns before mentioned (see table 2). An extra ‘others’ category is yet created due to censored data. It covers newly elected MPs with no prior parliamentary/government experience at all and who cannot be classified into existing categories at the moment. The category ‘others’ furthermore regroups European political careers as well as the generation of MPs who served in the national parliament until the establishment of regional parliaments but who were not re-elected subsequently (at any

⁴ It rises again up to 57.0 in Quebec after the 2011 federal elections (but not in Ontario). *Source*: author’s own calculation.

⁵ It furthermore includes MPs who have additional political experience in a polity distinct from the nine regions studied in this article. This type of profiles remains however very rare accounting for less than 0.5 percent of all careers analyzed.

levels). It was nevertheless necessary to record them in order to calculate the ratio of national level-hoppers at the first regional elections (see below).

Findings

The empirical results presented in this section are based on descriptive statistics. The hypotheses are indeed not tested on a sample of political careers but on *all careers* in the nine regions selected. In this respect, the generalization of the findings should not be based on the statistical significance of the variance observed – all careers being recorded, all differences detected are indeed significant *per se* of the genuine political behaviours observed in the regions analysed⁶. For that reason, the reliability and generalization of the findings have rather to be appreciated in the light of the relevance of case selection.

The first hypothesis tests whether or not strong regionalism induces more level-hopping movements towards the national level, and vice-and-versa in the case of weak regionalism. Table 3 describes hence three kinds of movements: the frequency of movements towards the regional political arena (Nat→Reg), towards the national political arena (Reg→Nat), and MPs who moved back and forth between both levels (integrated). Clearly, regional MPs move more often towards national parliaments in case of weak regionalism than in case of strong regionalism. The percentages of ‘Reg→Nat movements’ are systematically higher in Castilla-La-Mancha, Wales, Wallonia and Brussels in comparison to their ‘sister’ region. The results are enhanced by the fact that national parliaments offer less positions than regional assemblies and, therefore, accessibility and availability of national positions are restricted.

Yet, the effects of regionalism are not as conclusive as expected. On the one hand, Quebec presents more MPs conducting movements towards the national than the regional level. On the other hand, although the percentages of ‘Reg→Nat movements’ are higher in Wales, Wallonia and Brussels (in comparison to their sister region), there are ultimately more ‘Nat→Reg movements’ in those regions contrary to the provisions of hypothesis 1. Furthermore, in Belgium, the high ratio of integrated career even shows that both the regional and national levels might be equally attractive (22.4 percent in Flanders, 25.8 percent in Wallonia and up to 53.1 percent in Brussels). In this respect, only Spain constitutes a ‘handbook’ example of the regionalism hypothesis. In Catalonia (strong regionalism), there are more national MPs who try and manage to take up a seat at the *Parlament de Catalunya* (n=54,

⁶ In this respect, even in the case of Canada, all careers are recorded for the period under investigation. I do not aim to draw conclusions beyond this time-scope because the period prior to the 1993 federal elections was precisely rejected for its very distinctiveness.

47.8 percent) whereas in Castilla-La-Mancha (weak regionalism), there are more regional MPs who first served in *Las Cortes de Castilla-La-Mancha* before moving to the *Congreso* and the *Senado* (n=32, 56.1 percent).

[Table 3 about here]

Level-hopping movements in table 3 are yet slightly biased by the high percentage of centrifugal movements at first regional elections. When regional parliaments were newly established institutions and full of vacant seats to be populated, national incumbents successfully run at first regional elections creating an unusual ratio of ‘Nat→Reg movements’. They account for 20.8 percent in Scotland, 24.6 percent in Catalonia, and 44.6 percent in Wallonia. In line with previous research, it is therefore worth distinguishing level-hopping movements with and without first regional legislatures. Controlling for the latter, movements in Scotland and Wales now corroborate the regionalism hypothesis (see table 4): transfers towards London are more frequent in Wales (66.7 percent) whereas Scottish MPs leave more frequently their national position to serve at Holyrood, the seat of the Scottish Parliament (66.7 percent). In Belgium, the regionalism hypothesis is also verified in Flanders, yet the ‘Reg→Nat movements’ still constitute the smallest groups of level-hoppers in Wallonia (40.2 percent) and Brussels (27.4 percent).

The problem is that level-hopping movements strongly depend upon electoral rules (e.g. possibility of dual offices in Scotland and Wales whereas provincial Quebecker MPs must resign before running for federal elections) whilst they often reflect party strategy – especially in PR systems (Borchert 2011, 126) – rather than regional and national individual ambition. Moreover, although Scottish and Welsh inter-territorial movements are in line with the expected results, the low amount of transfers – respectively, 12 and 9 movements accounting for hardly 4.3 and 6.6 of the careers analysed – strongly limits the production of robust results. Actually a couple of movements in the opposite direction at the next election would counterbalance the current conclusions. Analysing regional and national ratios is thus the second necessary step to assess the regionalism hypothesis.

