

**Professional Politicians in Scotland and Catalonia:  
Towards a Regional Political Class**

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## 1. The Role of Regions in Political Careers

The study of recruitment and retention of professional politicians is heavily biased towards the national level. Despite increased research interest into so-called multi-level systems of governance on the one hand and political careers on the other, we know in fact very little about the relation of the two. For a long time career studies has ignored the fundamental changes to the territorial organisation of politics, clinging to the conventional wisdom which perceives the national level as the unquestioned apex of political careers (see Francis/Kenny 2000). More recent literature though (cf. Stolz 2003, Stolz and Borchert forthc., Edinger and Jahr 2010, Siavelis and Morgenstern 2008) contends that the national centre is challenged as the major focus of career ambitions, both from above and below: while the emergence of new international and supranational institutions has opened up new career opportunities beyond national borders (e.g. the European Parliament), the recent professionalization of regional politics in federal systems and the regionalisation of formerly unitary states have affected opportunity structures within them. This paper is concentrating on the latter developments.

The potential role of regions in political careers has been elevated by two distinct yet concurrent processes. The first one is the process of political *professionalisation* that has recently reached the regional level. Since the 1970s state legislatures in the US (Rosenthal 1996, 1998), *Länder* parliaments in Germany (Friedrich 1977, Gress/Huth 1998) and many other regional units have professionalised considerably. Today many regional legislatures already closely resemble the full-time, well-staffed, fully-maintained, long-career bodies of their national counterparts. No doubt, they are much more attractive for professional politicians than before.

Roughly at the same time, many unitary states in Europe have undergone a process of *regionalisation*. On the one hand this top-down process can be seen as a form of state modernisation (Hesse/Benz 1990) in response to functional demands of the international economy, problems of administrative efficiency and the emergence of EU regional policy. In many cases, however, this process was mainly initiated by regionalist movements pushing from below, demanding some form of political autonomy for territorial entities that command high levels of identity (see among others Keating 1988, 1998). Again, the creation of well-resourced regional institutions, in particular if endowed with the added value of a strong regional identity, may be drawing ambitious professional politicians towards the regional arena.

The following paper is concerned with the impact of such a regionalist driven regionalisation on political careers in two major West European countries: Spain and the United Kingdom. Both countries have recently undergone a far reaching process of regionalisation. In both countries the devolution of central state resources and competencies to newly established regional authorities shows clear aspects of state modernisation. However, in both cases this top-down process was also mainly provoked and driven by regionalist movements demanding the institutionalisation of democratic forms of self-government for their respective region. These demands were most clearly and forcefully articulated in the so-called “stateless nations” of Catalonia (in Spain) and Scotland (in the UK). But Catalan and Scottish regionalism were not only instrumental in bringing about the establishment of a highly asymmetrical regional structure in their “host” countries. Beyond this catalyst role for the regionalisation process, Catalonia and Scotland have also been able to secure the strongest form of autonomy and the highest degree of

professionalisation for their own regional institutions.<sup>1</sup> So, what kind of careers are developing from such a regionalist driven regionalisation process?

Theoretically, career movements between the regional and the national arena can take four distinct forms (see figure 1). The first is the “*classical springboard*” pattern, where regional politicians move “up” to the national level (i.e. in a centripetal direction), but hardly any of them move “down” to the regional arena (i.e. in a centrifugal direction). This pattern suggests a clear hierarchy of preferences with the national centre widely accepted as the apex of political careers. This is basically the pattern to be found in the US. It has become something like the standard model in career studies (see above).

Figure 1: Career patterns in multi-level systems

	High Centripetal Movement	Low Centripetal Movement
Low Centrifugal Movement	<b>Classical Springboard</b>	<b>Alternative Careers</b>
High Centrifugal Movement	<b>Integrated Careers</b>	<b>Inverse Springboard</b>

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<sup>1</sup> This case selection opens up a terminological problem: While Catalonia and Scotland see themselves as nations, in comparative terms it makes sense to treat them as regions. In this paper, the term “regional” refers to the level of government between the municipality and the state and thus to both of our cases. In contrast, the term “national” generally refers to the central state level and thus also to their “host” states, the United Kingdom and Spain. However, there are passages referring to Catalonia and Scotland where the terms “nation” and “national” seemed more appropriate. However, they were only used when their meaning was unequivocal.

A second pattern would consist of “*alternative careers*”, where regional politicians remain on the regional and national politicians remain on the national level. Such an overall pattern could be the result of a fairly equal evaluation of regional and national positions, where transaction costs restrict movement between arenas. However, such a pattern could also reflect the existence of two groups of politicians with opposing preferences, one with a clear regional orientation and the other with a national one, each following their particular ambition. Finally, this pattern could also be the result of the existence of distinct party system at each level (e.g. Canada).

In a third scenario we may find frequent career movements between the two arenas in both directions. Such a pattern of “*integrated careers*” is the result of an integrated circuit of positions with no strong institutional boundaries and no clear-cut hierarchy between regional and national positions, which make up one single rather than two distinct career arenas. Such a pattern could be produced by politicians with no particular preference, moving between regional and national positions with no sense of territorial direction, or by politicians who are being moved by their political masters (usually in the party leadership) according to short term strategic deliberations. Alternatively, it could be the result of two distinct groups of politicians pursuing opposing career paths, whose movements (from regional to national positions on the one hand and from national to regional positions on the other) are cancelling each other out.

