Who Runs for Higher Office? Electoral Institutions and Level-Hopping Attempts in Germany's State Legislatures [1]

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Abstract

Do electoral institutions matter for subnational politicians' ambition to enter national politics? The paper considers this question by analysing candidacies of sitting German State legislators for the Federal parliament ('level-hopping attempts'), leveraging within-legislature variation in electoral rules due to the widespread adoption of mixed-member systems in Germany's subnational parliaments. State MPs elected via closed list PR can be expected to be more likely to attempt level-hopping than those elected in the single-member districts (SMD) tier, as the former face lower re-election rates and the latter are more directly accountable to their constituency's voters. Empirical evidence from a novel dataset of State legislators spanning ten Federal elections (1987-2021) confirms this hypothesis. Moreover, the analysis shows that the difference in behaviour across tiers is more marked when State MPs run for insecure Federal candidacies than when they are offered secure candidacies. The findings highlight a previously overlooked dimension of the 'mandate divide' between MPs belonging to different electoral tiers in mixed-member systems. They also suggest that subnational electoral institutions play a role in enabling or constraining progressive ambition.

1   Introduction

One of the key insights from legislative studies is that the incentive and opportunity structures that shape legislators' behaviour vary according to the electoral rules that elected representatives are subjected to. Most significantly, electoral institutions determine the *competitiveness* of the reelection and re-selection processes that legislators face and the nature of *accountability* that they are subject to (André, Depauw and Shugart, 2014, p.232). This paper draws on the argument that electoral institutions shape the conduct of elected representatives, and extends the analysis to a previously overlooked aspect of legislators' behaviour: level-hopping attempts. A 'level-hopping attempt' is defined as *the candidacy of a sitting legislator to an elective office at a higher territorial level of politics in a multi-level polity.* In this sense, level-hopping attempts are a form of behaviour that reveals the progressive ambition (Schlesinger, 1966) of an MP: their preference for a career in a 'higher' legislative arena than the one they currently serve in. In short, the paper suggests that there is a connection between electoral institutions of sub-national legislatures and level-hopping attempts: the progressive ambitions of MPs elected from single-member districts are more constrained than those of legislators elected via PR lists.

There are empirical and normative reasons to identify and explain the phenomenon of level-hopping attempts. Empirically, they provide us with an indicator of politicians' willingness to 'move up' on the career ladder, which is distinct from two of the most commonly studied variables in the literature on multi-level careers. On the one hand, level-hopping attempts are analytically distinct from actual career movement across levels, insofar as they comprise instances of careerist behaviour that are frustrated by the circumstances and therefore are not identifiable simply by looking at career trajectory of politicians (Stolz, 2015). On the other hand, a candidacy is a revealed preference, as opposed to measures of stated progressive ambition drawn from legislator surveys (Maestas, 2003). In this sense, the paper contributes to the literature on multi-level careers by analysing a *behavioural* indicator of progressive *ambition.* Moreover, understanding the predictors of level-hopping attempts is arguably also important because such behaviour is normatively undesirable: legislators who try to forsake their mandate mid-term in pursuit of career advancement are clearly failing to keep their side the election 'bargain' with voters.

The phenomenon of level-hopping attempts is investigated in the German context, a case of multi-level polity with a Federal parliament (*Bundestag*) elected via mixed-member system with a closed-lists PR tier and State legislatures (*Landtage*, singular: *Landtag*) that, in most cases, mirror the Federal electoral rules. Mixed-member systems present an interesting case of within-legislature variation in institutional incentive structures, and the literature has identified marked differences between legislators elected from the single-member district tier and those elected from the list PR tier with respects to a range of aspects of legislators' behaviour (Lancaster and Patterson, 1990; Stratmann and Baur, 2002; Lundberg, 2006; Maaser and Stratmann, 2018; Breunig, Grossman and Hänni, 2022). In keeping with the thesis' focus on electoral institutions, this paper examines primarily the relationship between tier of election at State level – PR list or single-member district – and level-hopping attempts. By linking sub-national electoral systems with progressively ambitious behaviour, this paper makes two contributions. First, it highlights yet another behavioural difference between list PR and SMD legislators in a relatively rare context of within-legislature variation in electoral rules at sub-national level. Secondly, it centres sub-national electoral systems as an important institutional variable shaping legislators' career incentives and options in a multi-level polity.

The starting point of the argument is that legislators make career decisions not only on the basis of the perceived relative value of the current and prospective post, but also on the perceived probability of retaining those posts in future periods. I further posit that electoral tiers in a mixed-member system differ along two key dimensions related to career prospects: the lower electoral security associated with the list PR tier and the higher degree of personal accountability of a legislator associated with the single-member district tier. As discussed in section 4, these two factors should contribute to constrain single-member district MPs' progressive ambitions and, conversely, to encourage list MPs' candidacies to the Federal level. The resulting hypothesis that list PR MPs are more likely candidates for level-hopping attempts comes with a qualification: this difference in progressively ambitious behaviour should be particularly marked for insecure Federal candidacies. High-quality, secure candidacies will be equally appealing to both list and district legislators: they come with the prospect a long career in a more powerful legislative arena than the one they currently operate in, and – by ensuring successful level-hopping –

reduce the costs associated with an unsuccessful Federal candidacy.

To conduct the analysis, I compiled a novel dataset of legislators in German State Parliaments with data on over 8,000 MPs spanning almost forty years. This resource, which is perhaps the core contribution of the research project, is employed for a two-step empirical investigation into the relationship between electoral tier and legislators' career trajectories. First, the assumption that list PR legislators face lower prospects of re-election at State-level is tested on a sample of legislators sitting in the State parliaments at the end of each term, providing robust evidence in the expected direction. Secondly, I combine the State Parliament membership data with information on Federal candidacies in ten elections (1987-2021) and State-level leadership positions to test the relationship between tier of election level-hopping attempts. The multivariate analysis supports both the argument that list PR legislators are more likely to run for a Federal seat, and the further hypothesis that the effect of electoral tier is stronger for 'insecure' candidacies than for 'secure' ones.