[Table 4 about here]

In the second hypothesis, it is expected that the regional ratio will be higher than the national ratio when regionalism is stronger. Interestingly, it is however the national parliament that continues to attract the most professionalized MPs across all regions, irrespective of the

strength of regionalism (see table 5). In the UK, the ratio is particularly high which implies that once national candidates manage to enter the parliament, he/she is almost secured to stay for an extensive period of time (4 legislative terms on average). The unique exception is Brussels where the regional ratio (0.9) slightly exceeds the national ratio (0.8). In that region, seats availability most probably explain why regional politics predominates, albeit marginally. With a population of hardly 1 million inhabitants, the Brussel-Capital regions Parliament disposes of 89 regional seats (but only 20 national seats) whereas the 6 million Flemish are represented by 124 regional and 102 national MPs and the 4 million Walloons elect 75 regional and 61 national MPs.

[Table 5 about here]

Nevertheless, the fact that the national state prevails as the main attractive political centre does not exclude any regionalism effects. Firstly, national ratios are systematically higher in cases of weak regionalism than in cases of strong regionalism. The difference is particularly spectacular in the UK (the national ratio equals 20.5 in Wales but is only of 11.83 in Scotland) but is also substantial in Canada (it is of 3.12 in Ontario and 1.56 in Quebec) and to a lesser extent in Belgium and Spain (the variance is about 20-30 percent). Secondly, despite the predominance of the national parliament, regional ratios tend to be very similar if not equal to the national ratio in case of strong regionalism. For instance, the national ratios in Ontario and Wallonia are twice as big as the regional ratios whereas the margin significantly drops in case of strong regionalism (e.g. regional and national ratios are respectively of 1.37 and 1.56 in Quebec and of 0.72 and 0.99 in Flanders). And even though Scotland presents a relative low regional ratio, the gap between regional and national ratios is radically smaller than in Wales.

[Table 6 about here]

The final hypothesis examines intra-case variance and in particular whether differences observed result from specific political parties. As presented in table 6, there are clearly divergent political behaviours between ethnoregionalist parties and other parties. On the one hand, candidates from ethnoregionalist parties develop more often regional careers (the regional ratio is higher than the national ratio) while other candidates have a higher national ratio. The only exception is in the UK (both Scotland and Wales) where Westminster attracts professionalized MPs, irrespective of the kind of political parties. Yet, in that two cases, findings must be considered very cautiously due to the small number of observations for ethnoregionalist candidates: there are 6 SNP and 6 *Plaid Cymru* with national career patterns. On the

other hand, candidates from all other parties present a larger national ratio. Interestingly, they nevertheless did not discard regional parliaments, quite the opposite as their regional ratio is not that dissimilar to their ethnoregionalist colleagues in Flanders and Scotland. In Catalonia and Quebec, political behaviours diverge nonetheless more importantly creating a dual picture: ethnoregionalist candidates with a regional trajectory and other candidates with a national path.

Conclusion

Career patterns are diversified in multi-level systems. Previous research has shown that regional politics has become an attractive centre for politics, if not the most important political arena. While the strength of regionalism is at the basis of the establishment of regional parliaments, its effects remain unclear in the literature. Some authors argue that it does affect career patterns while other scholars found little evidence of the regionalism hypothesis. This article aimed at moving the debate on the regionalism hypothesis forward through a comparative empirical analysis covering cases of strong regionalism (Catalonia, Quebec, Scotland, and Flanders) and of weak regionalism (Castilla-La-Mancha, Ontario, Wales, Wallonia and Brussels). The analysis of 4.991 regional and national careers led to the conclusion that regionalism does matter but nationalism prevails.

In terms of level-hopping movements, there are generally more national MPs moving to regional institutions in case of strong regionalism and more regional MPs moving up to national political arena in case of weaker regionalism. While Catalonia and Castilla-La-Mancha could be used as ‘handbook ‘examples, results for the other regions are yet not that compelling and, sometimes, even in contradiction with the expected results. Based on political careers conducted at a single level of government (the overwhelming majority of careers identified), findings are much more convincing. In case of strong regionalism, there are more candidates developing regional professionalized careers than in case of weak regionalism. This is particularly true for MPs from ethnoregionalist parties who present more regional careers than national careers, even though candidates from other parties also give importance to the regional political arena developing regional professionalized careers.

The final and maybe most important finding of this research is that even though regionalism does matter, overall the national parliament remains the most attractive institution across all regions (except in Brussels for particular reasons due to seats availability). For students of regional and national studies, the results are highly relevant. More than any formal description of powers, career patterns are indeed considered as a good proxy of the genuine balance of powers between regional and national arenas (Squire 2014). It proves that

regionalism, in terms of regional identity and strength of ethno-regional parties, has indeed shaped career patterns in favour of the regional political arena but that the national state has nonetheless retained its central and dominant position.

