

Political careers in decentralized countries: A comparative approach

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1. Introduction

This paper aims to improve our understanding on political elites in decentralized countries; it is proposed a research design that facilitates the study of different dimensions on the study of political elites contrasting them with empirical evidence. To this purpose, the political careers of those who occupied the municipal or regional presidency¹, during 1998, in six federal countries are reconstructed: Germany, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Spain and Mexico. In order to transcend the limitations of area studies, the case selection is in function of establishing generalizations that permit to go beyond a specific geographical region, such as Europe and Latin America.

With this methodological decision in mind, and under the assumption that “regional” elite patterns do not exist, the objective of the paper is to describe the basic characteristics of the career paths of regional or municipal presidents, before and after they held office. In this regard, it will be studied variables related to the origin of their careers as well as their development, institutional levels and branches of power. They transited through, and their political exit when it has been produced.

The present work responds to the puzzle of how the existence of different political levels can affect the elite selection and turnover, originating different career pathways. It is argued that these vary according to the different possibilities that the specific institutional environment of the given political system and the strategies political actors adopt. Moreover, the political pathways, ambitions, and attitudes of the political elite members will have effects on the creation, institutionalization, and evolution of political institutions (Westlake, 1994; Deschouwer, 2001; Verzichelli y Edinger, 2005; Coller *et al.*, 2007).

The research question of this paper is to what extent the existence of different political sub-national levels give origin to elites that concentrate their activity in a determined realm, with characteristics that differentiate them from other elites, letting them to professionalize within a specific territory? Or, on the contrary, whether the elite members build their careers transiting across different institutional levels based on the aspirations of rank-and-file members and the incentives of the system. These two possible scenarios within decentralised political systems give origin to two paradigmatic models: bifurcation and integration (Moncrief, 1994; Scarrow, 1997). The existence of one model or the other will contribute to the existence of, on the one hand, a “municipal or regional elites”, and, on the other hand, a

¹ Considering that each country uses different names (region, state, autonomous community), the concept “regional” will be used to make reference to the mid-level of government – between the local and national realms.

political class that transits between different arenas and keeps a direct linkage with national politics.

Regarding the first assumption, bifurcation—Canada constitutes a paradigmatic case—the existence of a strong territorial differentiation contributes to explain that elites have undergone through a self-professionalization process. On the contrary, in terms of the integration model—such as the case of Germany—there are ascending political careers at different levels (Schlesinger, 1966; Polsby, 1968; Francis y Kenny, 2000). Bifurcation and integration models highlight how through different political careers can be observed relationships and linkages amongst different political levels, as well as the degree of effective decentralisation of the system (Stolz, 2003; Real y Jérez, 2008; Botella *et al.* 2011).

In this regard, there are different situations in which sub-national heads of government might come mainly from national institutions at the time that self-government institutions give origin to local and regional elites. On the first scenario, regional or local governments might become in political arenas on the way to the national government. On the contrary, the emergence of territorial careers might cause differentiated spaces to emerge in detriment of national careers (Botella *et al.* 2011).

Nevertheless, beyond the pioneering Stolz' (2003) pioneering work, in terms of differentiated territorial political careers, it is convenient to highlight how the academic literature has paid little attention to study political careers in multi-level states². There is little scholarship that reconstructs the political elite's careers in decentralised countries and when this subject has been studied, is generally done in the parliamentary realm (Coller, 2002, 2008, 2011; Stolz, 2003, 2005), with no attention whatsoever to the political pathways of members of the executive.

2. The study of political careers in decentralised countries

One of our first tasks is to define what we understand by political careers. In this work a political career is defined as the time period since the first moment an individual is appointed in a public sector job and the definite moment her or his political career comes to an end. This definition is similar to the one proposed by Viver (1978:169), for whom a political career is “the sequence of public jobs carried out by an individual through a determined period of time”. In the present work, the timeframe of study will start in 1998, when the studied individuals held an executive office at the local or regional level.

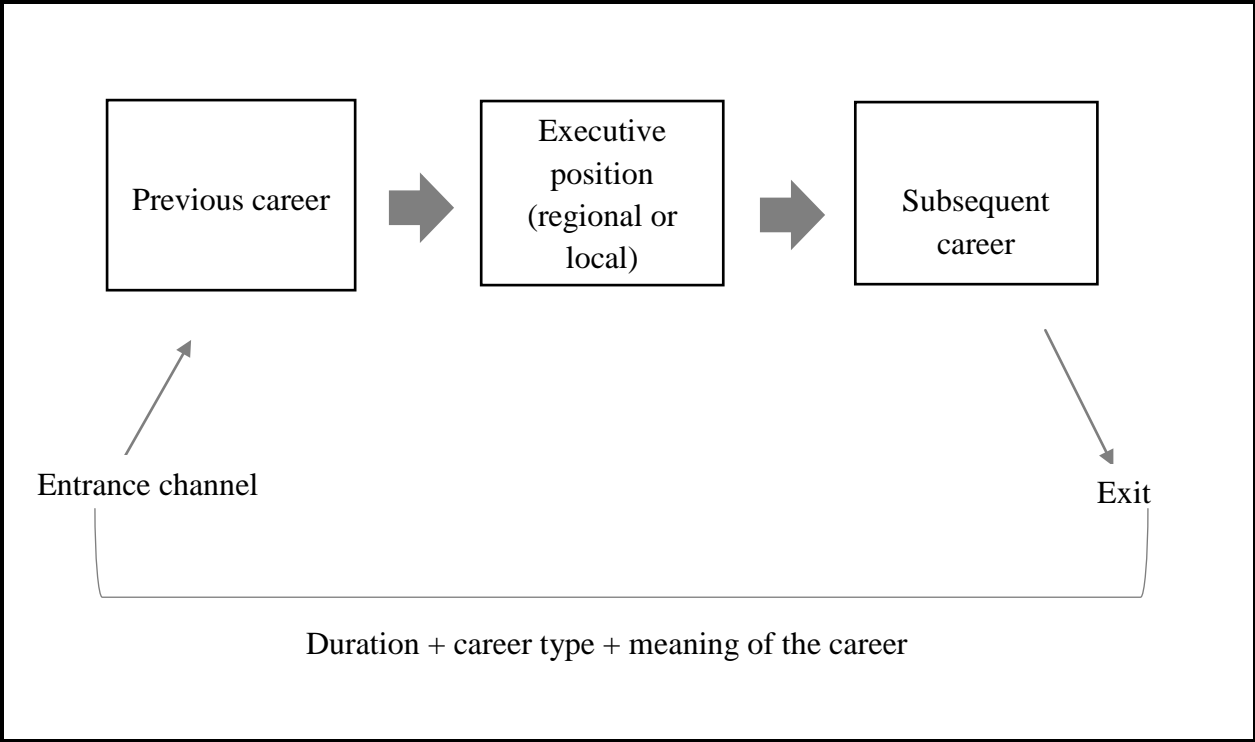
Nevertheless, as we can observe in Figure 1, we are interested in studying strictly the political trajectory as well as the channels in and out of politics. This model, inspired by Blondel (1985, 1991) and Rodriguez Teruel (2011) for the ministerial elite, provides a broad overview of the trajectory of politicians to collect both paths to political activity as a succession of roles leading to the municipal or regional office. It also traces the path back to the exercise of these

