

Patterns of Ministerial Careers in Germany

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1. Introduction

The study of political careers across territorial levels is a fairly new field of research. This has two main reasons. The first reason is to be seen in the methodological nationalism (cf. Jeffery 2008, Jeffery/Wincott 2010) that has been prevailing for a long time in many fields of political science and in particular in career studies. Political careers were automatically seen as political careers of national politicians at the national level. Recruitment studies of national parliamentarians attempted to give us some insight into the social and political background of the national political elite (for comparative studies in this field see Norris 1997 and Best/Cotta 2000). While the local and regional level did feature in these studies as a recruitment pool for national politicians, they did so in a de-territorialized way, i.e. as specific functional levels of government rather than as particular territorial entities. Furthermore, the funnel perspective of recruitment studies automatically treated the national level as the only possible career aim of politicians. Neither did regional parliaments feature as a separate object of study, nor did these studies of national MPs look at the career paths of MPs after they left parliament (for a more elaborate critique of this approach see Stolz 2011, Borchert/Stolz 2011a). In the US, where there is a much older tradition on state legislative research, the two territorial levels are largely treated as completely separate, neglecting a systematic study of career paths that link these territorial levels.

A second reason for the neglect of the territorial dimension in career studies is simply that this methodological nationalism had its origin in the empirical reality of many western democracies. Indeed, in many countries the national level really has been the dominant focus of political careers. However, at least this second supposition is about to change. There are at least three different developments that have challenged the national level as the unquestioned apex of the political career ladder. First of all, in many western democracies regional politics has seen a tremendous process of political professionalisation during the end of the last century (most notably the US and Germany, see Gress/Huth 1998, Rosenthal 1998, 1999). This has rendered the regional level (and in some cases also the local level, see Reiser 2006) a much more attractive career arena. Secondly, many (formerly) unitary European states (such as Italy, France,

Belgium, Spain, the UK etc.) have recently undergone quite significant processes of regionalization or even federalization (in the case of Belgium). The devolution of competencies and resources to the regions has also strengthened the regional level as a career arena. The third development is mainly restricted to Europe and has come from above: Europeanisation. With the establishment and continuous strengthening of the European Parliament (yet also the Commission) the national level has got another potential competitor to which career ambitions could, at least potentially, be directed.

More recent research has taken up these new developments often also explicitly rejecting the methodological nationalism of the past. A first snapshot study at career patterns across territorial levels in western democracies has revealed that political careers are not necessarily geared to the national level. Instead, career patterns across territorial levels “differ widely not only between countries, but also between regions within the same country” (Stolz 2003: 241). More elaborate and detailed studies have since followed looking at newly emerging multi-level career patterns in Europe (Edinger/Jahr 2011), in Latin America (Siavelis/Morgenstern 2008) and even across continents (Stolz/Borchert 2011b.). In these studies, quite understandably, the focus is generally on parliamentary careers, as this constitutes the largest body of professional political careers. Parliamentary careers were taken as proxy for political careers in general. However, as the general thrust has now been established it is time for a closer look at these careers, identifying not only general career patterns across territorial levels, but also distinguishing between different positions and institutions.

In this paper we will thus take a closer look at patterns of ministerial careers across territorial levels in Germany. For reasons explained above, the scarce literature on ministerial careers in Germany has so far almost exclusively focused on linkages between parliamentary and ministerial careers on the federal level (Kaiser/Fischer 2009, Fischer/Kaiser 2010). The one case where a selection of *Länder* is taken into account regards moves within levels rather than across levels (Vogel 2009). Career movements between the regional and the national cabinet have hardly received any scholarly attention. Yet, general research on ministerial careers at least identified an increasing importance of state cabinets as recruitment pools for the federal cabinet (Fischer/Kaiser 2009: 29). Given the still more than modest state of research, our main aim in this paper

is to detect and to describe the personal linkages between regional and national executives in Germany and to take first steps towards an explanation of these patterns. We do so by taking an institutional as well as a career perspective on the topic.

2. Theoretical Deliberations and Conceptual Framework

Patterns of political careers between the regional and the national level – no matter whether we investigate parliamentarians or government ministers – can generally take four distinct forms (cf. Stolz 2010: 98-100). 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).¹

FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

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).

¹ For some (Francis/Kenny 2000) this model even constitutes a general law of politics.

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.