The paper proceeds as follows. In section 2, I contextualise this study within the two lines of research it aims to speak to: the scholarship on progressive ambitions in multi-level politics and the literature on electoral tier effects on legislator behaviour in mixed-member systems. Section 3 provides background information on Germany's legislatures, electoral systems and candidate selection practices. In section 4, I present the theoretical framework and derive some hypothesis to put to empirical test. Section 5 details the data collection project, describes the procedures employed to link State parliament membership data with the other data sources, and outlines the methodological choices of the empirical analysis. Sections 6 and 7 presents the findings of, respectively, an analysis of reelection rates and level-hopping attempts of German State legislators. The results support the assumption that list PR MPs are less likely to be reelected at State level, as well as the hypotheses that list PR MPs are more likely to run for Federal office and that the effect is more significant for insecure candidacies relative to secure ones. Section 8 concludes, discussing implications and limitations of the analysis, as well as avenues for future research.

2 Related literature

As mentioned, this paper speaks to two areas of research: the literature on the electoral tier divides in legislator behaviour in mixed-member systems, and the scholarship on political careers in multi-level polities. With respect to the first line of research, the paper expands the analysis to a new dependent variable: level-hopping attempts. As for the second, this contribution suggests that the electoral institutions of sub-national legislatures are a key variable affecting legislators' tendency to exhibit progressively ambitious behaviour.

2.1 Mixed-Member Systems' Electoral Tiers and Legislator Behaviour

A mixed-member system can be defined (Shugart and Wattenberg, 2001, pp. 10-11) as an electoral system where representatives are elected in two overlapping sets of districts (tiers): a nominal tier composed of single-member districts and a list tier composed of multi-member districts. Commonly, the electoral formula of the nominal tier is single-member district plurality, and that of the list tier is closed-list PR. Originated in post-war Germany (Massicotte, 2003), since the 1990s mixed-member systems – in the two variants of mixed-member proportional and mixed-member majoritarian – have spread to a number of new democracies (Ukraine, Lithuania, Mexico, Russia, Taiwan) as well as established ones (Italy, Japan, New Zealand). The diffusion of this electoral institution has been accompanied by increasing scholarly interest in the opportunities these contexts presenting within-country variation in electoral institutions may offer to learn more about how electoral systems in general affect the behaviour of voters, parties, candidates and legislators (Stratmann and Baur, 2002). For instance, for Moser and Scheiner (2012, p.45), "the combination of very different electoral rules in the same country provides a unique opportunity to study the effects of separate electoral systems as they operate under identical social, political, and economic conditions". There is however no consensus as to whether and under which circumstances the tiers of mixed-member systems can be assumed to approximate the incentive structures of different sets of electoral rules (the 'controlled comparison' thesis), as opposed to producing unique institutional environments via their interaction (what has come to be known as the 'contamination effects' argument) (Herron, Nemoto and Nishikawa, 2018).

Studies on legislators' behaviour in mixed-member system reflect this broader tension in the literature. On the one hand, the 'controlled comparison' approach suggests that differences in how MPs elected in different tiers behave should mirror differences in incentive structures associated with the electoral rules of those tiers. In this perspective, differences in behaviour across tiers should reflect the competing principals that MPs elected from 'pure' list PR and 'pure' single member districts are also primarily accountable to: respectively, their party and their local electorate (Carey, 2007; Batto, 2012). This perspective – which is sometimes known as the 'mandate divide' hypothesis – purports to explain why list PR legislators tend to exhibit higher levels of party discipline (Batto, 2012), to be less responsive to constituents (Breunig, Grossman and Hänni, 2022), and to select committees involved with their party's core issues and constituencies over those that can deliver locally targeted goods (Stratmann and Baur, 2002; Maaser and Stratmann, 2018). These arguments have been criticised on the grounds that the 'mandate divide' approach obscures possible contamination effects: in particular, dual candidacies may create more complex incentive structures for legislators that cannot be flattened onto a PR-SMD distinction. As most mixed-member systems allow candidates to run simultaneously on both tiers, "dual candidacy allows the candidate to hedge bets, particularly if he or she is highly placed on the PR list: the candidate could lose one race yet still gain a seat in parliament. On the other hand, because of dual candidacy, a legislator might then need to satisfy both a national party and a local constituency, to varying degrees" (Herron, 2002, p.367). From this perspective, behavioural divides associated with mixed-member system tiers tell us little about systematic differences between the effects of PR and SMD systems; rather, they simply reflect the unique institutional configuration of an individual mixed-member system.

2.2 Multi-Level Careers and Progressive Ambition

Unlike voting behaviour and committee membership – the most common dependent variables in the 'mandate divide' literature – this paper considers a behavioural variable that has little to do with policy, but rather centres political actors' self-interested goals of professional advancement. The study of politics as a career dates back at least to Max Weber's 1919 *Politics as a Vocation* lecture (Weber, 2008). The theoretical development of this perspective owes much

to American behaviouralism (Ruchelman, 1970; Black, 1972; Rohde, 1979), and specifically to Joseph Schlesinger's seminal study of US executive and legislative officials' career pathways in the book *Ambition and Politics*, which starts with the oft-quoted maxim that "ambition lies at the heart of politics" (Schlesinger, 1966, p. 1). In particular, Schlesinger famously distinguished between *discrete*, *static* and *progressive* ambition: the first designates politicians' wish to hold a political job for the duration of the mandate, the second to their desire to retain the office they hold in the future, while the third refers to their aspiration to attain a more important post (Schlesinger, 1966, pp. 9-10). Because of its obvious connection to upward career movement, progressive ambition has been the key concept of interest for research into multi-level careers.

Americanists working in this tradition have found that progressive ambition affects the voting behaviour (Francis and Kenny, 1996), legislative activity intensity (Herrick and Moore, 1993) and district opinion responsiveness (Maestas, 2003) of US representatives aiming for higher office. Less is known about the individual characteristics that drive progressive ambition: however, there is evidence that factors normally associated with 'nascent' political ambition among members of the public, such as gender and personality traits, are not as predictive of progressively ambitious behaviour and attitudes among office-holders (Fulton et al., 2006; Dynes, Hassell and Miles, 2019). Moreover, ambition theory has been influential in the study of the professionalisation of US State legislatures – i.e. the extent to which these bodies offer its members opportunities for full-time lifelong employment in the same way Congress does (Squire, 1992). For instance, Schlesinger's discrete-static-progressive ambition typology maps onto Squire's (1988) distinction between *dead-end legislatures*, where professionalisation is low and turnover is high, *career legislatures*, characterised by high professionalisation and low turnover, and *springboard legislatures*, where personnel turnover is high not because these bodies do not offer satisfying career options but because they commonly serve as stepping stones to higher office.