The final theoretical possibility is represented by the “*inverse springboard*” pattern, defined by frequent centrifugal career movements from the national to the regional arena and more or less no movement from the regional level “up” to the national centre. Such a pattern is only conceivable in the context of a complete reversal of the traditional hierarchy of offices. In such a scenario national positions might be regarded as an important asset or even a pre-requisite for politicians to take up higher office at the regional level.

As stated above, regionalisation, regionalism and a high degree of political professionalisation on the regional level seem to elevate the role regional positions play in political careers. Regionalisation makes such positions available in the first place, political professionalisation makes them generally more attractive, and regionalism – apart from playing a role in both these processes – also endows the regional arena with specific non-institutional characteristics that can be seen to have an additional bearing on their attractiveness (e.g. a strong regional identity, a predominantly regional perspective on politics etc.). Taken together these factors may indeed weaken national ambitions of regional politicians and thus make for major deviations from the classical springboard pattern. But do political careers in such regions really deviate and what concrete forms will careers in such a scenario take instead?

## **2. The concept of political class and its application to the regional level**

This question gains particular relevance when viewed from a political class perspective. Unlike other approaches, the theory of political class, as developed by von Beyme (1993, 1996), Borchert and Golsch (1995) and Borchert (1999), views professional politicians neither only as individuals nor merely as members of a particular institution. Instead, they are attributed with the qualities of a collective actor. The basic argument is as follows: once individual politicians start to live off politics (rather than just for politics) and thus “strive to make politics a permanent source of income” (Weber 1958: 84), they eventually become conscious of a collective interest. This collective interest in the maintenance and advancement of their professional career turns

them into a political class (Borchert and Golsch 1995: 612). Furthermore, the “political class-hypothesis” states that these politicians try to form and reform democratic institutions according to their class interest (transforming them in Marxian terms from a ‘class in itself’ into a ‘class for itself’, Borchert and Golsch 1995: 614), and thus constitute an often neglected, yet very powerful collective actor.

This concept has been developed in the national context. There, it has been argued, the historical processes of democratization and professionalization have formed a political class, defined by objective structural features, collective interests and even common identities. However, as stated above, democratization and professionalization have expanded to the local, regional and even supranational level. From a political class perspective, this development may be seen as a mere extension of the national political class. From the center to the periphery, their common professionalism and their common career interest make politicians a distinct class irrespective of the territorial location of the position they currently hold. Their professional interests are shaped by the national political system and their careers are focused towards the national center. This interpretation corresponds to the traditional modernization theory that predicts that functional cleavages supersede territorial ones.

However, there is also a second possibility. Specific opportunity structures and territorial settings could render the regional level a career arena in its own right. Regional institutions may begin to shape the interests of regional politicians and may indeed become the focus of their career ambitions. Such a scenario might be particularly plausible where a strong regional identity and a strong political mobilization of this identity (i.e. regionalism) can be found. Such a development would provide a serious challenge to the territorial integrity of a national political class and might even produce a distinct regional political class.

In order to find out whether regional politicians form part of a political class, and whether this is a distinctly regional political class, we have to answer two sets of questions. First of all, we need to establish their *functional differentiation* vis-à-vis regional citizens. Are regional politicians really professional politicians? How intensive is their dedication to regional politics (vis-à-vis other occupations) and how extensive (years of their overall professional career) is their full-time dedication? Secondly, in order to establish their *territorial differentiation* from national politicians, we need to assess their career interests, their career movements between territorial levels and the role the regional arena plays for their career pathways. Is the regional level a mere stepping stone to a national career, or do we find political career pursued in and directed to the regional level?

In the following sections of this paper I will present some of the main results of an empirical study based on a dataset on the careers of all Catalan and Scottish regional parliamentarians, a survey of regional parliamentarians as well as interviews with a wide range of politicians from both regions. In order to keep this paper brief, I will summarize some of the findings (details can be consulted in Stolz 2010), while others are presented in more detail.

### **3. Political Careers of Scottish Politicians**

With the establishment of a Scottish Parliament in 1999 it became possible for the first time to pursue a professional political career in Scotland. From its very start the Scottish Parliament offered a substantial salary (set at 86.5 % of their Westminster counterparts) and quite generous

expenses and staff support. On the other hand it demanded from its members a full-time dedication. As a consequence almost 90% of Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) in the first legislature did not have any additional occupation concurrent to their mandate (including other political occupations). According to my survey, the median number of hours spent on parliamentary business per week is 60, while not one MSP claimed to work less than 40 hours week. MSPs are thus clearly full-time professional parliamentarians.

Yet their dedication is not only quite intensive, on the whole MSPs are also in for a long-term parliamentary career. With their quite considerable average reelection rate (2003 and 2007) of 71.2 % average tenure can be estimated at 13 to 15 years (depending on the number of comebacks after an electoral defeat). This is below the 18 years calculated for Westminster MPs (Rush/Cromwell 2001) – who are among the longest serving parliamentarians in the world. However, if we add the time accrued in other paid political offices (MP, EP, local government, staff position) before or after the mandate and disregard the a small number of deliberate “short-termers”, many MSPs will accumulate 20 years (or more) of professional political office served at the heyday of their working career. Clearly this amounts to a professional political career.

But what function does a regional office/mandate fulfill in a Scottish political career? In a survey of MSPs conducted in the first legislature more than 90 per cent of respondents stated that a regional (Scottish) mandate was their first preference. Only four per cent (both Conservatives) would have preferred serving as a Westminster MP. All of those who wanted to continue their political career, wanted to stay in the Scottish Parliament. About a third of them named the Scottish executive as their career aim (only two per cent named the UK government).