Which of these ideal type patterns any particular empirical case resembles is dependent upon a number of variables. Central among them are certainly the state structure (federal vs. unitary, but also the kind of federalism or unitary state), the party system and the internal structure of political parties, the existence or absence of strong regional identities or even regionalist/nationalist movements and the degree of political professionalisation to be found on the regional level (relative to the national one) (for a more comprehensive list of potential variables see Stolz 2003: 241-6, Stolz 2010: 49-53).

In the case of Germany, these variables do not clearly point to one of these types. The joint character of Germany’s federal system (as opposed to a more dual one), Germany’s relatively homogeneous and integrated party system (the extent of which is of course to be debated) and the lack of any strong regionalist movement all point

towards a pattern where territorial levels are strongly linked via career movements rather than to an *alternative careers* pattern. The clear dominance of national politics over *Länder* affairs in the public discourse and the highly unequal distribution of resources and legislative competencies do further suggest a centripetal career orientation, thus pointing towards the *springboard* rather than the non-hierarchically *integrated* pattern. In the last decades, however, the rising political professionalisation of regional politics may have at least partly countered such a tendency elevating the regional arena to a career arena for professional politicians in its own right.

If we look at empirical studies of parliamentary careers, we find that the German case can generally be located somewhere between the traditional springboard and the alternative careers pattern. In fact, there seems to be a trend from the former to the latter (Borchert/Stolz 2011c), though where exactly Germany should be located at present is certainly disputable.

In the following we will be looking at the careers of regional and national cabinet members. On the whole, we would expect them to follow similar lines. However, there are also reasons, why they might deviate from the pattern of parliamentary careers. In terms of recruitment, we might expect that cabinet members are disproportionately drawn from level-hoppers, because of the multi-level experience they bring to such an office. For those who already have a cabinet position, on the other hand, the move towards another territorial level seems less attractive yet also more accessible for ordinary legislators. This last argument seems particularly valid in the German case. Germany is not only known to be an example of joint or cooperative federalism, its federal system is also seen to be executive dominated. While state legislators and legislatures do not have much policy autonomy and are rather weak political players, the strength of the German *Länder* is the role they can play in federal politics (in particular via the *Bundesrat*). This role, however, is reserved to the state government, rather than the parliament. Thus the strong integration of federal policy making, might be seen as something that is driving ambitious state legislators towards the national centre (or indeed the regional cabinet), while members of the regional executive are not necessarily exposed to the same centripetal current. The high status of cabinet members together with their experience in multi-level politics, on the other hand, strongly

facilitates access for those who nevertheless do aspire to move across territorial boundaries.

3. Data

In order to identify a pattern of ministerial careers across territorial levels in Germany we take a look at centripetal career movements, i.e. regional cabinet members moving into the federal executive but also at centrifugal movements, i.e. federal cabinet members moving into the regional executive. Both kinds of movements can be analysed from different perspectives. First, we can take the traditional recruitment perspective, that may also be termed *import perspective*. Here it is asked, how many members of a particular (importing) institution have had prior experience in a particular other institution. How many former *Land* ministers serve(d) in a particular federal government? How many former federal ministers are to be found in the average *Land* cabinet? This perspective has a strong institutional focus. Looking at the number of members with particular characteristics (a particular career background) relative to the overall size of the importing institution, the main interest is in the composition of an institution rather than in individual political careers.

A more career oriented perspective is taken, when we relate the number of career movements between two institutions to the size of the exporting rather than the importing institution. How many members of a regional cabinet have made it into the federal government? How many ministers of a particular federal cabinet have ended up in a regional government? The answer to these questions reflects the likelihood of a certain career movement and thus the frequency with which a particular career path is pursued. In our study we will explore ministerial careers in Germany from both perspectives.

Our data contains career information about all ministers and chancellors² who have been appointed to the federal cabinet since the first government of the Federal Republic in 1949 up to the changes made in the second Merkel cabinet until April 2010.³ Our unit of observation varies according to what we want to investigate: We use either “persons” (N=203, each person is counted only once) or “cabinet ministers” (N=461, the cumulated number of ministerial offices in these cabinets, irrespective of the persons who hold these positions). Again, this distinction reflects the two perspectives explicated above. Exploring the career patterns of individual ministers on an aggregated level we are taking a career view, while focussing on cabinets ministerial positions allows us for example to give evidence about the recruitment power of the cabinets in the different *Länder* or about the share of ex *Land* ministers in each federal government.⁴ Our data contains information whether a federal minister served in a state government before and/or after his tenure on the federal level. For those who were in cabinet at both levels since 1969, we additionally coded their portfolios.