In the past few decades, the study of multi-level careers has expanded beyond the American context, focussing particularly on the institutional determinants of integration of national and sub-national personnel trajectories (Edinger and Jahr, 2016; Borchert and Stolz, 2011c; Samuels, 2003). The recent interest in the territorial dimension of the organisation of careers reflects processes of regionalisation of unitary states, professionalisation of state legislatures in federal

ones, and the emergence of supranational political arenas such as the European Parliament (Swenden, 2006; Stolz, 2013). The extant research has highlighted how institutional factors – federalism, legislative professionalisation, party selection procedures, office accumulation rules etc. – shape the *accessibility*, *availability* and *attractiveness* of political offices, which in turn affect the cost-benefit calculations behind politicians' career choices (Borchert, 2011). Much of this work is limited to single-country case studies; therefore, not much is known in comparative terms with regards to, for instance, the relationship between electoral systems and multi-level career movement. The case studies, however, do suggest that the American case, where career movement across territorial levels is essentially centripetal, is not a common template (Borchert and Stolz, 2011b). If anything, what is striking is the cross-national diversity of patterns of elite circulation: alongside the unidirectional model, common to the US and some unitary states prior to devolution (Oñate, 2018; Lo Russo and Verzichelli, 2016), we find contexts where national and sub-national levels function as separate arenas for 'alternative' career progression patterns (Docherty, 2011; Stolz, 2011), or interact in a more complex way, with frequent movements up *and down* the territorial ladder (Santos and Pegurier, 2011; Vanlangenakker, Maddens and Put, 2013; Dodeigne, 2014; Di Capua et al., 2022).

3 The German Case

Federalism is one of the core constitutional features of the German polity: its sixteen States (*Länder*, singular: *Land*) enjoy comparatively high levels of autonomy from the Federal government in Berlin in terms of their administrative and policy-making prerogatives (Ladner, Keuffer and Baldersheim, 2016). State Parliaments are a key institution of this level of governance: these are directly elected bodies that pass legislation in some policy areas (education, policing, planning, local government, culture and church affairs), as well as electing and monitoring State governments, which in turn implement both Federal and State law. Nonetheless, there is a clear hierarchy between the Federal and the State level: "In the German context it is very common to label the move from a State parliament to the national legislature, the Bundestag, as career advancement, whereas a move in the opposite direction is usually considered a step backward" (Jahr, 2015, p.55). Although there is some debate on whether the legislative

powers of the Landtag have diminished over time (Reutter, 2006), the consensus is that these bodies have become increasingly professionalised since the 1970s (Borchert and Stolz, 2011*a*). Table 1 provides some information on the level of professionalisation of the institutions (MP allowance, number of yearly committee sessions, MP-to-population ratio), as well as detailing the characteristics of their electoral systems. The comparison with the Bundestag shown in the table highlights significant variation between States, which range from Landtage of larger states such as North Rhine Westphalia and Bavaria, where legislator pay and MP-to-population ratio approach those of the Federal Parliament and legislative activity is intense, to the legislatures of the three City-States (Berlin, Bremen and Hamburg), which clearly appear less professionalised.

Thirteen of the 16 Landtage are elected via a mixed-member system with a compensatory PR tier, which makes them a rare case of sub-national parliaments that present within-legislature variation in the electoral rules, alongside the Scottish and Welsh Parliaments in the UK and municipal assemblies of major cities in Hungary and South Africa. The modal Landtag has an electoral system mirroring closely that of the German Federal Parliament: a mixed-member system with around half the legal number of MPs elected in the single-member district tier, and a compensatory closed-list PR tier with a 5% threshold. Voters cast two votes: a first vote (*Erststimme* or *Direktstimme*) for their single-member district candidate, and a second vote (*Zweitstimme* or *Listenstimme*) for a party list: normally a single one for the whole state but in some cases multi-member PR districts within the State have separate lists. There are some notable exceptions to this formula. Saarland and the City-States of Hamburg and Bremen use pure PR formulae. Moreover, the mixed-member systems of Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria apportion seats within party lists in ways that depart significantly from the closed-list formula. In Baden-Württemberg, voters cast only one vote for both a party and for a district candidate: within each party's list, compensatory PR seats are allocated to candidates who failed to win their single-member district but obtained the highest shares of their district vote. Bavaria employs a peculiar open list ballot formula: the second vote also allows voters to express a preferential vote for individual candidates within the list of their choice; PR seats are attributed on the basis of candidates' preferential votes *plus the candidates' first votes in their district* (for

Table 1: German State Parliaments (1980-2021).