This subjective career data closely corresponds with objective data on actual careers pursued since then. Table 1 depicts the absolute numbers of career moves from the Scottish to the UK Parliament and vice versa, counting newly elected members of one parliament with prior experience in the other (in brackets: parliamentarians who moved directly from one to the other).

Table 1: Career movements of Scottish parliamentarians between regional and national parliament

	UK	SCOT
Scottish election 1999	⇒	24 (15)
UK election 2001	1 (1) ←	
Scottish election 2003	⇒	0
UK election 2005	2 (1) ←	
Scottish election 2007	⇒	3 (1)
2001-2007	3	3

A look at the first Scottish election in 1999 shows again the relative weight/attractiveness of the Scottish Parliament. Of the 72 Scottish Westminster MPs 15 gave up their national seat in favour of a regional mandate. Some of them were (former) government ministers, others were strong supporters of the self-government movement. In general these MPs were of quite high caliber (containing the full SNP leadership and some senior people of the Liberal Democrats and the Labour Party, though not one single Conservative, nor one of Scottish Labour’s leadership).

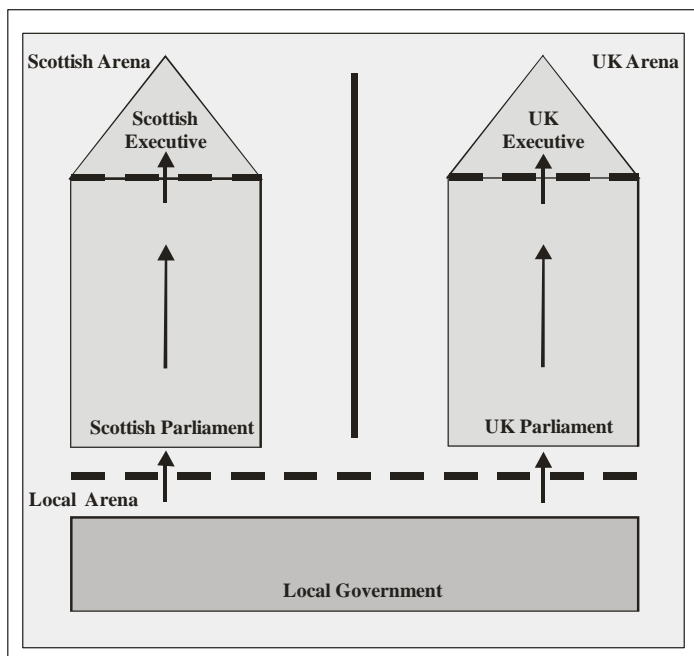
While this considerable intake from Westminster is quite significant, it does certainly not form part of a long-term pattern. The first election of a parliament is always fought in highly exceptional circumstances, not the least of which is the complete lack of incumbents. However, a closer look at the few elections that have taken place since, allows to make some tentative assumptions as to the pattern of movement that might be emerging.

In stark contrast to the huge original intake of 1999, the second Scottish election in 2003 brought not one Westminster MP to the Scottish Parliament, the third elections of 2007 brought two former and one current member of the UK Parliament. Career movements in the opposite direction were also clearly restricted. Only two sitting and one former MSPs made the move to Westminster. The few movements that did take place can also be seen to the result of very particular circumstances and thus they do not form a model that is likely to be repeated by many other Scottish MPs or MSPs. Two of the six movements are attributable to Alex Salmond, the former and current leader of the SNP, who had moved to the newly established Scottish Parliament as a sitting MNP, left it at the next UK election (2001) in order to keep his Westminster seat, yet returned to the Scottish Parliament in 2007 to become the first nationalist First Minister of Scotland. Apart from Salmond's unorthodox case of level-hopping, centripetal ambitions have been completely restricted to Conservative MSPs – and thus to members of the only party that had opposed the establishment of the Scottish Parliament in the first place. One sitting and one former member of the Scottish Parliament were successful, two other Conservative MSPs stood for Westminster yet did not win a seat. In reverse, this means that (with the exception of Salmond) not one of the pro-devolution MSPs has so far used the regional parliament as a stepping stone to Westminster. Perhaps even more surprising, not one of those who lost their Scottish seat in 2003 stood at the next Westminster election (instead five of them found their way back into the Scottish Parliament in 2007). Similarly, the three movements from Westminster to the Scottish Parliament (again Alex Salmond, and two former Labour MPs who had lost their seat due to the very special situation of a reduction of Scottish seats at Westminster) do not constitute any recurrent pattern.

Recruitment into a government office in the UK (including Scotland) is restricted to members of the parliament in question. Thus there is no direct cross-over from the regional parliament/executive into the national government or vice versa. Nevertheless the Scottish government has contained a number of former Westminster MPs (11) and even former UK ministers (3). However these are all from the first intake of 1999. None of the two former Westminster MPs who have newly arrived since then (Salmond has first come to Scotland in 1999) has made it into the executive yet. Similarly, none of the three MSPs that have moved to Westminster have been promoted to a government office so far. By contrast, the in-house recruitment of executive members in the Scottish Parliament is impressive. Of the 129 MSPs who were elected at the first election to the Scottish Parliament 52 (and thus 40 per cent) have since got a promotion into the Scottish government, more than a quarter (33/26%) has actually reached a cabinet position (while 37/29% are still in parliament and may get promotion in the future). The Scottish Parliament thus offers a clear in-house career ladder leading from a backbench position to a junior minister post into the cabinet. Compared to the good career prospects of MSPs in Scotland, the record of Scottish Westminster MPs in London looks much less impressive. Of those who have left the parliament since 1997 only XX / YY % have held a government position during their parliamentary service.