This conclusion as yet to be understood cautiously due to three reasons. First of all, the findings regarding the professionalization of regional and national political arenas should not be overestimated because only parliamentary/government offices were analysed. Indeed, office professionalization must be distinguished from individual professionalization (Stolz, 2010: 5-6). Parliamentary offices might appear little professionalized but individuals holding these offices can be professionalized politicians (at the party level, municipal level, administration level, etc.). Although the distinction tends to be less pertinent in the case of Canada and the UK, where parliamentary and government offices constitutes the highest positions, the distinction is worthwhile in Spain and Belgium. Previous studies have indeed established that a significant proportions of MPs with short parliamentary experience had a former and/or subsequent lengthy careers at the municipality level or in the administration (XXXX). In other words, they are “amateur legislators but professionalized politicians” (Jones 2002).

Secondly, future analysis should assess whether this national prevalence has been constant or has evolved over time in the nine regions examined, a goal beyond the scope of this study though. Finally, effects of regionalism were analysed at an aggregate level across regions and countries. Yet, the way regionalism affects differently actors at an individual level is equally critical to understand the meaning of regional and national positions in multi-level systems. In this respect, the fact that national offices remain the more important is not necessarily in contradiction with the regionalism hypothesis: national MPs can influence national policy-making in favour of their own region for instance. By contrast, some national MPs might be only motivated by the prestige of historic national positions and/or the individual rewards national institution provide (e.g. in terms of income and pension benefits). Further (qualitative) research is necessary to explore these important dimensions of political careers.

In conclusion, this article aimed to move the discussion one step further by presenting a systematic and comparative empirical analysis of regional and national political careers in eight regions since the first regional elections. Yet, the analysis of career patterns in multi-level systems requires further research. In particular, it would require the development of more sophisticated multivariate and hierarchal models that take into account the effects political and institutional factors interacting with the strength of regionalism.

Appendices: figures & tables

Table 1. Summary of cases selection

Strong regionalism	Catalonia	Flanders	Quebec	Scotland
Ethnoregionalist party	Strong	Strong/medium	Strong	Strong/medium
Self-identification	$R > N$	$R \geq N$	$R \geq N$	$R > N$
Ref. on independence	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Weak regionalism	Castilla-La-Mancha	Wallonia & Brussels	Ontario	Wales
Ethnoregionalist party	Nonexistent	Weak	Nonexistent	Weak
Self-identification	$N \geq R$	$N \geq R$	$N > R$	$R \geq N$
Ref. on independence	No	No	No	No