Electoral System Characteristics   *Legislature Professionalisation Indicators*

	Electoral system	Seats (SMD)	PR formula	PR seat allocation	District in list PR tier	Term length in years	Seats/100k residents	Allowance p.m. (2022)	Committee sessions p.a.
Brandenburg	Mixed	88 (44)	Hare	Closed List	Land	4 → 5 (1994)	3.48	€ 7,604	175
Berlin	Mixed	130 (78)	Hare	Closed List	Land/District	4 → 5 (1999)	3.55	€ 6,657	151
Baden-Württemberg	Mixed	120 (70)	S-Laguë	Best Loser in SMD	Land	4 → 5 (1996)	1.08	€ 7,972	118
Bavaria	Mixed	180 (91)	Hare	Open List	District	4 → 5 (1998)	1.37	€ 8,886	289
Bremen	PR	84 (0)	S-Laguë	Flexible List	District	4	12.35	€ 5,150	179
Hessen	Mixed	110 (55)	Hare	Closed List	Land	4 → 5 (2003)	6.53	€ 8,297	199
Hamburg	PR	121 (71)	S-Laguë	Flexible List	Land/District	4 → 5 (2015)	1.75	€ 3,555	185
Mecklenburg WP	Mixed	71 (36)	Hare	Closed List	Land	4 → 5 (2006)	4.41	€ 6,466	227
Lower Saxony	Mixed	135 (87)	d'Hondt	Closed List	Land	4 → 5 (1998)	1.69	€ 7,175	352
NR Westphalia	Mixed	181 (128)	S-Laguë	Closed List	Land	5	1.01	€ 9,603	322
Rhineland Palatinate	Mixed	101 (51)	S-Laguë	Closed List	Land/District	5	2.46	€ 7,394	148
Schleswig-Holstein	Mixed	69 (35)	S-Laguë	Closed List	Land	4 → 5 (2000)	2.37	€ 8,886	172
Saarland	PR	51 (0)	d'Hondt	Closed List	Land/District	5	5.18	€ 6,238	241
Saxony	Mixed	120 (60)	d'Hondt	Closed List	Land	4 → 5 (1994)	2.96	€ 6,237	125
Saxony Anhalt	Mixed	83 (41)	Hare	Closed List	Land	4 → 5 (2006)	3.81	€ 7,230	205
Thuringia	Mixed	88 (44)	Hare	Closed List	Land	4 → 5 (1994)	4.15	€ 6,036	127
Bundestag	Mixed	598 (299)	S-Laguë	Closed List	Länder	4	0.72	€ 10,012	738

Notes: **(1)** The legal number of seats may not correspond to the number of legislators due to compensation mandates for overhang seats; see Reutter (2021), pp. 37-47). Over the time period considered the number of seats changed for the following parliaments: Berlin, 150 (of which 90 SMDs) until the 1999 election; Bavaria, 204 (104) until 2003; Bremen, 100 (0) until 2003; 83 (0) until 2015; Lower Saxony, 155 (100) until 2003; North-Rhine Westphalia, 201 (151) until 2000; Saxony-Anhalt 99 (49) until 2006 and 91 (45) until 2016; Schleswig-Holstein, 75 (45) until 2000; Germany, 656 (328) until 2002. **(2)** The formula for PR seat allocation changed in Baden-Württemberg (d'Hondt until the 2011 election); Bremen (d'Hondt until 2003); Hessen (d'Hondt until 1983); Hamburg (d'Hondt until 2008); Lower-Saxony (Hare until 1982); North-Rhine Westphalia (d'Hondt until 1991, Hare until 2011); Schleswig-Holstein (d'Hondt until 2009); Germany (d'Hondt until 1987, Hare until 2009). **(3)** The ballot formula changed in Hamburg (closed list until 2011) and Bremen (closed list until 2011). **(4)** Parties can decide whether to field statewide or districtwide lists in Berlin and Rhineland Palatinate; Hamburg and Saarland have two PR tiers (one statewide, one districted). **(5)** The number of committee sessions per annum is an average of the years from 1990 to 2020. *Sources:* Committee sessions per annum from Appeldorn and Fortunato (2021); the rest is the author's own compilation from official sources.

details see Rudolph and Däubler, 2016).[2]

The process of candidate nomination is broadly similar at Federal and State level: the same actors, the regional party branch and the State party, control respectively the selection of district candidates and the drafting of PR lists for both types of election (Detterbeck, 2012, pp. 156-170). The candidate nomination process starts with regional party organisations' selection of district candidates for the seats that fall in their territorial remit through a secret ballot of the local party membership or their delegates.[3] "In rural areas and for a direct seat in the Bundestag this regional party organization will often be identical with the constituency party organization. But in metropolitan areas and for most direct seats in Länder parliaments the regional party organization will supervise selection in several districts" (Patzelt, 2007, p. 52). This process builds a strong linkage between the regional associations and the district MPs after the election: the former actively discourage challenges of incumbents unless there is genuine dissatisfaction with their record; the latter, in turn, will dedicate themselves to constituency work and more generally cater to their selectorates in their legislative activity to secure non-competitive 'coronations' in future selections (Roberts, 1988; Detterbeck, 2016). After this process, a statewide party convention drafts the PR list(s). The details of the selection procedure varies across parties and States, but broadly speaking differs from the district nominations in two respects. First, it is much more top-down than the regional party conventions: "Land party elites are in control of balancing party lists. While delegates decide, they often follow the suggested order of rankings" (Detterbeck, 2016, p. 840). Secondly, while incumbents do enjoy a clear advantage in securing high list positions, State parties use this process to 'rebalance' the outcome of the district candidate selection, taking into account a set of competing formal rules and informal norms in drafting the lists. The most common of these are gender and regional quotas, but parties like the Greens and Die Linke also have rules aimed at guaranteeing winnable list positions to newcomers and younger aspirants (Reiser, 2014). Moreover, at this stage party elites can parachute experts and non-party members in high list positions (Detterbeck, 2016). In sum, obtaining a winnable list position is a more accessible task for outsiders and a less

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[2]For the purposes of the analysis, Bavaria – but not Baden-Württemberg – is considered to have a preferential vote system in the PR tier, together with Bremen and Hamburg post-2011.

[3]In Hamburg, Bremen and Saarland, local branches select district lists rather than single-member district candidates.

secure prospect for incumbents than securing a safe district nomination.

4 Theory

The decision to seek a Federal candidacy can be conceived as a cost-benefit calculation, where legislators weigh the expected utility of continuing their career at State level against the expected utility of a 'candidacy lottery', which yields a Federal position in the event of success and the continuation of their career as State legislators in the event of failure. Two key assumptions must be made at this stage. First, legislators' horizons extend beyond the current period: they care about the value of a political position *and* they care about retaining it in a number of future periods, which is conditional on the expected electoral security of the posts (in Schlesinger's terms, they do not simply have discrete ambitions). Secondly, level-hopping attempts are costly if unsuccessful. The costs of a Federal candidacy can be conceptualised in terms of the reputational costs of revealing progressive ambition (it signals that the legislator considers their post as a springboard to another legislative body) and of the opportunity costs involved in pursuing a Federal nomination (as opposed to, for instance, using that political capital to achieve posts of influence at State level).