² Some exceptions are the work by Botella *et al.* (2011) on regional chiefs in Spain, France and Germany, and Sabato (1983) and Beyle (2004) about state governors in the United States. We can also stress Dunn's (1996) and Bernier's *et al.* (2005) research on provincial governments in Canada, even though they do not focus on the political careers of those who hold office.

appointments and the output of the policy in order to capture the use of political capital accumulated once abandoned a mayor or governor position.

Based on this analysis strategy, the reconstruction of the political course will be based on three basic pillars: the temporal dimension, the type of exercised career and its direction. These three categories, which will be shattered throughout this paper, constitute a new proposal of analysis which is different in several respects from previous academic work. Therefore, the fact that many of the works on elites have focused on careers or executive (Blondel, 1985, Power and Mochel, 2009, Botella *et al.* 2011) or legislative (Coller, 1999, 2002, 2008; Stoltz, 2003, 2005) makes difficult to study variables as the positions held at different institutional levels, the variable political arenas in which leaders move, or the direction of the career paths. Therefore, starting from what has already been developed by other authors, the present study will review the existing categorizations in order to modify or recreate them to fit the purpose of this research.

Figure 1. Concept framework for the study of political careers in decentralised countries



Source: own.

Considering these arguments, this analysis begins by noting that the appointment as head of the municipal or regional government is often the result of a process of ascension and previous political competition through which people access to leadership positions (Rodriguez Teruel, 2011:12, Czudnowski, 1975:155, Herzog, 1982:73). Therefore, it is a process of political recruitment in which the social profile of candidates, their personal skills, prior political experience and ability to build networks with other actors or organizations, help or hinder their access to some power positions.

Nevertheless, the transited career paths do not always follow a homogeneous profile and the reconstruction of the access routes and the occupied positions are a good criterion for discerning the existence of different types of experience. Thus, substantial differences can be detected in both input channels of political institutions and the transited path, the direction the career takes and the duration thereof.

2.1 Input channels in politics

Input channels refer to the paths to political activity and should not be confused with professional circles extraction (Blondel, 1985:58). That is, in operational terms, the first public office held by an individual. As observed in Table 1, there are three primary routes: the elected positions in representative institutions (the legislative and executive branches of the different levels of government), designated and discretionary appointments of senior and advisory staff positions in the government's administration, dependent and autonomous institutions (Alcántara, 2012:83), and positions of responsibility and organizational consulting within political parties or similar political representation groups (Alcántara, 2012:83).

Table 1. Starting a political career: Access route and institutional level of the first public job

Entrance channel	Content
Representative institutions	Legislative and executive at different levels of government
Public Administration	Designated appointments and discretionary appointees
Organic	Political parties and unions
First appointment	Content
Organizational level	Municipal, regional, state wide and supra-state wide

Source: own.

The distinction between different access channels helps to establish a first form to categorize the politicians within the sample of this study. On the one hand, a first group shall be composed of those who began their political careers through electoral contests and, therefore, they won their party's support to run as candidates³ and to establish an electoral connection with voters (Mayhew, 1974). This is a category that presents no identification problems and it has been widely researched on political professions scholarship at both levels, presidential and parliamentary.⁴

A second group consists of people who due to their experience, connections or professional prestige in politics began occupying discretionary and designated positions. Within this group, first we can find senior executives (ministers, secretaries of state, CEOs and their equivalents at regional and municipal levels). Also, members of the foreign service, who are

³ This is a generic argument that assumes representation through political parties. Nevertheless, as it will be developed further when the data is discussed, each electoral system's particularities will be considered. For instance, in Canada's municipal elections candidacies are presented individually and not by party.

⁴ At state wide level, the works by Blondel (1980), Best and Cotta (2000), Costa and Kerrouche (2007) can be highlighted. At the regional and municipal levels, the reading of Clarke and Kornberg (1983), Larsen (2002) and Botella et al. (2011) is recommended.

historically related to policy and discretion of their own hiring processes. In addition to its extensive heterogeneity, this group generates two definition problems. Firstly, as Alcántara (2012:86) points out, it is difficult to draw the line between discretionary appointments in the second or third levels of strict technical roles where the person does not acquire an explicit commitment to specific tasks. Thus, the person could work under the commands of another partisan or ideological boss, acquiring a technocratic profile. And, secondly, in weakly institutionalized systems with little professionalized management, designated and discretionary positions may be mistakenly assumed to be the result of clientelism or nepotism.

Finally, a third group will consist of men and women who began in politics within the party apparatus or organizations of a similar nature. They constitute using Mills's terminology (1956:255), "the middle levels of power." That is, they are people that keep the representative activity running by training party's future leaders, consultancy, campaigning and establishing relationships with other organizations. As in the case of appointees, this group also presents problems of definition considering that these are cases where it is difficult to distinguish between these from the staff of these organizations. Also, the literature has traditionally focused on the mechanisms of internal organization rather than its members, so establishing criteria for identifying these professional politicians is challenging.

Moreover, along with the access route, we should take into account the institutional levels at which individuals enter into politics. Thus, considering that the case studies are decentralised countries, the entry level into politics allows identifying whether municipal or regional levels are way stations needed to reach national policy, if they are the final destinations of individuals who began their career at the state level or if it is possible to start at a level where the career will take place later. Thus, although the multilevel systems offer the possibility of own career patterns at each level of government, following its own logic competition (Taylor-Robinson, 2003), there may exist incentives as to which the individuals' ultimate goal will be state policy. Therefore, by paying attention to the territorial dimension, from the time of entry into politics, makes possible to identify information about the level of professionalism of each level (Gress, 1998; Rosenthal, 1998), what is attractive about them (Reiser, 2006) and the individuals' strategies to immerse into political activity.

2.2 The political career's pathways

Once the path to politics has been specified, in order to reconstruct the career of elites it is important to pay attention to three aspects of the succession of positions held during the career trajectories of individuals: the length of the position held, the career type, and its direction. By choosing these three elements it is aimed to develop classifications that facilitate distinguishing different career patterns based on the selected variables. Furthermore, these patterns will allow, in further research, to measure the influence of the variables included in Schlesinger's (1966) model: institutional "structures of opportunity" provided by the system, expectations about the trajectory derived from previous experience and the impact of the aspirations of the organization in power over the individual's career.