In contrast to the national level, where our sample consists of the whole population of federal ministers, for the regional level we do not have anything close to a full dataset of regional cabinet ministers. Instead our career analysis of regional ministers draws from two different sources. First of all, our data set of federal ministers, by definition also contains all *Land* ministers who served at the federal level before or after their position in the *Land* cabinet. In order to put this sub-group of regional ministers into perspective, i.e. in order to calculate ratios of those who do move between territorial levels, we also conducted three snapshots of regional cabinets. They were taken in each of the sixteen states (respectively 11 before reunification) and cover all *Land* ministers who were in office in a government which was in power on January 1st 1960, 1991 and 2010. These snapshots comprise 469 regional cabinet members altogether.⁵ In addition to

² For reasons of terminological simplicity we use the term “ministers” for the total of the executive personnel which encompasses ministers and chancellors.

³ Our latest newcomer is Kristina Schröder (CDU), appointed to the Ministry of Family Affairs in November 2009.

⁴ If we took only “persons” and not “cabinet ministers” as our unit of observation, we would not be able to differentiate between cabinets, as for example the cabinets Kohl I and II show. In both governments in each case four ministers had a *Länder* past, yet they were the same four persons. Hence, for an institutional perspective we need to count one person several times.

⁵ The overall number of *Länder* ministers since 1946 can be estimated at about 2000. This number is calculated as follows: Based on 203 persons on the federal level in 61 years one can calculate an average of 3.3 newly appointed ministers per federal government year. In total, we have approximately 815 state government years. Given the

information about their prior or subsequent appearance in the federal government, the data also contains prior or subsequent moves to and from the federal parliament.

4. Findings

Our main findings in a nutshell: There is considerable movement of executive personnel between the *Land* and the federal governments. In the 61 years since the foundation of the Federal Republic of Germany, 56 ministers have made such a move. We observe that the route from a *Land* to the federal cabinet is far more common than vice versa. We present this data in the next section and go into more detail, in the search for significant patterns. We mainly explore the centripetal and centrifugal moves to and from the federal level (Section 4.1 and 4.2), but additionally take a look at a selection of *Land* cabinets (Section 4.4).

4.1 Centripetal direction

Up to 2010 47 of all 203 federal ministers had been minister at a *Land* government before entering the federal cabinet. This constitutes a centripetal import ratio of 23 per cent. In other words: almost a fourth of all federal ministers had prior experience in the state government. This figure is considerably higher than the import ratios that has been generated by former *Land* parliamentarians in the German Bundestag in the last twenty years (this ratio has risen from 15 to 19 per cent between 1994 and 2009, Kintz 2010), though lower than this ratio had been in the 1960s (more than 25 per cent in 1965 according to Borchert/Golsch 1999: 129).

A comparison over time reveals a clear trend towards an increasing number of ministers with a *Land* past in the federal cabinet. This trend becomes especially evident since 1998: We show that from 1998 onwards the share of ministers with a state experience never dropped below 35 %, whereas between 1949 and 1998 it hardly ever exceeded

smaller size of state cabinets and assuming on average a similar personnel stability as on the federal level, we calculate only 2.4 appointed ministers per year. This multiplied by 815 state government years equals 1956.

30 per cent (only two occasions: Adenauer I, 1949-1953 and Kiesinger I, 1966-1969). Also, of the 47 ministers who were in a *Land* executive 30 were appointed since Helmut Kohl's first chancellorship (64 per cent) in 1982 and 22 since the first cabinet of Gerhard Schröder in 1998. Yet, a look on the whole period reveals that this is not a linear pattern. Instead we have found considerable variance between individual cabinets : While some Chancellors had a cabinet composed of 50 per cent members with a *Land* government experience like Schröder I and Adenauer I,⁶ in other cabinets as for example Schmidt I-III there was only one such person (in fact it was Helmut Schmidt himself with a *Land* executive past). At this stage of our research we are not yet able to explain the reasons for the large differences between governments. We suspect a combination of situational factors and the personal preferences of each chancellor to be of particular importance.