4.1 Electoral Security

A first possible source of divergence between list PR and SMD legislators' likelihood of attempting level-hopping is the 'baseline' electoral security associated with the two tiers: i.e. legislators' re-election prospects in the State legislature independently of their decision to run for a Federal seat. Clearly, a legislator at risk of exiting the State parliament will be more eager to seize the opportunity of a Federal election to avert such an eventuality than one who can expect a long and secure career in sub-national politics. Empirically, multi-member PR seats have in fact been found to be associated with lower re-election rates than single-member district seats both across countries employing different systems and across electoral tiers in mixed-member systems (Matland and Studlar, 2004; Manow, 2007). As shown in section 6, I find this to be the case for German State legislatures as well, where re-election rates of list PR MPs are over 10 percentage points lower than those of SMD legislators.

One explanation for the different levels of electoral security of PR and SMD legislators advanced in the literature concerns SMD MPs' stronger incumbency advantage, which in turn reflects the higher degree of control they have over their re-selection and re-election relative to list PR MPs. As far as re-selection is concerned, the candidate nomination process for single-member districts is significantly less competitive for incumbents, as parties are wary of replacing district MPs that can draw on a personal vote (Heinsohn and Schiefer, 2019): for instance, in Germany "there seems to be a strong norm not to challenge incumbents without good reason" (Baumann, Debus and Klingelhöfer, 2017, p. 983). Conversely, as there are more list candidate spots than incumbents, the process of drafting a candidate ranking is likely to present a higher degree of competition for winnable positions, which may result in incumbents being moved down the list. Analogously, SMD incumbents have also more control over their re-election than list PR legislators. As the nominal vote (*Erststimme*) is to some degree a personal vote, SMD MPs can use the resources at their disposal – campaigning, committee assignments, position-taking – to maximise re-election chances. Conversely, list PR seats are attributed on the basis of the 'party' vote (*Zweitstimme*), which reflects voters' partisan preferences and is broadly inelastic with respects to individual MPs' efforts (Zittel and Gschwend, 2008). While the argument for an incumbency advantage of SMD over list PR can be generalised across electoral system families, there is a second explanation as to why list PR MPs may be expected to face lower re-election prospects that is specific to mixed-member systems: the implications of dual candidacies. Because in mixed-member systems district seats are assigned before list PR seats, a 'dual candidate' who would be elected via both tiers ends up taking the district mandate. It follows that district MPs may or may not have secured a 'fallback' post in a safe position on the lists, while list PR legislators by definition have either ran for a district they failed to win or failed to obtain one at all. Thus, on average, sitting SMD legislators can be expected to have secured a more favourable combination of district and list candidacies than sitting list PR MPs, and are therefore likely to retain such advantage in future electoral contests.

4.2 Constituency Commitment

Alongside different levels of 'baseline' electoral security, it may also be possible that the nature of accountability engendered by the two tiers affects legislators' decision-making calculations. District MPs owe their post as candidates to regional party branches and their post in parliament to the 'first vote' of the voters from their district. Both these actors can be assumed to have strong preferences for a locally-oriented legislator. It follows that signalling commitment to the local constituency is crucial for legislators' future prospect of re-selection and re-election, and therefore there is a clear disincentive to reveal their desire to leave their post mid-term. If their level-hopping attempt is unsuccessful, they can expect to face a competitive re-selection process and a more uphill re-election contest to retain their post at State level. As Vanlangenakker, Maddens and Put (2013, p. 364) put it, "the constituency MPs can build up a strong personal network in their district, thereby increasing their chance on re-election. However, an MP will lose this incumbency advantage if he or she does not stick to the same constituency and thus to the same election. Consequently, the geographical incongruence is a factor which impedes the movement between levels." List MPs, conversely, are largely shielded from the reputational costs of a failed Federal candidacy, as the key gatekeeper to their permanence in the legislature is the State party. Unlike district voters and regional branches, which have an interest for a locally oriented legislator, State parties can be assumed to be indifferent to a legislator's desire to 'move up' as she would still be accountable to the same party organisation. Moreover, in a closed-list PR system, voters cannot punish progressively ambitious behaviour of an individual legislator with their second-vote. In a way, this *constituency commitment* mechanism is simply the flip-side of the 'incumbency advantage' argument outlined above: SMD legislators may have more control over their re-election prospects, but this also means that they can damage those prospects by acting against the interests of their local (s)electorates. In other words, a Federal candidacy is not only relatively less attractive to a SMD legislator, but also potentially more risky.

4.3 Hypotheses

In sum, the two tiers present legislators with distinct electoral security environments: being elected from a SMD comes with higher baseline electoral security but also higher reputational costs to a failed Federal candidacy; being elected via a PR list is a more insecure position, but progressively ambitious behaviour is less costly as they do not have to cater to locally-oriented (s)electorates. These factors should map onto higher expected utility from a Federal candidacy for list PR than SMD legislators. Therefore:

Hypothesis 1 *list PR State MPs are more likely to attempt level-hopping than SMD MPs.*

A further implication of these considerations concerns the *type* of candidacy that legislators from the two tiers can be expected to take up. The two hypothesised sources of differential behaviour between list and district MPs – different reputational costs and baseline electoral security – are only realised if the Federal candidacy is unsuccessful. It follows that, if a State legislator enters the Federal nomination process expecting to secure a Federal seat with high probability, these variables will weigh less on their consideration, as candidacy failure becomes unlikely. Therefore, for 'high-value' candidacies, we should observe smaller differences in the behaviour of legislators from the list PR and district tiers than for 'low-value' candidacies. Long-shot candidacies, on the other hand, will be mostly appealing to list PR legislators, whose permanence in the State legislature is at higher risk if the miss a level-hopping opportunity and have relatively less to lose from trying to seize the chance when a Federal election comes up.