Figure 1. Career patterns in multi-level systems

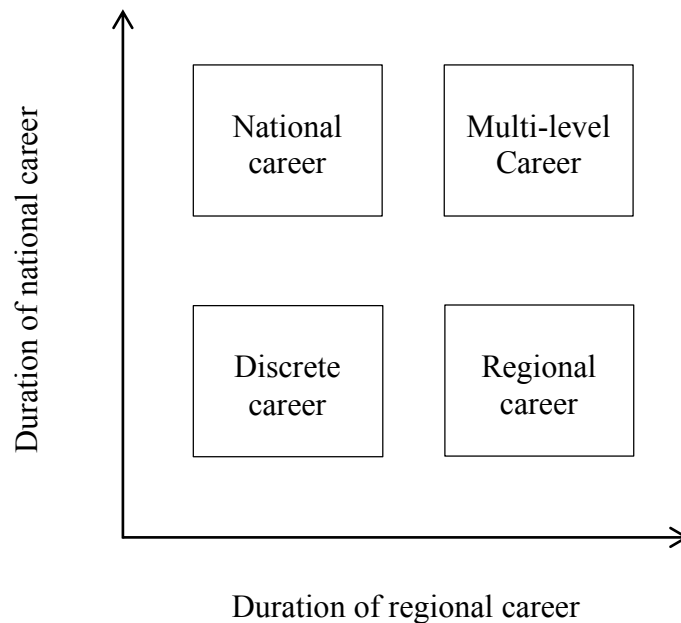


Table 2. Career patterns in cases of strong and weak regionalism

	Catalonia		Scotland		Quebec		Flanders			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
Strong regionalism										
Regional career	253	27.9	123	43.8	193	36.6	64	10.6		
National career	96	10.6	71	25.3	103	19.5	137	22.7		
Discrete regional career	327	36.1	48	17.1	141	26.8	89	14.8		
Discrete national career	118	13.0	6	2.1	66	12.5	139	23.1		
Multi-level experience	112	12.4	33	11.7	24	4.6	174	28.9		
All but others	906	100	281	100	527	100	603	100		
Others	131	-	76	-	119	-	225	-		
All careers	1037	-	357	-	646	-	828	-		
<hr/>										
	Castilla-La-Mancha		Wales		Ontario		Wallonia		Brussels	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Weak Regionalism										
Regional career	59	13.1	54	39.4	187	33.9	37	6.7	85	31.8
National career	74	16.5	41	29.9	162	29.4	76	13.8	10	3.7
Discrete regional career	134	29.8	23	16.8	135	24.5	74	13.4	95	35.6
Discrete national career	120	26.7	2	1.5	52	9.4	64	11.6	13	4.9
Multi-level experience	62	13.8	17	12.4	15	2.7	128	23.2	64	24.0
All but others	449	100	137	100	551	100	379	100	267	100
Others	44	-	45	-	40	-	149	-	62	-
All careers	493	-	182	-	591	-	528	-	329	-

Note: The percentage is based on the total number of careers except the censored and ‘others’ categories.

Table 3. Level-hopping movements in cases of strong and weak regionalism

Strong regionalism	Catalonia		Quebec		Scotland		Flanders	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Reg→Nat	29	25.7	15	62.5	4	12.1	13	7.5
Nat→Reg	54	47.8	9	37.5	28	84.8	122	70.1
Integrated	30	26.5	0	0	1	3.0	39	22.4
Total	113	100	24	100	33	100	174	100

Weak regionalism	Castilla-La-Mancha		Ontario		Wales		Wallonia		Brussels	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Reg→Nat	32	56.1	12	85.7	5	29.4	16	12.5	11	17.2
Nat→Reg	16	28.1	1	7.1	11	64.7	79	61.7	19	29.7
Integrated	9	15.8	1	7.1	1	5.9	33	25.8	34	53.1
Total	57	100	14	100	17	100	128	100	64	100

Key: Integrated movements represent MPs who move back and forth between regional and national arenas.
 Bold numbers represent the highest frequency in percentage.

Table 4. Level-hopping movements in cases of strong and weak regionalism.
(Excluding first regional elections)

Strong regionalism	Catalonia		Quebec		Scotland		Flanders	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Reg→Nat	29	25.7	15	62.5	4	33.3	24	22.4
Nat→Reg	54	47.8	9	37.5	8	66.7	55	51.4
Integrated	30	26.5	0	0	0	0.0	28	26.2
Total	113	100	24	100	12	100	107	100

Weak regionalism	Castilla-La-Mancha		Ontario		Wales		Wallonia		Brussels	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Reg→Nat	32	56.1	12	85.7	6	66.7	23	28.0	11	17.7
Nat→Reg	16	28.1	1	7.1	3	33.3	33	40.2	17	27.4
Integrated	9	15.8	1	7.1	0	0.0	26	31.7	34	54.8
Total	57	100	14	100	9	100	82	100	62	100

Key: Integrated movements represent MPs who move back and forth between regional and national arenas.
 Bold numbers represent the highest frequency in percentage.

Table 5. Regional and national ratios

Weak regionalism	<u>Regional ratio</u>	<u>National ratio</u>	<u>Results</u>
Castilla-La-Mancha	0.44	0.62	N > R
Wales	2.35	20.50	N > R
Ontario	1.39	3.12	N > R
Wallonia	0.50	1.19	N > R
Brussels	0.89	0.77	R > N
Strong regionalism	<u>Regional ratio</u>	<u>National ratio</u>	<u>Results</u>
Catalonia	0.77	0.81	N > R
Scotland	2.56	11.83	N > R
Quebec	1.37	1.56	N > R
Flanders	0.72	0.99	N > R

Table 6. Regional and national ratios by political parties

Ethnoregionalist parties				
Weak regionalism	<u>Regional ratio</u>	<u>National ratio</u>	<u>Results</u>	<u>N</u>
Wales	0.58	All prof.	N > R	31
Strong regionalism	<u>Regional ratio</u>	<u>National ratio</u>	<u>Results</u>	<u>N</u>
Catalonia	0.94	0.88	R > N	453
Scotland	2.38	All prof.	N > R	98
Quebec	1.77	1.44	R > N	258
Flanders	0.79	0.70	R > N	218
Other parties				
Weak regionalism	<u>Regional ratio</u>	<u>National ratio</u>	<u>Results</u>	<u>N</u>
Wales	2.63	19.00	N > R	151
Strong regionalism	<u>Regional ratio</u>	<u>National ratio</u>	<u>Results</u>	<u>N</u>
Catalonia	0.64	0.79	N > R	584
Scotland	2.66	11.00	N > R	259
Quebec	1.13	1.78	N > R	364
Flanders	0.74	1.13	N > R	442

Key: All prof. = all careers are professionalized, there is no discrete pattern.

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