A second general pattern can be detected concerning the data within one chancellorship: The centripetal ratio is highest at the beginning of each chancellor's reign and then declines in the subsequent cabinets. One explanation for this phenomenon might be that a new chancellor seeks to compose a cabinet with practical government experience. Especially after a change in the governing parties the federal experience is hardly available so that chancellors revert to the *Land* level (as Gerhard Schröder in 1998). In subsequent cabinets then the executive experience at *Land* level can be replaced by the experience obtained in the past terms on the federal level.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Another potential explanation for the growing occurrence of level switchers is the need to compensate *Land* politicians who lost influence or even their job as a *Land* PM for reasons attributed to the poor performance of his party in the national government (Manow 2005: 259). Burkhart showed that the higher the decline in the federal government's popularity is, the higher are the losses of federal government parties in *Land* elections. Since reunification 1990 this negative influence of federal politics on

⁶ As this was the very first German post-war cabinet it is clearly a special case. In 1949, with no experienced federal legislators to pick from, *Länder* governments (in place since 1946) were an obvious recruitment pool.

Land election outcomes has even grown, rather than declined (Burkhart 2005). This explains a series of calls to cabinet especially during Gerhard Schröders administration. Reinhard Klimmt and Hans Eichel were 1999 voted out of there PM's office in Saarland respectively Hesse and joined the national cabinet shortly afterwards.

A look at the the career paths of the eight German chancellors shows that they are even more likely to have served in a *Land* cabinet before entering their federal office than their cabinet colleagues. Four of them, Kurt Georg Kiesinger, Willy Brandt, Helmut Kohl, and Gerhard Schröder, once were themselves *Ministerpräsident* of a *Land*; two served as ministers in *Land* executives (Helmut Schmidt and Ludwig Erhard) and only two came without any *Land* government experience (Konrad Adenauer and Angela Merkel). Our hunch that the chancellors' own career paths would have an influence on their appointment decisions in such a way that they selected those ministers who were career wise similar to themselves is not to be corroborated: Our figures do not show any correlation between the chancellors' career and their recruitment decisions.

But what does condition the selection of federal ministers? Even though recent studies suggest that on the federal level there is a tendency to appoint generalists rather than experts (Fischer/Kaiser 2009: 31), we took a closer look at the portfolio of all *Land* ministers who have been recruited into federal government since 1969 (N = 33). Is there a connection between the policy fields the ministers have been in charge of at the *Land* and at the federal level? Do ministers who have been responsible for the intersection of *Land* and federal politics (usually the Ministry for Federal and European affairs) have any advantage? And finally, are political heavyweights (defined as prime ministers and finance ministers) more likely to be appointed? The result is that for 29 ministers (88 per cent) at least one of these features applies. 15 (45 per cent) were political heavy weights in the *Land* executive, 18 (55 per cent) were not. Ten (30 per cent) held a portfolio with a strong policy field connection to their subsequent office at federal level, two featured only partial policy connection between the portfolios and 21 had none at all. Only four ministers (12 per cent) held an intersectional function in the Ministry for Federal and European Affairs. These figures suggest that there is no clear portfolio wise pattern regarding the moves from the *Land* to the federal cabinet. Yet, being a political heavyweight in the *Land* executive can help on the way to the federal cabinet. Despite

the decreasing importance of expertise in a certain policy field, the portfolios held on the *Land* level may hint at the portfolio obtained by those promoted into the federal executive – yet, it is no decisive factor for a federal appointment. The same holds for the intersection portfolio at *Land* level: It might support a call to the federal cabinet, but it's not crucial.

While the centripetal import ratio of 23 per cent clearly reveals that *Land* governments are an important recruitment reservoir for federal ministers and that there is a considerable presence of *Land* experience in the federal government (institutional perspective), we should put things into perspective. First of all we have to acknowledge that former *Land* ministers are not the largest group in federal governments. Like in most other parliamentary systems it is the federal parliament that functions as the most important recruitment pool for the federal cabinet. In Germany no less than 64 per cent of the federal ministers held a seat in the Bundestag at the time of their first appointment to the national cabinet, an additional 7 per cent had held such a mandate at a former stage of their career (Fischer/Kaiser 2010: 38). However, the two recruitment pools are of course not mutually exclusive, some federal cabinet ministers might have held both positions in the course of their career.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

A completely different picture appears, however, if we change perspective from the importing to the exporting institution. The 47 *Land* ministers that made the step into the federal cabinet can be seen as fairly large share (23 per cent) of all federal cabinet ministers, but this figure looks considerably less impressive if compared to the overall number of ministers who have served in a *Land* cabinet. Indeed, for ministers in a *Land* government the promotion to the federal level is a rare exception rather than the rule. Of the approximately 2000 *Land* ministers since 1946 only 47 have made such a career step – an export ratio of just 2,4 per cent. For the remaining 97.6 per cent of all *Land* ministers this is the highest position they would get in politics.⁷ This finding is also