Taken together, the data presented strongly suggests that the careers of Scottish professional politicians follow the pattern of *alternative careers* (see figure 1). Careers may start in similar amateur positions such as party offices, local government etc. By entering parliament politicians reach the realm of professional politics. It is at this stage that career pathways finally diverge into either a career in the Scottish Parliament or at Westminster with very few career opportunities outside parliament and very little career movement between the regional and the national level. Scotland has thus clearly developed into a career arena in its own right, with the Scottish government at the apex of the career ladder. Not only is career movement limited between the two arenas, there is also no clear-cut hierarchy between the two. There is a higher *availability* of professional positions in Scotland, the *accessibility* of positions in both arenas is highly restricted and depends very much on individual characteristics of candidates and the preferences of very different (party) selectorates. The *attractiveness* of positions depends partly on party background (politicians from the SNP clearly favour the Scottish arena, while Conservatives are the most Westminster oriented), yet is also very much a question of individual preferences. The decision which of the two career pathway to pursue, however, is more often than not determined by pure chance (where is the first opportunity to enter professional politics). An attempt at visualising this career pattern can be seen in figure 2.

Figure 2: Scottish Political Careers



#### 4. Political Careers of Catalan Politicians

Compared to Scotland, political careers of Catalan politicians are much more complex. The first, and one of the most important differences, regards the level of professionalisation. When the Catalan Parliament was set up in 1980 the parliamentary mandate in Catalonia as well as in the Spanish Congress was not fully professionalized. Salaries as well as expenses and staff support were rather scarce (though quite similar on both levels!). Significant developments in this respect have only been made in the last decade. However, relatively low levels of political



professionalisation in the parliamentary arena do not mean that there are no professional politicians in Catalonia, just that the pattern of political professionalisation and political careers is different.

In my survey of 2003 only half of all members of the Catalan Parliament (MCPs) stated that they did not have any additional occupation. The median number of hours they claimed to work on parliamentary business was 32.5 hours per week. So, clearly, many MCPs are not full-time parliamentarians. However, a closer look at their additional occupations and their time commitments also shows that most of them are nevertheless full-time politicians. The apparent contradiction of these statements is resolved, when we take into account the considerable time MCPs spent on local and party political business. A majority of MCPs hold both local (many as mayors) and party office simultaneously to their parliamentary mandate.

With regard to the longitudinal extension of their parliamentary career similar observation can be made. With an average seat turnover of 48 per cent and an average legislative period of 3.83 years the average tenure of MCPs can be taken to be close to 8 years. This quite close to the figure for the Spanish Congress where the turnover is only slightly lower (44 %). This tenure in itself is not very long. However, a mandate in the Catalan Parliament is not the only paid political office on offer for a Catalan politician. Many Catalan parliamentarians serve in parliaments on different territorial levels (Catalan, Spanish, European) consecutively (see below). Furthermore, apart from a parliamentary mandate Catalan politicians can earn a living in various positions inside local government, the regional administration (the Generalitat) and the party bureaucracy. These positions are indeed frequently held before, in between or after parliamentary mandate. So, while the Catalan Parliament indeed contains more short-term full-time politicians than the Scottish one, there nevertheless exists a considerable number of Catalan politicians who pursue a long-term professional political career (some including, some excluding a mandate in the Catalan Parliament).

To get a better picture with regard to the function of the regional mandate within the full career another look at the survey results might be insightful. Among MCPs a clear majority – though less than in Scotland - prefers their mandate to one on the Spanish level (72 %). Their ambitions are also mostly directed to the regional level, yet they include the European Parliament (6.4 %) and local government (12.8 %) both with higher shares than the Spanish parliament (4.3 %).

Table 2: Career movements of Catalan politicians between regional and national parliament

Election	ES	CAT
regional election 1980		⇒ 17 (11)
national election 1982	3 (3)	⇐
regional election 1984		⇒ 6 (2)
national election 1986	2 (1)	⇐
regional election 1988		⇒ 8 (2)
national election 1989	4 (4)	⇐
regional election 1992		⇒ 2 (1)
national election 1993	5 (4)	⇐
regional election 1995		⇒ 6 (5)
national election 1996	5 (2)	⇐

regional election 1999		⇒	10 (1)
national election 2000	4 (1)	⇐	
regional election 2003		⇒	6 (3)
national election 2004	3 (3)	⇐	
regional election 2006		⇒	3 (2)
national election 2008	3 (1)	⇐	
all	29	⇒	58
all except 1980	29	⇐	41

Actual career movements between the Catalan Parliament and Spanish Congress show an interesting and rather unusual picture (table 2). Similar to the Scottish case the original intake of members of the national Spanish parliament is significant both in terms of quantity and quality. No less than 17 newly elected MCPs (and thus 12.6 per cent) had prior experience in the Spanish Congress, while almost a quarter of Catalonia's members in the Spanish Congress of 1980 (11 of 46) had actually left their current national mandate in order to take up a seat in the regional parliament. In terms of their political stature these politicians were even more senior than those who initially moved to the Scottish Parliament. Among the 17 former Congress members we find the party leaders of all five major forces of Catalan politics. In 1977 they went to the constituent legislature of the Spanish Congress in order to bring about autonomy for Catalonia. Once Catalan institutions were established, they returned to Catalonia to shape her politics.