Hypothesis 2 *list PR State legislators are more likely to attempt level-hopping with an insecure Federal candidacy than SMD legislators, while the two types of MPs are equally likely to run for a secure Federal candidacy.*

5 Data and Methods

The empirical section of the paper proceeds in two steps: section 6 presents a short analysis of the relationship between State legislators' tier of election and their electoral security at State level, which is a core premise of the theoretical argument; section 7 proceeds to test

the hypothesised relationships between tier of election, level-hopping attempts and candidacy quality. The first part relies entirely on the novel database of German State legislators, which allows to investigate the likelihood of permanence in sub-national legislatures across 129 State elections. The second section combines Landtag membership data with information from three more datasets, which record (1) Federal candidacies, (2) membership of State executives and (3) parliamentary leadership positions at State level; the analysis encompasses ten federal elections. The data collection and matching procedures employed to generate the samples for the analysis are detailed below.

5.1 Datasets

5.1.1 Landtag Membership Dataset

The *Landtag membership dataset* comprises all State legislators who sat in each of the 16 German Länder from the first legislative term starting after the year 1980 until 30 September 2021. It was compiled by webscraping entries from Wikipedia page directories listing members of German State parliaments for all legislative terms since 1946. Each entry was associated with a link to the legislator's Wikipedia biography, where available, and the text of the webpage was stored. Using the first line of the legislator's Wikipedia biography or – if the page did not exist – a character string of their name and their State, each entry was associated with a legislator ID and a unique legislator-legislature pair ID. I then created a variable recording the number of terms the legislator served in one State parliament, as well as an incumbency status dummy.

For reasons of data availability, further biographical and electoral information was collected only for entries from legislative terms starting after 1980, while data for prior legislatures was set aside. In total, the *Landtag membership dataset* comprises 19,131 legislator-legislature pairs, 8,507 unique legislators[4], and 145 legislatures. Drawing on both the State legislature member directories and legislators' Wikipedia biographies, each legislator-legislature pair was associated with variables recording the party at the time of election and at the end of the legislature, the date of election, the tier and district of election, the dates of permanence in parliament,

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[4]For practical purposes I decided to code legislators who served in multiple State parliaments as different entries.

birth and death dates, and birth place. Exploiting the fact that gender is expressed in German with different articles and word endings, I created a gender variable; moreover, I scraped from Wikipedia biographies alternative or disused personal titles (alternative name spellings, married/unmarried surnames etc.) to facilitate linking across datasets. I integrated this data collection effort with information from official records in case of missing values.

5.1.2 Candidacies Dataset

Official Federal election records compiled by Germany's *Bundeswahlleiter* (Federal Returning Officer) for the ten elections from 1987 to 2021 inclusive were used to compile the *candidacies dataset*. Each entry was associated with list position and single-member district seat, as well as information on the candidacy's outcome (non-election, election via lists, election via SMD). Information on district party shares (*Erststimme*) in each Federal election and in the previous Federal election were associated with entries that competed in a single-member district, using further data from the *Bundeswahlleiter* on real and notional SMD vote shares. After subsetting the dataset to candidates of parties that had representation at State level, candidates were assigned IDs corresponding to State legislator via text string matching.

The State legislator-Federal candidate matching proceeded as follows. In both the *Landtag membership* and *candidacies* datasets, names and surnames – excluding titles (Prof., Dr. etc.) and suffixes (von, van, zu) – were shortened to the first string of the name and the first string of the surname, standardising diacritics and other characters that may result in alternative spellings (*ss* for *ß*, *ae* for *ä* etc.). If a candidate and a legislator had the same name, surname and birth year, they were matched. I further recorded whether they matched across any of these combinations of variables: (1) name, surname and party, (2) surname, birth year, party and State, (3) name, birth year, party and State. These 'problem cases' were manually coded as matching or not matching by comparing a range of information available both in the legislators and in candidacies data: married/unmarried surnames, alternative name spellings, occupation, and biographical information on candidacies and Landtag membership in the text of the Wikipedia biography stored in the legislator dataset. Most of matches identified among these 'problem cases' are due to misspellings, alternative spellings, name changes or missing

birth year data in the legislator dataset. Out of 27,958 candidacies, 2,975 (10.6%) returned a match with entries in the *Landtag membership dataset.*

5.1.3 Parliamentary and Executive Position Datasets

The *executives* and *parliamentary leadership* datasets list individuals who, in each legislative term and for each Land, held positions of power respectively in the State government and in the State parliaments. The *executives* dataset includes cabinet ministers (*Minister/in*), while the *parliamentary leadership* dataset includes speakers of the Parliament (*Präsident/in*), deputy speakers (*Vizepräsident/in*), leaders of the parliamentary party (*Fraktionsvorsitzende/r*), chief whips (*Geschäftsführer/in*), deputy leaders of the parliamentary party (*Stellvertretende/r Fraktionsvorsitzende/r*), and chairs of standing committees (*Vorsitzende/r des Ausschusses*).

The *executives dataset* was compiled from official sources and Wikipedia directories on State government (*Landesregierung*) composition. The *parliamentary leadership dataset* integrates the one created by Heinsohn and Schiefer (2019), which includes information on those who held parliamentary positions of power in the 1990s and 2000s (corresponding to 4-to-6 legislative terms, depending on the State). Additional research was conducted to cover the period comprised between 1987 and 2021, drawing on data from State parliaments' handbooks, as well as parliamentary and party websites stored on the Wayback Machine internet archive. Ideally, one would wish to know the start and end dates of each post-holder's tenure in office, allowing to isolate post-holders at the time of each Federal election. This information is available for cabinet ministers, but not for parliamentary posts. In this case, both primary (e.g. handbooks) and secondary (the Heinsohn-Schiefer data) sources offer only a snapshot of the allocation of leadership positions at one point in time. Therefore, to maximise the accuracy of the information relative to sitting State legislators *at the time of Federal elections*, for the *parliamentary leadership dataset*, I collected data on post-holders using sources compiled *prior and as close as possible to* each of the ten Federal elections under consideration. Moreover, I updated some of the Heinsohn-Schiefer data to reflect leadership changes occurring over the course of the parliament. For some legislative terms, however, it was not possible to get such precise information, and the only feasible solution was to retain data on leadership posts collected years prior to the

relevant Federal election (provided that this information referred to the State legislative term coinciding with such election).