⁷ The exceptions which confirm the rule are Michael Schreyer (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen) and Günther Oettinger (CDU) who jumped from a *Land* government straight to the European Commission.

reflected in the data from our snapshots, though the export ratio in our sample (regional ministers of 1960 and 1991) is slightly higher (4.4 per cent) (see table 2).⁸

However, based on the admittedly rather limited sample size, regional cabinet ministers seem to be more likely to move to the federal parliament than their colleagues on the backbenches of regional parliaments. In our sample roughly 11 per cent of regional ministers have subsequently moved on to the federal parliament. This contrasts with just about 5 per cent of regional MPs who have been said to make such a move (Stolz 2011). While it seems obvious why regional cabinet members may find it a lot easier to make such a move (they are simply much better positioned in the candidate selection process than any “ordinary” regional MP), it is much less clear why they exchange their cabinet position on the regional for a mere parliamentary mandate on the federal level (after all, less than half of them has also moved into the federal cabinet). The answer might lie either in an involuntary exit from the regional cabinet (deselection, electoral defeat, change of government) or in an active recruitment by the federal party (and the ambition to move into federal government at some point in future).

4.2 Centrifugal direction

In most established federal systems centrifugal career movements are rather rare (Stolz 2003). However, this does not mean that they do not exist nor that they are not important.

In Germany in the year 2000, the share of regional parliamentarians with prior experience in the federal parliament was roughly 3 per cent (Borchert/Stolz 2011c). Indeed, this hardly represents a highly frequented career path. However, those who do move “downwards” to the *Länder* level stand a good chance of promotion into the regional cabinet. In our snapshot sample 17 per cent of regional cabinet ministers had prior experience in the federal parliament (see table 2). Again this corroborates our hunch (see section 2) that multi-level experience is an asset in cabinet recruitment.

⁸ In our analysis of subsequent movements the snapshot of 2010 obviously has to be disregarded.

TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

The disposition of federal cabinet ministers to move down to the regional level is understandably even lower. Of all the 203 federal cabinet ministers since 1949 only 9 – and thus 4.4 per cent – have moved on into regional government later in their career (see table 3).⁹ From an import perspective, former federal cabinet ministers thus represent less than 1 per cent of all regional ministers (in our snapshot they represent 0.85 per cent, see table 2). Again, we note that this is not a very highly frequented career path. However, it is a clearly defined and highly prestigious pathway, as those who opted for it without exception ended up in the Prime Minister's seat on the *Land* level. Some were drawn directly from the federal cabinet to replace a resigning *Land* PM (Horst Seehofer [CSU] in 2008), others resigned their federal position after they had successfully run for prime minister in a *Land* election (Walter Wallmann [CDU] in 1987), others took over the Prime Ministership only several years after they were forced out of the federal office (Jürgen Rüttgers [CDU], prime minister since 2005). Together these cases clearly indicate that the federal cabinet can be seen as recruitment pool for the regional premiership. In our snapshot sample almost 10 per cent of regional prime ministers had come from a federal cabinet office.

Taken together, we may conclude that political careers in the German federal system rarely take a centrifugal direction. However, if they do, they often lead into governmental office. "Ordinary" parliamentarians who move downwards are often rewarded with a cabinet position. If members of the federal cabinet choose (or are chosen) to continue their career on the *Land* level, a common ministerial seat does not suffice – it has to be that of the prime minister.

4.3 Balance of movement

Taking centripetal and centrifugal career movements together we can identify a pattern of ministerial careers across territorial levels in Germany. With regard to the absolute number of movements this pattern is very clear: 47 government members moved from *Land* to *Bund*, only nine from *Bund* to *Land*. With the balance of movement (at least in

⁹ Yet we have to take into account that for the recently departed and the current members of the federal cabinet it is still possible to start off a *Land* career.

absolute terms) clearly tipped towards centripetal career paths, ministerial careers in Germany closely resemble the patterns of parliamentary careers across these two territorial levels (see Stolz 2003, 2011). This pattern reflects a marked hierarchy between the two levels of government with the federal level clearly exceeding the regional in terms of status, power, income etc.

This hierarchy is perhaps best captured, from a recruitment perspective. Here the 23 per cent of federal cabinet ministers with a prior cabinet position on the regional level contrast markedly with one per cent of regional cabinet ministers who have served in federal government before. While almost one in four federal cabinet members pursued a pathway via a regional cabinet seat, less than one in hundred regional cabinet members have come via the federal government. However, those who did come this pathway invariably ended up in the premiership position.