But what kind of career pattern has emerged since? Another look at table 2 clearly shows a considerable degree of mobility in both directions. As expected, the 17 former Congress members moving to the newly established Catalan Parliament in 1980 were an exceptionally high intake. However, table 2 also shows a clear and sustained pattern of centrifugal movement evolving. In every single election since then, between two and ten deputies have moved "down" to the Catalan Parliament. Yet, at the same time there has also been movement away from the Catalan Parliament to the Congress. Quite surprisingly, the overall balance of movement is clearly tipped towards the regional parliament – even if we leave out the first election. Since 1982 there have been 29 movements from the Catalan Parliament to the Congress, but 41 in the opposite direction. This pattern is not restricted to the nationalist parties but holds in particular for the socialist PSC and the former communists of ICV. If we take a careers perspective (relating the number of parliamentarians moving from one institution to the other to the overall number of members in the exporting institution) the difference becomes even more pronounced: Roughly every seventeenth MCP (6.0 %) eventually takes on a Congress seat, while almost a third of all Catalan Congress members have moved on to the Catalan Parliament.

These frequent career movements of Catalan parliamentarians between the Catalan and the Spanish level also find some kind of expression in the patterns of government recruitment. In contrast to the Scottish/British case, government ministers in Catalonia and Spain do not have to be members of their respective parliament. Instead they are recruited from quite different walks of political and social life. During Jordi Pujol's (CiU) reign at the head of the Catalan government (1980-2003) almost half of all government ministers have not come from the political arena at all, but from the higher echelons of the administration. Only slightly more than half of the appointed ministers had held an elected political office (either local, regional, or national) prior to their nomination. Surprisingly, the most important parliamentary recruitment pool for the Catalan government at this time had not been the Catalan Parliament but the Spanish

Congress. Since the new tripartite coalition (PSC, ERC, ICV) has taken over in 2003 this tendency has been reversed. Nevertheless, by 2008 only about half of all Catalan ministers had served in the Catalan Parliament at the time of their appointment, while an astonishing quarter had served in the Spanish Congress.

Between 1977 and 2008 only 13 Catalan politicians have served in the Spanish government.<sup>2</sup> The most striking fact about their careers is their lack of parliamentary experience at the time of their appointment. Only five of them had been recruited from Congress (the socialists Lluçh, Solé Tura, Borrell, Montilla and Chacon), and one from the Catalan Parliament (Punset, UCD).<sup>3</sup> The other seven had come from private industry (Birulés, ind/PP), from the higher ranks of the state administration (Majó, PSC and García-Valdecasas, PP), from the higher ranks of the Catalan administration (Piqué, ind/PP), and from Catalan local government (Serra, Clos, and Corbacho, all PSC). Altogether, career movements from the Spanish parliament to the Catalan government are much more frequent than from the Catalan Parliament to the Spanish government. In fact, Catalan members of the Spanish Congress are four times more likely to end up in the Catalan government than in the Spanish government.

Taken together, the frequent career movements between the Catalan and the Spanish level (in both directions) suggests that the Catalan career pattern is best depicted as one of *integrated careers* (see figure 1).<sup>4</sup> In fact the frequency of movements and the lack of a clear direction suggests that for Catalan politicians local, Catalan, Spanish and even European institutions constitute one single career arena rather than three different territorial levels. Unlike Scottish politicians their options for a professional political career are not restricted to two distinct parliamentary career paths each with its own government at the apex. Instead, professional political careers may be pursued in different institutions (parliament, government, party organisation, administration, public enterprise) and on different territorial levels (local, regional, national and European). The frequent movements between these territorial levels and institutions are largely determined by the leadership of political parties. As a result we find many different forms of career paths. If there is an apex of these careers it is not the Spanish but the Catalan government.<sup>5</sup> Figure 3 gives you a visual impression of this career pattern.

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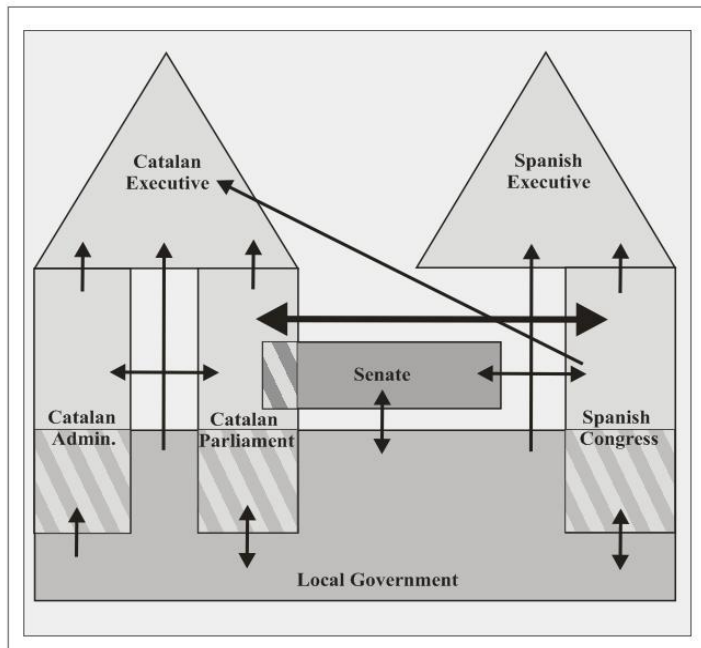
<sup>2</sup> In contrast to Ainaud (1996) and Udina (1997) Catalan ministers are defined as those coming from a Catalan political base rather than those with a Catalan ancestry. Thus, three ministers of the UCD government who have been referred to as “Catalan” – Oliart, Rovira and Mayor Zaragoza – are discounted in this analysis as their political career is not a Catalan one. All three had been representing non-Catalan constituencies in Congress.