Entries in the two datasets were assigned IDs corresponding to State legislators using a text string matching technique similar to that outlined above for the matching of election candidates. In this case, post-holders were automatically assigned an ID corresponding to a legislator if they matched across name, surname, party, State and legislative term. Partial matches were dealt with manually with further research. The *executives* dataset contains 1,803 entries (minister-cabinet pairs), corresponding to 903 unique individuals in 134 cabinets: 81.7% of the entries were successfully matched with State legislator IDs. The *parliamentary leadership* dataset contains 4,950 entries (position-legislature pairs), corresponding to a total 2,590 unique individuals over 113 legislatures: 99.2% of the entries were successfully matched with State legislator IDs.[5] The parliamentary posts broke down across positions as follows: 131 speakers (2.6%), 344 deputy speakers (6.9%), 641 party leaders (12.9%), 1,473 deputy leaders (29.6%), 513 chief whips (10.4%) and 1,848 committee chairs (37.3%).

5.2   Methods

5.2.1   Electoral Security

The premise that list PR legislators face lower re-election prospects is first investigated descriptively by computing re-election and return rates for list PR and single-member district MPs across subgroups of interest (state, party, gender, seniority, age, term duration). Re-election rates refer to the percentage of MPs sitting in the legislature at the end of legislative term t who are re-elected at $t + 1$; return rates refer to the percentage of MPs sitting in the legislature at the end of t who sit in parliament at any point during $t + 1$. In essence, the distinction between re-election and return rate is that that the latter includes MPs who narrowly missed election via the list and enter the legislature as substitutes over the course of the term.[6] Reelection and return rates are clearly an imprecise indicator of aggregate-level electoral security: ideally,

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[5]The partial matching is mainly due to the fact that Hamburg and Bremen's Parliaments serve both as municipal councils and State legislatures. As the memberships of the two do not fully overlap, some leadership positions may have been held by politicians who are municipal councillors but not State legislators.

[6]The dataset also includes MPs who won their election and did not take up the mandate: these are coded as members from and until the date of the State election, so they are counted as re-elected but not as returned.

we would want to isolate rates of non-re-candidacy and failed re-candidacy. However, because complete State-level candidacy data are not available for most *Länder*, these are the the closest approximation of a measure of electoral security that can be inferred from the data.

Alongside a cross-tabulation of aggregate re-election and return rates, I present the results of logistic models where binary variables for both outcomes (*re-elected* and *returned*), measured at the legislator-legislature pair, are regressed on tier of election and covariates. I introduce fixed effects for State, party and their interaction, and cluster standard errors at the election level. Further Control variables include gender, term duration, election year, preferential vote in the PR tier[7], as well as linear and quadratic operationalisations of age and seniority (number of terms served in the State parliament). I also computed two variables recording the change in party share and number of seats (*Δ Seats*), to account for the fact that incumbent re-election will be more likely when their party gains seats, and control for either of them in alternative specifications of the model. Finally, I specify a model where pure PR elections are excluded, to isolate tier effects in mixed-member systems only.

5.2.2 Level-Hopping Attempts

Section 7 presents and discuss the results of empirical tests of the two hypotheses. To reduce the *Landtag membership dataset* to the population of potential level-hoppers, I proceeded as follows. For each of the ten Federal elections considered (1987-2021), I subsetted the data to only those legislators who, for each Federal election, (1) were sitting in State legislatures the day before the Federal election, and (2) belonged to parties that contested the elections. I then merged the ten sets of sitting legislators into single dataset, which therefore has as unit of analysis 'State legislator-Federal election pairs'.[8] The main dependent variable, capturing level-hopping attempts, is a *candidacy* dummy: it takes the value of 1 if a legislator's entry appears among candidates in the relevant Federal election, and 0 otherwise.

Moreover, I coded a categorical variable *candidacy quality*, which reflects perceived likelihood

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[7]The dummy variable takes the value of 1 for list PR legislators from Bavaria, Hamburg (post-2011) and Bremen (post-2011), who were elected under some type of open or flexible list system.

[8]The unit is distinct from the legislator-legislature pairs used in the *Landtag membership dataset*: a legislator-legislature pair may repeat in the new dataset if the State's legislative term coincides with two Federal election; conversely, legislator-legislature pairs may be dropped if the entire State legislative term falls in between two Federal election, or if an individual legislator had left the State parliament by the date of the Federal election

of successful level-hopping prior to the election and takes the values of 'Didn't Run', 'Ran in Secure Position' and 'Ran in Insecure Position'. To measure candidacy quality, I examined single-member seat characteristics and seat list position data in the *candidacies dataset.* Single-member seat candidacies are considered secure if the candidate's party won the seat in the previous election (or would have won, under redistricted seat boundaries). State list positions are considered secure if the list position assigned to the candidate is higher than or equal to the last position of the party's elected list candidates in the previous Federal election in a State. To account for dual candidacies across tiers, if either the State list position or the single-member seat are coded as safe, the overall *candidacy quality* takes the value 'Ran in Secure Position'; if neither is safe, the variable takes the value 'Ran in Insecure Position'. Using *Bundestag* membership data from the `LegislatoR` repository (Göbel and Munzert, 2021), I recorded whether the level-hopper took up the post in the Federal parliament in a *moved up* dummy variable, which in effect indicates whether the candidacy was successful.

Because likelihood of level-hopping may be related to the utility the legislator assigns to the current position (moving up to the Bundestag entails giving up the influence they wield in their current job), I also drew on the *executive* and *parliamentary leadership* datasets to code additional variables capturing legislators' power at State level. As discussed, data on position of power at State level have been collected to match as closely as possible the distribution of leadership posts at the time of each election. I coded an *executive position* dummy recording whether the legislator was also a cabinet member at election time, as well as a *party in State government* dummy recording whether the legislator's party was part of the State government majority at the time of election. Using data from the *parliamentary leadership dataset*, I coded two variables recording whether the State legislator held positions of power in the State parliamentary party (*party leadership*, including party leaders, deputy leaders and chief whips) or in the State parliament (*legislative position*, including speakers, deputy speakers and committee chairs). Moreover, I created a *Time to Next State Election* variable recording the expected remaining time a legislator can expect the current State legislative term will last after the Federal election: it stands to reason that the longer a legislator can benefit from their current position, the less attractive a Federal candidacy will appear. The variable, scaled as a decimal fraction

of years, is simply computed as the start of the State legislature date plus the legal duration of the State term (4 or 5 years, depending on the State) minus the date of the Federal election associated with each entry.