A look from a career point of view (i.e. an export perspective), however, may tell a more cautionary tale. Yes, a considerable share of federal cabinet members has used a regional executive office as a springboard to federal government. In relation to the total number of approx. 2000 *Land* ministers, though, the number of 47 remains quite low (2.4 per cent centripetal export ratio). Indeed it does not exceed the share of ministers who moved from the federal to a state executive (4.4 per cent centrifugal export ratio). Thus, despite the marked centripetal direction of movements in absolute terms our analysis has also shown, that it is more likely for a federal minister to move “down” towards the regional level, than it is for one of the many regional ministers to reach the federal government level.

4.4 The *Land* perspective

In the last three sections we have identified the general pattern of ministerial career movements between the regional and federal level of government. In this section we try to disaggregate the figures in order to search for specific *Land* patterns. Do we find the same pattern everywhere, or are there significant variations to be found? While the absolute numbers of movements in our snapshot sample for individual *Länder* are too small to come to general conclusions, some results are still worth presenting.

With regard to the balance of movement in absolute terms the figures for individual *Länder* do not show significant deviations from the overall pattern. For all but one case – Bavaria - the balance of absolute movements is either even or tipped towards the federal level (see table 2). In our snapshot no *Land* had more than one former federal minister in its government, while some regional governments have produced more than one federal minister (with the last snapshot cohort – 2010 – still to fulfil its potential). The Land with the most marked balance is Lower Saxony (no centrifugal move, 4 centripetal ones)

More valid and meaningful results can be obtained by including the movements to and from the respective parliaments on each level. With regard to the import of federal MPs into regional cabinets there is considerable variation between Germany's regions (see column 5/6 of table 2). While a number of West German *Länder* (the city states of Bremen and Hamburg but also the larger states of Hesse and Bavaria) do not recruit more than six or seven per cent of their regional cabinet from former federal MPs, east German *Länder* have figures of around twenty (Saxony, Thuringia, Saxony-Anhalt) or thirty per cent (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Brandenburg).¹⁰ Regional cabinet recruitment in East Germany thus seems to be particularly oriented to the federal parliament.¹¹

With regard to centripetal career movements, the export dimension of regional cabinets, the situation is different. Due to the composition of our snapshot sample Eastern German Land cabinets could not have been expected to provide many federal MPs and ministers. The one Land that clearly sticks out from all the Western regions is Lower Saxony. While the share of regional cabinet members moving into the federal government for the rest of the *Länder* does not exceed five per cent, the Lower Saxony cabinet has an export ratio towards the federal cabinet of 11 per cent (table 2, column 8). Similarly, while the regional cabinets generally “export” less than 10 per cent into the German Bundestag, the cabinet of Lower Saxony features an export ratio toward the

¹⁰ Similar figures, however, are also to be found in two of the largest West German states (Baden-Württemberg and North Rhine-Westphalia) and the small Saarland.

¹¹ This includes members of the Volkskammer of 1990, the short lived democratically elected Eastern German parliament.

federal parliament of 17 per cent (column 10). Thus, if ever *Länder* cabinets can be seen as a springboard towards federal office, it is in Lower Saxony where such a pattern can be observed most clearly.

5. Conclusion

This study constitutes a first look at ministerial careers across territorial levels in Germany. The data presented seems to support some general notions of political careers in Germany as well as of German federalism. The most general result of this study, yet perhaps the least surprising, reads as follows: ministerial career movements between the state and the federal level are almost unidirectional. The pattern of movement shows a clear centripetal orientation of political careers reflecting the centripetal orientation of the German federal system in general. However, the overall frequency of movement is not very high. Indeed for most of the *Länder* the import as well as export of ministers from their regional cabinet into the federal cabinet and vice versa does not exceed 5 per cent of the cabinet ministers. Thus the springboard function the regional cabinet has for some politicians has to be qualified by a look at the many ministerial careers that do not cross territorial boundaries. Again (see Borchert/Stolz 2011c) Germany seems to be placed somewhere between the springboard and the alternative careers model.