<sup>3</sup> *José Montilla* (PSC, Industry, Telecommunications, Energy, Commerce and Tourism, 2004) was nominated to the government right after his election to Congress. Thus, he was appointed from Congress, yet he owes this position not to his parliamentary career but to his office as the general secretary of the PSC (the number two behind president Maragall). *Solé Tura* had been a member of the Catalan Parliament before he was elected to Congress and appointed to the Spanish government.

<sup>4</sup> This assessment becomes even more obvious when we shift the focus from the aggregate to the individual level. An astonishing eleven MPs have been moving from one parliament to the other and back. Two others have even served twice in both parliaments (Maciá Alavedra and Fernández Teixidó).

<sup>5</sup> This assessment is perhaps best illustrated by the move of PSC leader Montilla to leave his super-ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism in the Spanish government (where he was effectively number 2 behind prime minister Zapatero) in order to stand as candidate for the Catalan presidency (which he subsequently won).

Figure 3: Catalan Political Careers



## 5. Tentative Explanations

In the two case studies above we have detected a fairly strong regional career orientation among both Catalan and Scottish politicians, yet also a clear divergence with regard to the actual career pattern that has developed since the establishment of regional parliaments in both regions. Both these results need some explanation. Why do Catalan and Scottish careers deviate from the classical unidirectional springboard pattern and why do they differ from each other?

The first question is almost exclusively to be understood with regard to *attractiveness*. Career patterns deviate from the nation-state centred unidirectional model because a mandate in the regional parliament is highly attractive to a large number of ambitious professional politicians in Catalonia and Scotland. They develop a regional career orientation, i.e. the regional parliament and the regional executive are seen as career aims in itself. This is to be seen in the high number (and high calibre) of members of the national parliament (MNPs) moving back into the first regional parliament as well as in the high number of such movements (Catalonia) and the low levels of movement into the opposite direction (Scotland) since then. But why is this the case?

Among the most important necessary conditions for professional politicians to consider pursuing a regional rather than a national career are to be seen in relatively high levels of professionalization and relatively high levels of policy competencies in the regional parliament compared to the national one. And indeed both the Catalan and the Scottish Parliament are quite attractive in this respect. As stated above in terms of parliamentary salaries the regional parliaments are only slightly behind the national ones. In terms of legislative competencies the difference to the national legislature is naturally more pronounced. However, the Catalan and the Scottish Parliament are among the strongest regional parliaments in Europe with regard to their capacity for autonomous policy making. Hence, on both these dimensions Catalan and Scottish MNPs were to lose, yet to lose only little, by moving to the regional parliament. While this may

be an important pre-condition to consider the regional parliament a feasible career option, the motive for actually doing so has to be found elsewhere.

The most plausible explanation appears to lie in the high levels of regional identity and the strong politicization of this identity in Catalan and Scottish society. Regionalism in this sense goes far beyond the activities of a single regionalist party or even a regionalist movement. It affects all parties and in effect all relevant political actors in the regional arena. In Catalonia and Scotland the newly established regional parliaments are symbols of re-awakened political identity and democracy. Both parliaments carry a high status with the general public, and the media in both regions is very much orientated towards them (cf. Stolz 2010: 104). For most regional parliamentarians serving in this body means participating in the self-government of the territorial unit that is politically the most meaningful to them. Catalonia and Scotland rather than Spain or the UK are defining their political frame of reference. This assessment is supported by survey results, where most members of the regional parliaments (MRPs) in Catalonia and Scotland stated their preference of the regional over the national mandate. By far the most important reason for this preference is to be seen in their general ambition to influence regional politics (rather than national politics). Private family reasons and specific policy interests (in devolved matters) were only stated by a minority (Stolz 2010: 104)

As a result we find a strong regional career orientation in Catalonia and in Scotland. Career patterns, however, look vastly different. In Catalonia the general regional orientation is reflected in the high numbers of movements towards the Catalan Parliament, while in Scotland it is expressed in terms of the low levels of movement into the Westminster Parliament. These differences can only be explained with reference to the highly dissimilar institutional structure of opportunity politicians in the two regions are facing. Thus, I will briefly sketch out the main differences with regard to the availability, the accessibility and the attractiveness of crossing over from the regional to the national parliament and vice versa in both cases.

In terms of the *availability* of parliamentary mandates the two cases do not differ significantly. For would-be Scottish parliamentarians there is a total of 188 seats available (before 2005 there were 201), 129 in the Scottish Parliament and 59 at Westminster (72 until 2005). In Catalonia there is currently a total of 182 seats, 135 in the Catalan Parliament and 47 in the Spanish Congress. In both cases, as in most other countries, there are more regional seats available for national MPs than vice versa.