The time dimension provides two types of information: the time when the individual enters into politics and the time they spend in this activity (Botella and Rodríguez, 2005). Thus, this type of information serves as an indicator of age contributing to the social definition of the political elite at the time that shows the turnover patterns within the representative activity and, by extension, the movement rate of individuals within the elite. Finally, it sheds light on the experience of those who engage in politics because according to the duration of the race it can be inferred information about the ability of individuals to acquire knowledge about the intricacies of the institutions and their functioning.⁵

Regarding career type, the present work proposes a two-dimension classification: the number of institutional levels where individuals have developed their political career and the branches of power where they have held positions.⁶ The decision to combine both aspects matches the objective of observing whether there are obvious connections between the two variables—the institutional level and the political arenas—and to identify dominating patterns in the political careers of decentralised countries, paying attention to mobility within institutional levels, as well as the individuals' ability in one or more branches of power. The ultimate goal is to classify political careers in decentralised countries paying much attention to mobility between institutional levels and the capacity of individuals to hold office within one or more powers. Through this exercise, as applied in the analysis of ministerial careers by Rodríguez Teruel (2011), it is intended to observe to what extent the trajectories of individuals who occupied distinguished positions of power both in the municipal and regional levels of government have been marked by the transition from legislative to executive levels and from the sub-state to the state level.

When attending the first dimension stated in Table 2 three career types are identified: single-level, two-level, and multi-level. This classification matches the political arenas the politician has transited during their career. That is, the local, regional, state and supra-state arenas. Regarding the second dimension, we differentiate from careers that have been developed only at the executive level, those in which executive positions have dominated and, and others where there has been a predominance of legislative positions. Since all individuals in the sample have been local or regional presidents, a fourth category that could include only legislative office is overridden.

Based on the combination of both dimensions nine career patterns can be identified, as described in Table 2. They are single-level executive careers, single-level with executive dominance, single-level with legislative dominance, two-level executive, two-level with executive dominance, two-level with legislative dominance, multi-level executive, multi-level with executive dominance and multi-level with legislative dominance. They are excluding categories combining the two aforementioned dimensions and respond to the need to locate the elite both in relation to the different territorial arenas in which they can exercise their

⁵ As Dogan points (1989:241), in reference to ministerial careers, “we must distinguish between those who left their mark on history and those who just made an appearance in the political arena. The duration of ministerial service is a good criterion, even if it is certainly not the only one”

⁶ This model supposes a variation to the one presented by Rodríguez Teruel (2011) and Botella et al. (2011), where only transited institutional levels are considered for the analysis.

activity and their ability to move between the different powers. From these criteria it can be checked whether countries generate decentralised territorial elites that have characteristics of their own or whether groups are developing their own trajectories moving between levels and powers.

Table 2. Definition of political career types

Career type	Institutional levels	Definition
Single-level Executive	One	Only executive office at a single institutional level
Single-level with Executive predominance	One	Most positions held are executive even if they have held legislative office too, at a single institutional level.
Single-level with Legislative predominance	One	Most positions held are legislative even if they have held executive office too, at a single institutional level.
Two-level Executive	Two	Executive positions at two institutional levels.
Two-level with Executive predominance	Two	Most positions held are executive even if they have held legislative office too, at two institutional levels.
Two-level with Legislative predominance	Two	Most positions held are legislative even if they have held executive office too, at two institutional levels.
Multi-level Executive	Three or four	Only executive positions at three or four institutional levels.
Multi-level with Executive predominance	Three or four	Most executive positions even if they have held legislative office too, at three or four institutional levels.
Multi-level with Legislative predominance	Three or four	Most legislative positions even if they have held executive office too, at three or four institutional levels.

Source: own.

In a different vein, the career path permits to complement the information provided by the above typology. As seen in Table 3, four career categories are identified: upward, downward, horizontal, and zigzag. This classification, as proposed by Botella and Rodríguez Teruel (2011), refers to the trend followed by the paths in regard to mobility between institutional levels as mentioned above. In this regard, the direction the career adopts has implications in the functioning of the political system and the individual elite behaviour. Hence, the elite's mobility responds to the system's incentives that indicate either to stay within the same institutional level or move across; at the same time, it provides information about the degree of the members of the elite's experience of in terms of their career-path itineraries.

2.3 The way out of politics

Finally, within the model we consider the way out of politics. In this regard, as Alcántara (2012: 124) puts forward, “an appropriate indicator to validate a professional career rests upon the retirement process”. This is because this variable allows obtaining information about the factors that can make a politician abandon his career as well as the activity he or she will carry out after. Thus, it should be noted that the end of the political career provides an opportunity to integrate the owned capital monetized or not, with the exit mechanisms themselves.

In this regard, Table 4 shows the main assumptions of the exit of politics: the electoral defeat, scandal / expulsion, death / illness, retirement and voluntary redundancy to pursue other occupation. In the first two cases, the exit of politics is an unintended consequence of the inability of the individual to achieve electoral support and / or supporters or being associated with any kind of scandal. The third course, the death or illness, is also associated with an involuntary abandonment of politics but, contrary to what happens in the above case, is not a direct result of the individual's behaviour. Finally, the cases of retirement or leaving to pursue other professional activity are the result of personal decisions of individuals.

Table 4. Reasons for the exit of politics

Reasons for the exit of politics	Content
Electoral defeat	Abandonment of politics after losing some elections.
Scandal/expulsion	Abandonment of politics as a consequence of having been associated illegal activities or internal conflicts with the party.
Death/illness	Abandonment of politics as a consequence death or health-related issues.
Retirement	Retirement of politics to put end to a professional career.

Reasons for the exit of politics	Content
Another professional activity	Voluntary abandonment of politics to pursue a different professional activity.

Source: own, based on Alcántara (2012)

3. A comparative approach of political careers in decentralised countries: an aggregate viewpoint

From the proposed model, we will perform an analysis of the data in order to bring empirical support to what we have argued from a theoretico-methodological viewpoint. This is intended to achieve two objectives. First, to extract patterns and regularities sensitive to generalization in the politicians' path comprising the sample. And, secondly, to test the proposed analytical model in order to observe its validity and its ability to be applied to future case studies. To this purpose, the data analysis will be conducted following the design proposed in the previous section. Also, since the ultimate goal of this research is to analyse political trajectories, we will first present aggregate data of those who occupied the municipal and regional presidency. However, the following part will replicate the analysis splitting the sample into those who occupied the regional and the municipal presidency. As a result, in addition to applying the model, it is intended to observe whether there are distinguishable patterns from each other across people who built their careers at different institutional levels.