Compared with centripetal parliamentary careers, the import ratio of former *Länder* ministers in the federal cabinet is higher, though their export ratio in relation to the overall pool of *Länder* ministers is lower than that of *Länder* parliamentarians moving into the federal parliament. The first comparison might be interpreted as suggesting that the regional cabinet experience is a more important asset in the competition for federal cabinet posts than a prior regional mandate is for the candidature and election to the federal parliament. The latter one might indeed reflect the relatively high attractiveness of *Länder* cabinet offices vis-à-vis the *Länder* parliamentary mandates in Germany's executive federalism (see chapter 2).

One of the more interesting findings regards the distribution of vastly different import ratios across individual federal cabinets. Here the much higher rates for the first cabinets of a chancellor, especially if reaching his/her position after a period of opposition, reflects the training function of *Länder* cabinets. It is especially in the absence of potential candidates with ministerial experience on the federal level, that chancellors tend to look to the *Länder* executives as recruitment reservoirs.

Another argument with regard to the hierarchy between different territorial levels and different political offices can be made when looking at the few centrifugal career moves of federal cabinet ministers that did take place. The only position on the state level a (former) federal cabinet member is going to take up is that of prime-minister.

The rather low absolute numbers for individual *Länder* do not really allow for a more detailed analysis with regard to the regional distribution of centripetal and centrifugal career movements. While in general the general German wide pattern seems to be fairly stable, there is variation with regard to the East-West dimension as well as with regard to some outliers (especially Lower Saxony). This kind of variation certainly deserves a closer look once a more comprehensive dataset is available.

As a first attempt to identify and explain ministerial careers across territorial levels this study is necessarily limited. Future research, we would suggest, should expand from here in at least three different directions. First of all, we have to move a long way towards compiling comprehensive datasets that provide all relevant career information on regional and federal ministers in Germany. Apart from filling in a vast number of the ca. 2000 regional ministers that have been appointed to regional cabinets since 1946, we should also enhance the number of variables to be gathered. In addition to parliamentary and cabinet positions, party and local government offices should be included, while a look at the respective tenure in each position might help to evaluate its importance in a career.

Secondly, the nature and motive of career movement should be looked at in more detail. Explanations for general career patterns can only be given, once the causes for individual career moves are understood. In general we might distinguish three forms of

career movements. Firstly, politicians might choose to give up one office completely voluntarily in order to take up the other. This type of movement can be found among others in the careers of Philipp Roesler (FDP), Ursula von der Leyen (CDU) and Karl-Heinz Funke (SPD), all of whom had been drawn directly from a current state cabinet post into the federal executive. A second type consists of indirect movement, where the movement into a new office has followed the involuntary loss (through deselection, dismissal, electoral defeat etc.) of the prior office or mandate. This type applies for example to Hans Eichel and Reinhard Klimmt, both once SPD Prime Minister in a *Land* and defeated in an election. Fate (rather than good timing) promptly offered them seats in the federal cabinet which just had become vacant after two ministerial resignations. A third type can be seen in career moves where the first office is given up voluntarily, yet this is not immediately followed by the other office. Joschka Fischer (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen) took a double switch in 1994, leaving Hessian cabinet to lead his parliamentary party on federal level. In 1998 he entered the national government. In the first type we can expect that the career move is seen as a move up the career ladder, while in the second (and perhaps also in the third) we do not really know, whether the new office is not seen as second prize.

Finally all these results have to be set into a comparative context. In addition to taking a diachronic perspective, monitoring change over time, and to comparing legislative with ministerial careers we should also start to engage in serious cross-country and indeed cross-regional comparison. The specific features of political careers in Germany can only be appreciated, if they are contrasted to career patterns elsewhere. This AECPA conference panel might provide a good starting point for such a research agenda.

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Figures and Tables

Figure 1: Career patterns in multi-level systems

	High Centripetal Movement	Low Centripetal Movement
Low Centrifugal Movement	Classical Springboard	Alternative Careers
High Centrifugal Movement	Integrated Careers	Inverse Springboard