But, how accessible are seats in the regional and in the national parliament for members of the respective other parliament? The *accessibility* of parliamentary mandates is first and foremost conditioned by the turnover in the respective parliament. High turnover rates facilitate access from outside and hamper career continuity of incumbents, while low turnover rates facilitate long tenure within a parliament and hamper access from outside. Thus, the frequent career movements between Catalan and Spanish Parliament and the low level of movement between Scottish and UK Parliament can be seen as a function of the highly different turnover rates in both cases (see above).

Table 3: Volatility, seat change and turnover in Catalonia and Scotland

	n	volatility	seats changing parties		member turnover	
		percentage points	seats	percentage	seats	percentage
CAT 80/84	135	34.3	48	35.6	79	58.5
CAT 84/88	135	6.1	9	6.6	53	39.3
CAT 88/92	135	7.2	8	5.9	56	41.5
CAT 92/95	135	11.9	17	12.6	60	44.4
CAT 95/99	135	7.6	17	12.6	70	51.9
CAT 99/03	135	9.4	18	13.4	68	50.4
CAT 03/06	135	8.0	8	5.9	66	48.9
Average CAT	135	12.1	17.9	13.2	64.6	47.8
SCOT 1999/2003	129	9/11.3	22	17.1	30	23.3
-constituency seats	73	9	7	9.6	11	15.1
- regional seats	56	11.3	15	26.8	19	33.4
SCOT 2003/07	129	10,6/12.1	30	23.3	44	34.1
-constituency seats	73	10.6	14	19.2	19	26.0
- regional seats	56	12.1	16	28.6	25	44.6
Average SCOT	129	9.8/11.7	26	20.2	38.5	28.77

Source: calculation and compilation by author based on electoral results published by the respective parliaments.

However, this leaves us with the question, how to account for the hugely different turnover rates. A look at table 3 clearly shows that this difference is not induced by the voters but by the institutional mechanisms that translate the voters' verdict into a specific distribution of seats to individual candidates. So far, Scottish elections have produced not only a higher volatility (net change of party support), but also a higher number of seats changing parties (net change of party seats in each electoral district) than regional elections in Catalonia (the change between the first and second Catalan election clearly is an exception to the rule). However, paradoxically the composition of the Scottish Parliament (in terms of individual members) is changing much less between elections than that of the Catalan Parliament.

The answer to this conundrum lies in the different electoral systems and the differences in the system of candidate nomination. The Spanish (and Catalan) electoral system with its closed party lists and the centralized nomination process to be found in Catalan (as well as in Spanish) parties strongly facilitates turnover as well as movements between territorial levels. Congress and Catalan elections are run according to the same rules, within the same constituency boundaries and with the same party elites in control of the nomination process: Thus, a small circle of party leaders (sometimes just the party leader himself) is allowed to "place", "replace", and "move" MPs from one legislature to the other according to strategic, tactical or simply personal considerations. By contrast, the plurality voting system in single-member constituencies and the highly localized nomination system to which all Westminster MPs and more than half of all members of the Scottish Parliament owe their seats generally produce a strong incumbency

advantage and thus reduces the accessibility for any movement from another territorial level. While there is little hard evidence of a strong personal vote, the direct voter-deputy link in the constituency combined with the resources at the disposal of individual MPs nevertheless allows incumbents to build a strong personal network in “their” constituency and strengthens their position in the intra-party reselection process to a degree that they are hardly ever deselected. With the nomination process largely dispersed to local party organizations there is also no single authority that could determine the composition of the whole parliamentary group according to any overriding considerations (whether personal or strategic). Thus, various bodies of the political parties are playing an important gate-keeper role, yet individual Scottish politicians are nevertheless much more responsible for their career moves than their Catalan counterparts, for whom the accessibility of a particular position is almost completely determined by the party leadership.

However, as stated above, career pathways are not only conditioned by the accessibility of certain positions and institutions but also by their relative *attractiveness*. As has been shown in the first part of the empirical analysis, the regional parliaments of Catalonia and Scotland show a similarly high general attractiveness relative to the respective national parliaments. However, the two cases differ considerably with regard to the “transaction costs” incurred by any movement between regional and national parliament and thus with regard to the attractiveness of cross-over careers.

British parliamentary tradition provides strong incentives to individual MPs to follow the once adopted parliamentary career and discourages movements between parliaments. Contrary to Spanish (and for that matter Catalan) parliamentarianism, intra-parliamentary careers usually follow a more or less structured pattern (for Westminster see Riddell, 1993: 9), where seniority is an important asset. Government ministers in Scotland and the UK are exclusively recruited from within the respective parliament. Thus, those who stay long enough, improve their chances of government promotion, while MPs crossing over to another institution would lose a good deal of their accumulated capital. In Catalonia and Spain by contrast, prior experience in another parliament and the lack of in-house seniority do not hamper the chance for career advancement into senior parliamentary positions or even into government office (López Nieto, 2000). As shown above, Catalan and Spanish ministers have been appointed from a wide range of institutions, including parliaments of a higher or lower territorial level.

A Catalan politician with a regional career orientation does not stand to lose anything by entering the Spanish Congress. On the contrary, it might provide him or her with the necessary resources (e.g. prominence) to move on to the higher ranks of Catalan politics. Scottish politicians with a clear-cut regional or national career orientation, on the other hand, would be ill-advised to enter the “wrong” parliament. The possibility of crossing over to their first choice parliament is highly limited, fast track parliamentary careers are hardly conceivable, and a direct cross-over appointment to the government is precluded. As a consequence regional career orientations in Scotland are moulded into an alternative strongly bounded Scottish career path, whereas the regional orientation of Catalan politicians is expressed in the form of regionally directed career movements within a highly integrated career arena consisting of Catalan and Spanish institutions.