When conducting a first approach to the political careers of individuals who occupied executive positions at sub-levels, common patterns and differences can be found. Based on this, the first thing to note is the predominance of representative institutions as the input channel to politics. Table 5 shows how in the six cases under study is observed that over 75% of the politicians constituting the sample entered into politics through an executive or legislative office. We then find individuals who started in the Public Administration and, finally, organic positions. These findings suggest that the electoral race, associated with elected office, is an almost inevitable step in the political careers of those who hold or have held senior positions at executive levels of government in decentralised countries.

Table 5. Access channel to the political career of those who have held the municipal or regional presidency (%)

	Germany	Argentina	Brazil	Canada	Spain	Mexico	Total
Elected office	87.1	86.5	92.0	89.3	91.1	75.4	86.3
Public Administration	6.5	10.8	8.0	10.7	8.9	17.5	10.9
Organic positions	6.5	2.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.0	2.8
(N)	42	70	80	39	53	94	377

Source: the author's own data base, based on official documents.

A second regularity is the predominance of the local level as an access channel to political activity. In Table 6 is observed that in both, aggregate (46.6%) and in each country, the first public office was held largely within the municipal level. It is then followed by the regional level (30.3%), which in most cases—with the exception of Mexico and Spain—is presented as the second highest percentage. In these two countries, the state level is the second entry into mainstream politics. It can be interpreted that in decentralised countries the municipal level is the main pathway to politics. However, it should be noted whether this level becomes the final destination of professionalization or if it is used as a way station on a rising career that ultimately aims at statewide office.

In order to observe whether in decentralised countries the municipal level is the main pathway to politics, one can look at the last office held. In Table 6 two large groups of countries are identified. On the one hand, in the majority of countries (Argentina, Brazil, Spain and Mexico) politicians who exerted their last public office at the state level are predominant. However, Germany and Canada are an exception because they have a large number of politicians whose last appointment was at the regional level. In light of these facts a second generalization can be extracted from the analysis: there are countries in which the elite members who have occupied local or regional positions end up integrated into national politics whilst others will form part of a sub-state elite. This finding would empirically corroborate both theoretical assumptions set out above: the integration and the bifurcation by territorial differentiation.

Table 6. Career paths of those who have held a municipal and a regional office (%).

	Germany	Argentina	Brazil	Canada	Spain	Mexico	Total
First public office							
Municipal	53.1	47.4	48.0	46.0	47.9	40.0	46.6
Regional	25.0	34.2	42.0	39.3	22.9	21.8	30.3
Statewide	21.9	18.4	10.0	14.3	29.2	38.2	23.1
Supra-statewide	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Last public office							
Municipal	20.0	7.4	7.7	22.2	9.8	3.9	10.0
Regional	44.0	33.3	35.9	38.9	29.3	29.4	33.8
Statewide	36.0	55.6	56.4	33.3	58.5	66.7	54.7
Supra-statewide	0.0	3.7	0.0	5.6	2.4	0.0	1.5
Levels run							
(total)	58.6	26.3	12.0	48.1	17.8	22.4	27.1
One	37.9	55.3	66.0	40.7	66.7	55.2	55.9
Two	3.4	15.8	22.0	11.1	15.6	20.7	16.2
Three	0.0	2.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.7	0.8
Four							
Levels run before 1998							
(total)	71.0	55.3	70.0	89.3	76.1	70.4	71.3
One	29.0	42.1	30.0	10.7	19.6	29.6	27.5
Two	0.0	2.6	0.0	0.0	4.3	0.0	1.2
Three	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Four							
(N)	42	70	79	39	53	94	377

Source: the author's own data base, based on official documents.

Along with the first and last public position, it is worth paying attention to mobility between levels held by the politicians included in the sample. To this end, in Table 6 distinguishes between the number of office levels politicians have gone through all the way through their careers and levels transited only up to 1998. This distinction serves the objective of observing whether having occupied a municipal or regional presidency opens the door to new institutional levels—especially at the statewide level—or whether mayors and governors find in sub-state entities a place where to professionalise themselves. In this regard, a majority trend is observed among individuals in the sample who have held office at two different institutional levels. The only exceptions are Germany and Canada, where 58.6% and 48.1% of the studied politicians developed their entire career at a single level. This leads to the conclusion that, in principle, these two countries offer

opportunities and incentives to develop a sub-state level career without a final aspiration to national politics.

This statement finds support when looking at the data for transited arenas before 1998. When comparing these data with previous it is observed how before this year politicians had played their main activity in a single arena and it is after having occupied the municipal or regional presidency when they actually transited to another level. One can wonder how mobility in these countries is a phenomenon that occurs after occupying a prominent position in the Executive and it may be part of a promotion strategy. However, in order to support this assertion, Table 7 shows the type of career conducted based on the two dimensions proposed in the research design: the number of institutional levels and power-branches where office was held.

The next step is to look at the type of career carried out. As proposed in the explanatory model, we will observe the institutional levels the politician went through, the political powers in which he or she held positions and the direction of the career path. In terms of the type of career held, Table 7 shows that the first significant fact is that Germany and Canada replayed common patterns, since single-level executive careers tend to dominate, with percentages of 38.7% and 36.9% respectively. Considering that all units of analysis have held executive positions at local or regional level, it is interesting to notice that these two countries offer possibilities making of the sub-state level a place in which professionalisation is possible without achieving the national arena.

In the other four countries under study, the predominant career-type is the two-level, which implies a movement across institutional levels. However, when attention is paid to the power branches in which politicians held positions, there are differences between cases. On the one hand, in Argentina executive careers only tend to predominate (20.5%) while in Spain we will find the “executive dominance” type (30.4%). This leads to think of a career pattern in which the legislature is not considered neither a target nor a way station, where the entire political career can be developed at the executive level. However, Brazil (30.6%) and Mexico (25.9%) have the highest values of bi-level careers with legislative predominance. In these two cases it can be pointed out that passage through the legislative chambers can be seen as one step in a political career.

Table 7. Career features of those who have held a municipal and regional office (%)

	Germany	Argentina	Brazil	Canada	Spain	Mexico	Total
Career type							
Single-level Executive	38.7	17.9	12.2	36.9	8.7	14.8	19.8
Single-level with Executive predominance	22.6	5.1	0.0	17.9	4.3	0.0	6.5
Single-level with Legislative predominance	0.0	2.6	0.0	7.1	2.2	0.0	1.6
Two-level Executive	6.5	20.5	16.3	7.1	6.5	24.1	14.6
Two-level with Executive predominance	12.9	12.8	18.4	14.3	30.4	22.2	19.4
Two-level with Legislative predominance	3.2	17.9	30.6	7.1	22.1	25.9	20.6
Multi-level Executive	0.0	10.3	2.0	3.6	4.4	3.7	3.2
Multi-level with Executive Predominance	9.7	12.8	12.2	6.0	13.0	9.3	10.1
Multi-level with Legislative predominance	6.5	0.0	8.2	0.0	8.7	0.0	4.0
Career direction							
Upward	7.1	40.5	42.6	23.1		29.4	27.5
Downward	7.1	5.4	8.5	15.4		14.7	11.4
Horizontal	67.9	27.0	12.8	50.0		29.4	34.2
Zigzag	17.9	27.0	36.2	11.5		26.5	26.9
(N)	42	70	79	39	53	94	377

Source: the author's own data base, based on official documents.