Table 1: Centripetal Moves			
Government	Federal Cabinet Members	Regional Cabinet before Federal Cabinet	Centripetal Ratio
Adenauer I (1949-1953)	16	8	50,00%
Adenauer II (1953-1957)	24	7	29,17%
Adenauer III (1957-1961)	20	4	20,00%
Adenauer IV (1961-1962)	21	2	9,52%
Adenauer V (1962-1963)	22	3	13,64%
Erhard I (1963-1965)	24	3	12,50%
Erhard II (1965-1966)	22	3	13,64%
Kiesinger I (1966-1969)	25	8	32,00%
Brandt I (1969-1972)	17	5	29,41%
Brandt II (1972-1974)	18	3	16,67%
Schmidt I (1974-1976)	17	1	5,88%
Schmidt II (1976-1980)	22	1	4,55%
Schmidt III (1980-1982)	21	1	4,76%
Kohl I (1982-1983)	17	4	23,53%
Kohl II (1983-1987)	21	4	19,05%
Kohl III (1987-1991)	31	5	16,13%
Kohl IV (1991-1994)	31	6	19,35%
Kohl V (1994-1998)	20	5	25,00%
Schröder I (1998-2002)	22	11	50,00%
Schröder II (2002-2005)	14	6	42,86%
Merkel I (2005-2009)	19	9	47,37%
Merkel II (2009-)	17	6	35,29%
Total Cabinet Ministers	461	105	22,78%
Total Persons	203	47	23,15%

Land	Land Cabinet Members	Federal Cabinet before Regional Cabinet	Import Ratio	Federal Parliament before Regional Cabinet	Import Ratio	Federal Cabinet after Regional Cabinet	Export Ratio	Federal Parliament after Regional Cabinet	Export Ratio
Baden-Württemberg	34	0	0,00%	8	23,53%	1	2,94%	3	8,82%
Bavaria	32	1	3,13%	2	6,25%	0	0,00%	3	9,38%
Berlin	43	0	0,00%	5	11,63%	2	4,65%	5	11,63%
Brandenburg	22	0	0,00%	7	31,82%	1	4,55%	1	4,55%
Bremen	32	0	0,00%	2	6,25%	0	0,00%	3	9,38%
Hamburg	33	0	0,00%	2	6,06%	0	0,00%	3	9,09%
Hesse	29	1	3,45%	2	6,90%	1	3,45%	2	6,90%
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	18	0	0,00%	5	27,78%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%
Lower Saxony	35	0	0,00%	5	14,29%	4	11,43%	6	17,14%
North Rhine-Westphalia	39	1	2,56%	8	20,51%	2	5,13%	1	2,56%
Rhineland-Palatinate	29	0	0,00%	5	17,24%	1	3,45%	1	3,45%
Saarland	27	0	0,00%	8	29,63%	1	3,70%	2	7,41%
Saxony	23	0	0,00%	4	17,39%	0	0,00%	1	4,35%
Saxony-Anhalt	22	0	0,00%	5	22,73%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%
Schleswig-Holstein	29	1	3,45%	6	20,69%	1	3,45%	1	3,45%
Thuringia	22	0	0,00%	5	22,73%	0	0,00%	0	0,00%
Total 1960	113	0	0,00%	20	17,70%	4	3,54%	14	12,39%
Total 1991	185	2	1,08%	35	18,92%	9	4,86%	18	9,73%
Total 2010	171	2	1,17%	24	14,04%	1	0,58%	0	0,00%
Total (1960, 1991)	298					13	4,36%	32	10,74%
Total (1960, 1991, 2010)	469	4	0,85%	79	16,84%				

Table 3: Centrifugal Moves			
Government	Federal Cabinet Members	Regional Cabinet after Federal Cabinet	Centrifugal Ratio
Adenauer I (1949-1953)	16	1	6,25%
Adenauer II (1953-1957)	24	2	8,33%
Adenauer III (1957-1961)	20	1	5,00%
Adenauer IV (1961-1962)	21	1	4,76%
Adenauer V (1962-1963)	22	1	4,55%
Erhard I (1963-1965)	24	0	0,00%
Erhard II (1965-1966)	22	1	4,55%
Kiesinger I (1966-1969)	25	2	8,00%
Brandt I (1969-1972)	17	1	5,88%
Brandt II (1972-1974)	18	2	11,11%
Schmidt I (1974-1976)	17	1	5,88%
Schmidt II (1976-1980)	22	1	4,55%
Schmidt III (1980-1982)	21	2	9,52%
Kohl I (1982-1983)	17	0	0,00%
Kohl II (1983-1987)	21	1	4,76%
Kohl III (1987-1991)	31	1	3,23%
Kohl IV (1991-1994)	31	0	0,00%
Kohl V (1994-1998)	20	2	10,00%
Schröder I (1998-2002)	22	0	0,00%
Schröder II (2002-2005)	14	0	0,00%
Merkel I (2005-2009)	19	1	5,26%
Merkel II (2009-)	17	0	0,00%
Total Cabinet Ministers	461	21	4,56%
Total Persons	203	9	4,43%