## **6. Consequences: Towards a Regional Political Class**

After searching for possible explanations for the career patterns of Scottish and Catalan professional politicians we may now turn to their consequences. As has been shown above regional politicians in Scotland and Catalonia are pursuing a professional career based on and oriented towards the regional arena. Their paid, full-time and long-term dedication to regional politics distinguishes them from their fellow regional citizens (functional differentiation), their regional career path and orientation distinguishes them from their national colleagues in professional politics (territorial differentiation). This functional and territorial differentiation suggests the existence of a regional political class in itself. However, neither is this territorial and functional differentiation complete, nor is their internal structure (and thus their class interest) the same.

The regional political class in Scotland is based on the Scottish Parliament. Once elected to the Scottish Parliament the professional life and ambition of MSPs has only little in common with their Westminster counterparts. It is to the Scottish Parliament that they owe their living, it is to the Scottish Parliament that they dedicate their full working time, and it is to the Scottish Parliament (including the Executive) that they look for their political and professional future. Their career maintenance is largely dependent on localised electorates and selectorates and career advancement is mainly governed by parliamentary institutions (i.e. the leadership of the parliamentary group and/or the executive).

However, while this description comes close to an idealtype regional political class, some qualifications have to be made. Despite all the evidence for their disjunction, Scottish politicians remain linked to their Westminster counterparts to some degree through political parties, through some careers and even through the constitutional structure. The party linkage is strongest within the Labour party. Labour has long been the most important vehicle of Scottish integration into the British state. And of course, Scottish politicians are still socialised in a markedly British institution – both in its organisation and ethos. Another linkage is provided by career pathways. Although, the Scottish level remains the main career focus for almost all professional politicians in Scotland, there are exceptions to this rule, most notably in (yet not restricted to) the Tory party. The third, and perhaps most important qualification regards the institutional autonomy of professional politicians in Scotland. The unitary structure of the UK that gives Westminster formally unrestrained powers over Scottish political institutions stands in direct contrast to the self-regulatory power that is part of the definition of any distinct political class. However, as the British system works more on political considerations than on statutory rules, Scottish politicians do wield considerable power over their own affairs. Taken together these caveats should remind us that there cannot be such a thing as a completely distinct regional political class, yet politicians in Scotland have come close to this idealtype in many respects.

The structure of the Catalan political class is completely different from the Scottish one. Instead of splitting up into a regional and national political class along institutional lines, the high-pace, multi-directional movements of Catalan politicians between institutions of different territorial levels are largely centred around and dependent upon Catalan institutions, and thus make for a single integrated regional political class, albeit with boundaries extending its proper territorial base. Despite career paths and opportunities crossing institutional and territorial boundaries, a majority of professional positions is based in Catalonia and so is the ultimate prize of a Catalan political career – a place in the Catalan government. The organisational bond that integrates



professional politicians from a variety of offices and even from different territorial levels into a single political class are political parties (all but the PP genuinely Catalan parties).

Again a few qualifications have to be made. Both with regard to its outside boundaries as well as with regard to its internal coherence the Catalan political class is less clearly defined than the Scottish one. In terms of its social differentiation, the higher numbers of short-term political careers, the lower levels of professionalisation (including ties to prior forms of occupation) the Catalan political class is surely not a completely distinct social group. Similarly the Catalan contingent in the Spanish Congress and the nationally oriented PP members in the Catalan Parliament are blurring the territorial differentiation between the Catalan and the Spanish political class. The institutional diversity and dispersion of the Catalan political class and its sheer extension are also strongly affecting its internal coherence. While the Scottish Parliament contains the core of the Scottish political class functioning as its highly bounded central committee, the institutional backbone of the Catalan political class had long been divided along partisan lines. Between 1980 and 2003 the nationalist CiU coalition had effectively monopolised the Catalan government and administration. At the same time, the electoral strength of the socialists at the local level allowed them to build their “fiefdoms” in the larger Catalan cities, especially in Barcelona. The Catalan Parliament imports these many divisions, including the party political schism into the very core of the political class. On the other hand, the parliament provides important forms of linkages. Many will move through this socialisation agency at some point in their career, others combine their mandate with more important offices at local, regional or party level. With all the party leaders present, the Catalan Parliament also provides an important forum for inter-party cooperation, though not necessarily during the official parliamentary proceedings.

A party based multi-

The analysis of career patterns in Scotland and Catalonia has revealed that Scottish and Catalan politicians cannot easily be subsumed into the group of UK or Spanish professional politicians. In contrast, their peculiar regional career patterns can be seen as common structural features marking them as a regional political class in itself. The theory of political class purports that this may lead to the emergence of a common consciousness, common interests and finally, collective action in pursuit of this interest. Such a regional political class would clearly pursue different interests than a national one. Similarly the highly bounded parliament based Scottish political class is likely to engage in other projects than the extended party based political class of Catalonia. The identification of regionally oriented career patterns and a regional political class may thus be an important step in identifying and understanding a central actor in the still very recent institution-building processes in Catalonia and Scotland. If and how the regional political classes in these regions actually did pursue their collective self-interest is, of course, a matter for another paper ....

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