Regarding the temporal dimension, as Table 8 shows the careers' average length is similar in all the countries studied, ranging in a band range between 20 and 25 years. In this sense, Mexico reaches the maximum value (25 years), while the shorter careers are to be found in Canada (20.8 years). However, it is more important to note the maximum and minimum values. In this regard, the Latin American countries included in the study (Argentina, Brazil and Mexico) are those showing the highest values, exceeding in all cases 50 years of political career. This could, tentatively, mean that in Latin America there are more incentives to perform longer careers. With regard to the minimum values of the political

careers, these are located in Germany (1 year), Argentina and Mexico (3 years). However, in this case it seems there is not an association that explains such values.

Table 8. Average career length of those who have held a municipal and regional presidency

	Germany	Argentina	Brazil	Canada	Spain	Mexico	Total
Average length	22.2	24.5	24.7	20.8	23.9	25.0	23.4
Maximum	45.0	54.0	57.0	45.0	43.0	61.0	61.0
Minimum	1.0	3.0	13.0	6.0	5.0	3.0	1.0
Standard deviation	11.4	9.4	9.7	9.8	11.4	10.6	10.0
(N)	42	70	80	39	53	94	377

Source: the author's own data base, based on official documents.

In terms of the exit from politics, Germany (62.5%), Canada (67.9%) and Mexico (60.4%) are the countries in which predominates a higher percentage of individuals retired from politics in 2012, bear in mind, in relationship with those who occupied a seat on the regional executive in 1998. On the contrary, Brazil (69.6%) and Spain (62.5%) are the countries of the initial sample with a higher percentage of active politicians. Looking at the causes of departure from politics, it is seen that, except for Argentina and Brazil, in most cases is mainly due to the individuals' decision of engaging in a different occupation. In the two countries that do not follow this pattern, the main cause of the exit from politics is illness or death, with percentages of 33% and 40% respectively. Also, another interesting fact is that Argentina and Canada are the countries with the largest number of cases of politicians abandoning politics (both with a percentage of 26.7%), due to reasons related to a political scandal or expulsion from the party.

Table 9. Exit from politics of those who have held a municipal and regional presidency (%)

	Germany	Argentina	Brazil	Canada	Spain	Mexico	Total
Currently in politics							
Yes	37.5	54.7	69.6	32.1	62.5	39.6	54.8
No	62.5	45.3	30.4	67.9	37.5	60.4	45.2
(N)	42	70	79	39	53	94	377
Cause of exit							
Electoral defeat	15.0	6.7	26.7	21.1	9.0	13.1	13.3
Scandal/expulsion	15.0	26.7	6.7	26.7	12.6	12.6	16.2
Death/illness	15.0	33.3	40.0	5.0	0.0	12.6	17.1
Retirement	5.0	20.0	13.3	5.0	27.8	6.7	16.2
Other professional activity	50.0	13.3	13.3	42.2	48.6	57	37.1
(N)	26	32	24	26	20	57	185
Previous occupation							
Lawyer	25.0	100.0	0.0	0.0	11.1	16.7	
Private sector	69.9	0.0	43.3	75	66.7	33.3	
Public servant	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	
NGO	5.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	22.2	25.0	
International organisation	0.0	0.0	24.7	0.0	0.0	8.3	
Journalist	0.0	0.0	7.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	
University lecturer	0.0	0.0	24.7	25.0	0.0	16.7	
(N)	13	4	3	11	10	32	73

Source: the author's own data base, based on official documents.

Regarding the subsequent occupation, following the exit of politics, Table 9 shows that there is a predominance of law and private enterprise. Professions generally linked to the political class, which invites us to think that the most common thing to do after abandoning politics is to return to the profession of origin. Apart from these, we find other professions related to positions in foundations or NGOs, and university teaching.

1.2 Political careers of those who held the municipal office

After analyzing the data at the aggregate level, it is interesting to study whether within the sub-state level, those who held executive positions at local and regional level have substantial differences in their paths or, on the contrary, reproduce common patterns. In this sense, focusing on the municipal level, much of the classical literature on elites tended to consider that the nature of local democracy was exclusively determined by the set of rules of the game set up in the constitution (Rodrigues-Silveira, 2011). From this perspective, what was going on at the local level was interpreted as a simple container in which models

and dynamics were discharged. However, in recent years some scholars began to note the existence of disparities between the dynamics developed at the national level and those occurred in the lower levels of government (Cornelius et. al 1999, Gibson, 2007).

If this argument is extrapolated to the issue of political careers, the question that arises brings us back to the beginning of this chapter: the mayors make a kind of elite characteristics. To answer this question, in this section the data collected for the mayors who were in the exercise of his office in 1998 with aggregate data presented in the previous section will be compared. To do this, first, the political input channels shall be covered. As shown in Table 10, overall the same pattern as in aggregate the collected plays. That is, there is a clear predominance of representative institutions as the path to politics. However, it is interesting to note the case of Mexico, where 32.1% of those who held municipal power started in politics in public administration, through appointees or trust. This, to a lesser extent, also identified in Argentina with a percentage of 25%. Here was a peculiarity first detected in career patterns.

If this argument is extrapolated to the issue of political careers, the question that arises brings us back to the beginning of this paper: do mayors constitute a kind of elite with features of its own? To answer this question, in this section the data collected for the mayors who were in office by 1998 with aggregate data presented in the previous section will be compared. To do this, first, the political input channels will be studied. As shown in Table 10, overall the same pattern as in the aggregate group is observed for mayors who were in office by 1998. That is, there is a clear predominance of representative institutions as a pathway to politics. However, it is interesting to note the case of Mexico, where 32.1% of those who held municipal power started in politics in public administration, as appointees. This patter is also found in Argentina—although to a lesser extent—with a percentage of 25%. Thus, here is found a peculiarity in career patterns.

Tabla 10. Career access route of those who have held a municipal office (%)

	Germany	Argentina	Brazil	Canada	Spain	Mexico	Total
Representative institutions	87.5	68.8	84.0	100.0	93.5	53.6	80.3
Public administration	6.3	25.0	16.0	0.0	6.5	32.1	15.2
Party office	6.3	6.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	14.3	4.5
(N)	26	46	52	26	34	62	246

Source: the author’s own data base, based on official documents.

Table 11 shows how again the municipal sphere tends to be dominant as the first public office held. However, among those who occupied the municipal office percentages of

careers started at the local level are higher than those reported in the aggregate, including in the sample those who occupied the regional presidency.

Nevertheless, there are differences between countries. While Germany and Canada have the maximum values, 76.5% and 81.3%, respectively, in Argentina and Brazil the percentages are below 60%. In Argentina, there is a predominance of careers started at the state level (31.3%), while in the Brazilian case a larger percentage of individuals held their first public office at the regional level (40%). Moreover, as with Argentina, Spain (22.6%) and Mexico (32.1%) are the countries that show the highest percentages of individuals who began their careers at the state level. Finally, note that there are not individuals who began their careers at the supranational level in any of the cases.

Regarding the last public office, in the case of those who occupied the municipal office two groups of countries can be identified: those in which most of them exert their last political activity in the municipal level and those who do so in the state level. Within the first category Germany (55.6%) and Canada (66.7%) can be grouped, which in the aggregate data showed lower levels of individuals who ended their career at the state level. This would lead to corroborate the assertion of the existence of a sub-area in which politicians are more professional without aspiring to the national arena. In the second group we find the rest of countries, where the state level as an area in which the last public office was held tends to predominate. Here, an upward career pattern is identified, as evidenced below.

Table 11. Career paths of those who have held the municipal office (%)

	Germany	Argentina	Brazil	Canada	Spain	Mexico	Total
First public office							
Municipal	76.5	56.3	52.0	81.3	64.5	60.7	63.9
Regional	5.9	12.5	40.0	12.5	12.9	7.1	15.8
Statewide	17.6	31.3	8.0	6.3	22.6	32.1	20.3
Supra-statewide	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Last public office							
Municipal	55.6	25.0	11.8	66.7	16.7	9.5	22.4
Regional	11.1	25.0	29.4	0.0	16.7	14.3	17.6
Statewide	33.3	50.0	58.8	33.3	62.5	76.2	58.8
Supra-statewide	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.2	0.0	1.2
Levels run before 1998							
One	81.3	81.3	72.0	61.5	74.2	68.2	77.5
Two	18.7	18.7	28.0	38.5	19.4	32.0	20.9
Three	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	6.5	0.0	1.6

Four	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Levels run (total)							
One	78.6	31.3	16.0	80.0	20.0	17.2	33.3
Two	21.4	56.3	76.0	20.0	66.7	75.9	58.9
Three	0.0	12.5	8.0	0.0	13.3	6.9	7.8
Four	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
(N)	26	46	52	26	34	62	246

Source: the author's own data base, based on official documents.

When paying attention to the arenas run before 1998, Table 11 shows that in all cases the percentage of individuals who had gone through one-single level exceeds 60%, reaching particularly high levels in countries such as Argentina and Germany, where in both cases the rate is 81.3%. However, when all arenas are counted, the predominance goes from single-level to two-level careers. The exceptions are, as in the aggregate analysis, Germany and Canada where most of the individuals in the sample developed their entire career at the same level, keeping horizontal careers.

In terms of the type of career, Germany (56.3%) and Canada again show a distinct pattern compared to other countries that dominate the single-level executive career-type. In the rest of countries tends to predominate the two-level sort of career, which are indistinctively executive, and legislative-predominant or executive-predominant. In this regard, in Argentina the executive two-level careers tend to stand out (31.3%), while in Spain those of executive predominance (31%); whereas in Brazil (41.7%) and Mexico (32.1%) the legislative predominant careers tend to be found more frequently. This is consistent with the aggregate analysis presented in Table 6.

Looking at the career direction, Germany (78.6%) and Canada (80%) show a predominance of horizontal careers, whereas in the other countries the careers tend to follow an upward direction. The only exception is Argentina, where the paths tend to zigzag (33.3%).

Table 12. Career features of those who have held the municipal presidency (%)

	Germany	Argentina	Brazil	Canada	Spain	Mexico	Total
Career type							
Single-level							
Executive	56.3	18.8	16.7	56.3	13.8	17.9	26.4
Single-level with							
Executive							
predominance	18.8	6.3	0.0	18.8	3.4	0.0	6.2
Single-level with							
Legislative							
predominance	0.0	6.3	0.0	6.3	0.0	0.0	1.6
Two-level Executive	12.5	31.3	12.5	12.5	6.9	25.0	16.3
Two-level with							
Executive							
predominance	6.3	12.5	20.8	0.0	31.0	17.9	17.1
Two-level with							
Legislative							
predominance	6.3	12.5	41.7	6.3	31.0	32.1	24.8
Multi-level							
Executive	0.0	6.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8
Multi-level with							
Executive							
predominance	0.0	6.3	8.3	0.0	3.4	7.1	4.7
Multi-level with							
Legislative							
predominance	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	10.3	0.0	2.3
Career direction							
Upward	13.5	20.1	40.9	12.9	70.0	60.0	36.3
Downward	7.9	15.3	6.7	0.0	0.0	10.0	11.8
Horizontal	78.6	31.3	16.0	80.0	20.0	17.2	33.3
Zigzag	0.0	33.3	36.4	7.1	10.0	12.8	18.7
(N)	26	46	52	26	34	62	246

Source: the author's own data base, based on official documents.

Moving to the temporal dimension, Table 13 shows that the average number of years across countries ranges between twenty and twenty-three. Slightly lower levels than those recorded at the aggregate level. The same is observed in terms of maximum and minimum values, which reached slightly below numbers than the ones listed in Table 8. Regarding countries where longer careers are reported, in aggregate terms, the cases were Argentina and Mexico where only people included in the sample who in 1998 occupied municipal offices, the highest average durations are found in Germany and Spain.

Table 13. Career average duration of those who have held a municipal presidency

	Germany	Argentina	Brazil	Canada	Spain	Mexico	Total
Average duration	23.0	20.4	20.8	20.2	22.0	20.5	21.2
Maximum	39.0	36.0	32.0	34.0	35.0	39.0	39.0
Minimum	1.0	3.0	1.0	10.0	5.0	3.0	1.0
Standard deviation	10.8	8.3	6.9	7.8	7.3	9.0	8.2
(N)	26	46	52	26	34	62	246

Source: the author's own data base, based on official documents.

Finally, when looking at political data comprising the sample, we see that Germany (71.5%) and Spain (80%) are the two countries that show a higher rate of abandonment, followed by Canada (66.7%) and Mexico (50%). By contrast, the countries with the highest percentages of active politicians even within the sample are Argentina (57.1%) and Brazil (51.1%).

Table 14. Exit from politics of those who held the municipal presidency (%)

	Germany	Argentina	Brazil	Canada	Spain	Mexico	Total
Currently in politics							
Yes	28,5	57,1	51,1	33,3	20,0	50,0	38,3
No	71,5	42,9	48,9	66,7	80,0	50,0	61,7
(N)	26	46	52	26	34	62	246
The cause of exit							
Electoral defeat	22,2	25,0	37,5	30,0	0,0	14,3	18,0
Scandal/expulsion	22,2	37,5	12,5	0,0	12,5	14,3	14,0
Death/illness	22,2	0,0	25,0	10,0	0,0	14,3	18,0
Retirement	11,1	12,5	25,0	10,0	37,5	0,0	16,0
Other professional activity	22,2	25,0	0,0	50,0	50,0	57,1	34,0
(N)	19	20	25	17	27	31	139
Subsequent occupation							
Lawyer	33,3	100,0	0,0	0,0	20,0	14,3	15,4
Private business	33,3	0,0	57,1	100,0	40,0	42,9	50,0
Public servant	33,3	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	28,5	11,6
NGO	0,0	0,0	28,6	0,0	40,0	0,0	15,4
International organisation	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0
Journalist	0,0	0,0	14,3	0,0	0,0	0,0	3,8
Lecturer	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	14,3	3,8

(N)	4	5	0	9	14	18	50
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Source: the author's own data base, based on official documents.

The main causes of departure from politics vary across case studies. Regarding Germany, the scenario is very heterogeneous as shown in Table 14. However, this pattern is not reproduced in the other cases. In Argentina scandals or expulsions are the leading cause from the party (37.5%). In Brazil, electoral defeat (37%) tends to predominate. Finally, in Canada (50%), Spain (50%) and Mexico (57.1%) most of the units of study abandoned politics to pursue a different career. As was the case at the aggregate data analysis, the legal profession, and private business constitute the majority of career-destinations among those who leave politics.

1.3 The political careers of those who have held the regional presidency

Now that the aggregated data analysis and the type of path of those who held the municipal office, the last step is to analyse the the career features of those who held the regional office. This is intended to deepen on the differences, if they exist, between the career profiles of those who held government positions in different institutional levels. In this sense, Table 15 shows that representative institutions remain as the main access channel to also among those who held the regional presidency. However, even though in the case of politicians who held the municipal office, Argentina was the difference since it had a high percentage of politicians who started in the field of public administration, Canada is an exception. Thus, 25% of the sample started in positions of trust or self-designation.

Table 15. Access channel to a political career of those who have held the regional presidency (%)

	Germany	Argentina	Brazil	Canada	Spain	Mexico	Total
Representative institutions	86.7	100.0	100.0	75.0	85.7	96.6	93.1
Public administration	6.7	0.0	0.0	25.0	14.3	3.4	6.0
Party office	6.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.9
(N)	16	24	27	13	19	38	131

Source: the author's own data base, based on official documents.

Regarding the institutional entry level into politics, Table 16 shows a difference from the results presented above: the main entry channel into politics is no longer the municipal level in all cases. With the exception of Brazil where this pattern is maintained in the other countries the regional presidency is the predominant first public position held at entry level.

However, differences can be detected between countries. Canada represents a paradigmatic case, because 75% of those who held the presidency in 1998 entered regional politics in this institutional level. In Germany and Argentina, the regional level is still predominant, but with not so high values, with percentages ranging from 46.7% to 50%. Finally, Spain and Mexico show a high percentage of regional presidents who entered politics at the state level, with values of 41.2% and 44.5% respectively.

In terms of the last position held, there are two broad groups of countries: those in which most of the politicians studied in the sample ended in the regional level and those in which their last stage in politics was the state level. In the first group are Germany (62.5%) and Canada (58.3%), while in the second Argentina (55%), Brazil (54.5%), Spain (52.9%) are located and Mexico (60%). Thus, also in the case of the trajectories of those who held regional managing positions is observed that Canada and Germany show distinct patterns compared to the other countries, introducing the sub-state level as an area of politics in which to professionalise.

Table 16. Career paths of those who occupied the regional presidency (%)

	Germany	Argentina	Brazil	Canada	Spain	Mexico	Total
First public office							
Statewide	26.7	40.9	44.0	0.0	17.6	18.5	27.1
Supra-statewide	46.7	50.0	12.0	75.0	41.2	37.0	46.6
Statewide	26.7	9.1	44.0	25.0	41.2	44.5	26.3
Supra-statewide	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Last public office							
Municipal	0.0	0.0	4.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.9
Regional	62.5	40.0	40.9	58.3	47.1	40.0	45.7
Statewide	37.5	55.0	54.5	33.3	52.9	60.0	51.7
Supra-statewide	0.0	5.0	0.0	8.3	0.0	0.0	1.7
Levels run before 1998							
One	93.3	36.4	68.0	66.7	47.1	77.8	64.4
Two	6.7	59.1	32.0	33.3	52.9	22.2	34.7
Three	0.0	4.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8
Four	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Levels run (total)							

One	46.7	22.7	8.0	50.0	11.8	11.1	21.2
Two	20.0	54.5	56	41.7	52.9	66.7	51.7
Three	33.3	18.2	36	8.3	29.4	22.2	25.4
Four	0.0	4.5	0.0	0.0	5.9	0.0	1.7
(N)	16	24	27	13	19	32	131

Source: the author's own data base, based on official documents.

In the analysis of career paths before 1998, with the exception of Argentina and Spain, the other countries studied show a single-path predominance. These two countries are the exception. When these data are compared with the total number of arenas transited throughout a career, we see that excepting for Germany and Canada, in the other countries politicians who have gone through two arenas tend to dominate. This allows to consider these two countries as cases where horizontal careers in which the governors tend to carry out their entire career in the regional level.

Table 17. Average career duration of those who occupied the regional presidency

	Germany	Argentina	Brazil	Canada	Spain	Mexico	Total
Average duration	21.4	26.6	28.4	22.3	25.2	27.4	25.9
Maximum	45.0	54.0	57.0	45.0	43.0	61.0	61.0
Minimum	6.0	5.0	13.0	6.0	9.0	3.0	3.0
Standard deviation	10.7	10.2	12.2	13.6	11.1	11.2	11.4
(N)	16	24	27	13	19	32	131

Source: the author's own data base, based on official documents.

Table 17 shows the average career duration, which ranges between 21 and 28 years. These figures are slightly higher than those presented in Table 13, concerning the paths of those who held the municipal office. Also, here we find Brazil (28.4) and Mexico (27.4) countries that show a more durable path on average. That invites us to think that these two countries offer more incentives and opportunities to those who occupied the regional presidency to keep on their career. Finally, note the high peaks collected in Mexico (61), Brazil (57) and Argentina (54).

Table 18. Career features of those who have held the regional presidency (%)

	Germany	Argentina	Brazil	Canada	Spain	Mexico	Total
Career type							
Single-level Executive	20.0	17.4	8.0	9.1	13.3	10.3	12.7
Single-level with Executive	13.3	4.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	17.2	6.8

predominance							
Single-level with							
Legislative							
predominance	13.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.7
Two-level Executive	0.0	13.0	20	45.5	6.7	3.4	12.7
Two-level with							
Executive							
predominance	33.3	13.0	16.0	27.3	26.7	24.1	22.0
Two-level with							
Legislative							
predominance	13.3	21.7	20.0	0.0	33.3	6.9	16.1
Multi-level Executive	6.7	13.0	4.0	0.0	13.3	0	5.9
Multi-level with							
Executive							
predominance	0.0	17.4	16.0	18.2	6.7	27.6	16.1
Multi-level with							
Legislative							
predominance	0.0	0.0	16.0	0.0	0.0	10.3	5.9
Career direction							
Upward	40.0	54.5	44.0	8.3	29.4	18.5	33.9
Downward	20.0	0.0	12.0	8.3	17.5	33.3	16.1
Horizontal	26.7	22.7	8.0	50.0	5.9	11.1	17.8
Zigzag	13.3	22.7	36.0	33.3	47.1	37.0	32.2
(N)	16	24	27	13	19	32	131

Source: the author's own data base, based on official documents.

In terms of career types, in Germany there is a predominance of two-level sort of careers with executive dominance (33.3%). In Argentina (21.7%), Brazil (20%) and Spain (33.3%) the most frequent type of trajectory is the two-level with legislative dominance. In Mexico, multi-level careers with executive prevalence (27.6%) tend to stand out. Finally, in Canada the highest percentage reported is for executive two-level careers (45.5%).

Regarding the direction of the career, only Canada has a predominantly horizontal path (50%). Germany has a predominance of vertical paths (40%), like Argentina (54.5%) and Brazil (44%). Finally, Spain (74.1%) and Mexico (37%) had predominantly zigzag careers.

Finally, Table 19 shows that there is predominance, within the sample, of individuals who are currently no longer in politics. Thus, the only exceptions are Brazil (71.4%) and Spain (60%). Argentina constitutes an intermediate case, because 50% of the sample continues in politics while the other 50% has stopped this activity.

Table 19. Exit from politics of those who held the regional presidency (%)

	Germany	Argentina	Brazil	Canada	Spain	Mexico	Total
Currently in politics							
Yes	31.0	50.0	71.4	45.5	60.0	33.3	47.7
No	69.0	50.0	28.6	55.5	40.0	66.7	52.3
(N)	16	24	27	13	19	32	131
Reasons for the exit of politics							
Electoral defeat	10.0	14.3	14.3	0.0	16.7	5.0	9.1
Scandal/expulsion	10.0	28.6	0.0	80.0	16.7	10.0	18.2
Death/illness	10.0	28.6	57.1	0.0	0.0	10.0	16.4
Retirement	0.0	28.6	0.0	0.0	50.0	20.0	16.4
Another professional activity	70.0	0.0	28.6	20.0	16.7	55.0	40.0
(N)	11	12	8	7	8	21	67
Previous occupation							
Lawyer	22.2	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	16.7	17.9
Private sector	66.7	0.0	33.3	50.0	100.0	33.3	46.4
Public servant	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
NGO	11.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	25.0	17.9
International organisation	0.0	0.0	33.3	0.0	0.0	8.3	3.6
Journalist	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
University lecturer	0.0	0.0	33.3	50.0	0.0	16.7	14.3
(N)	8	0	2	2	2	12	28

Source: the author's own data base, based on official documents.

Regarding the causes of departure from politics, Germany (70%) and Mexico (50%) have the highest percentages of cases of dedication to other occupation. In Canada it is striking that 80% of those who left did so for causes related to a scandal or expulsion from the party. In Brazil careers were abandoned mainly due to death or illness (57.1%) and Spain retirement (50%), which invites us to think on highly professional individuals. Finally, Argentina is the country that has greater variation of causes related to exit from politics. Among the causes death (28.6%), scandal (28.6%) and expulsion (28.6%) stand out as the most frequent. Finally, it is noteworthy that the most common occupations are again later law and private business, followed by lecturing at universities.

4. Future research agenda

Through this descriptive exercise we have been able to extract some common career paths at the time that differences were observed between the different countries that make up the universe of study. Through this first approach it was found that Canada and Germany have

similar career patterns, which are significantly different from other countries in certain variables. Nonetheless, beyond the differences between countries, it is interesting to note what differences are observed if we distinguish between trajectories who held the mayor's office and the regional office.

Table 20 presents a comparison showing the analysed variables for municipal and regional presidents. It can be observed that even though in both cases the access channel to politics with representative institutions, for mayors the first public position was in the municipal arena while in the case of regional presidents was the regional arena. This can lead to the conclusion that different entry strategies based on geographical areas in which careers want to be started. This is corroborated by the type of career data, because while mayors – ie municipal presidents – tend to dominate executive careers in the case of regional presidents careers with executive dominance are predominant, indicating that governors tend to move around different power positions while mayors tend to focus only on the executive. Finally, with respect to the direction of the career it is found that a considerable percentage of governors followed a zigzag path.

Table 20. Comparisons

	Municipal presidents	Regional presidents
Access channel	Representative institutions (80.3%)	Representative institutions (93.1%)
First occupation	Municipal (63.9%)	Regional (46.6%)
Last occupation	State (58.8%)	State (51.7%)
Levels went through before 1998	Uno (77.5%)	Uno (64.4%)
Levels (total)	Dos (58.9%)	Dos (51.7%)
Career type	Executive (26.4%)	Executive predominance (22%)
Career direction	Upward (36.3%)	Upward (33.9%)/Zigzag(32%)
Average career duration	21.22 years	25.9 years
Currently in politics?	No (61.7%)	No (52.3%)
Career exit reason	Another activity (34%)	Another activity (40%)
Subsequent occupation	Private business (50%)	Private business (46.4%)
(N)	246	131

Source: the author's own data base, based on official documents.

It is important to bear in mind that these are only preliminary results, which constitute a first approximation to the study of these cases. Therefore, the main objective of this paper is to propose a methodology for systematizing the study of political careers from a broad perspective that considers different dimensions. This is the first step for further development of an index to create a typology of careers based on the items studied. From

there, the research agenda includes identifying those sociodemographic, institutional, contextual and other related variables that serve as a causal link to explain the different career patterns identified.

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