The empirical section starts by presenting a simple cross-tabulation of level-hopping attempt rates across subgroups, broken down by candidacy quality and candidacy success (table 4). I then proceed to test the hypotheses with multivariate regression analysis. To test hypothesis 1, I fit logistic binomial regressions where the probability of running for a Federal seat is modelled as a function of tier of election (list PR vs SMD) and covariates. These include the executive position, legislative position and party leadership dummies, preferential voting rule, gender, time until next State election, as well as linear and quadratic specifications of age and seniority. State, party and Federal election fixed effects are introduced, as well as State × Party and State × Federal Election interactions in alternative specifications of the model. Again, I subset the data to mixed-member system legislatures only in one model specification to account for possible differences in the behaviour of PR legislators in mixed-member and pure PR systems. To test hypothesis 2, I ran multinomial regression models where the categorical choice variable *candidacy quality* is regressed on the same independent variables as the binominal model. Heterodaskedasticity-robust standard errors are employed throughout.

6   Electoral Security

A key premise of the theoretical discussion is that legislators' tier of election mark a difference in their re-election prospects, as observed by Manow (2007) for the Bundestag and as it is generally found to be the case in mixed-member systems (Vowles, 2015; Centellas, 2013). The *Landtag membership dataset* allows to examine the plausibility of this assumption for German State parliaments, by comparing re-election and return rates after each State election for the two tiers. Table 2 shows the percentage of legislators sitting in the legislature at the end of a parliamentary term who (1) were re-elected in the following legislature (reelection rate) and (2) took up a seat over the course of the next legislature (return rate), grouped by tier of election for some subgroups of interest. Consistently with Heinsohn (2014), patterns of institutional variation suggest that more professionalised State legislatures and shorter effective

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Table 2: Re-election and return rates (sitting legislators at the end of term)

	Re-election Rates		Return Rates		Entries	
	List PR	SMD	List PR	SMD	List PR	SMD
State						
Brandenburg	50%	62%	55%	65%	302	227
Berlin	46%	66%	50%	67%	810	658
Baden-Württemberg	61%	72%	61%	73%	630	595
Bavaria	62%	75%	63%	76%	818	755
Bremen	60%	—	63%	—	824	—
Hessen	70%	77%	72%	79%	606	501
Hamburg	63%	—	66%	—	1437	—
Mecklenburg WP	50%	63%	55%	65%	233	190
Lower Saxony	55%	68%	59%	70%	554	721
NR Westphalia	49%	66%	57%	67%	670	1055
Rhineland Palatinate	63%	80%	66%	80%	551	255
Schleswig-Holstein	57%	70%	61%	72%	355	353
Saarland	66%	—	70%	—	409	—
Saxony	50%	69%	51%	71%	436	353
Saxony-Anhalt	55%	60%	57%	62%	417	308
Thuringia	52%	71%	58%	73%	289	241
Party						
CDU/CSU	61%	70%	65%	71%	2792	3813
SPD	62%	69%	65%	71%	3565	2114
Greens	53%	76%	56%	76%	1168	70
PDS/Die Linke	60%	66%	63%	69%	734	198
FDP	43%	—	45%	—	723	—
AfD	44%	38%	44%	38%	94	16
DVU/NPD/REP	23%	—	23%	—	115	—
Other Minor Parties	33%	—	33%	—	150	1
Gender						
Female	57%	70%	61%	72%	3089	1117
Male	58%	69%	61%	71%	6252	5095
Seniority						
1st term	56%	76%	60%	78%	4137	1944
2nd term	63%	74%	66%	75%	2185	1601
3st or 4th term	59%	65%	61%	66%	2177	1859
5th term or more	51%	55%	52%	56%	842	808
Age (end of term)						
< 40 years old	63%	82%	67%	84%	1368	431
40−50 years old	67%	82%	71%	84%	2804	1611
50−60 years old	61%	76%	64%	78%	3424	2567
≥ 60 years old	33%	42%	35%	43%	1697	1603
Term Duration						
< 3 years	66%	75%	70%	77%	1066	460
3−4 years	59%	72%	62%	73%	2583	1550
4−5 years	58%	68%	60%	70%	3381	2110
5 + years	53%	68%	57%	69%	2311	2092
Overall	**58%**	**69%**	**61%**	**71%**	**9341**	**6212**

Table 3: Logistic Regression Models (clustered s.e. at election level in parentheses)

	Dependent variable:					
	Re-elected			*Returned*		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Constant	−20.86**	−21.90***	−29.35***	−26.26***	−27.81***	−34.03***
	(9.13)	(6.89)	(7.08)	(9.25)	(7.23)	(7.27)
List PR	−0.81***	−0.79***	−0.81***	−0.65***	−0.63***	−0.64***
	(0.06)	(0.09)	(0.10)	(0.04)	(0.06)	(0.07)
Seniority	−0.05	−0.08	−0.03	−0.11*	−0.14**	−0.09
	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Seniority^2	0.0002	0.003	−0.01	0.005	0.01	−0.002
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Age	0.34***	0.34***	0.37***	0.34***	0.34***	0.36***
	(0.04)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.03)
Age^2	−0.004***	−0.004***	−0.004***	−0.004***	−0.004***	−0.004***
	(0.0004)	(0.0004)	(0.0003)	(0.0004)	(0.0004)	(0.0003)
Term Duration	−0.15**	−0.11	−0.03	−0.17**	−0.13*	−0.05
	(0.07)	(0.08)	(0.04)	(0.07)	(0.08)	(0.04)
Gender (Male)	0.06*	0.05*	0.08***	0.06*	0.06*	0.08***
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)
Election Year	0.01	0.01**	0.01***	0.01**	0.01***	0.01***
	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.004)
Preferential Vote	−0.11	−0.17	−0.13	−0.08	−0.14	−0.23
	(0.09)	(0.11)	(0.16)	(0.12)	(0.13)	(0.16)
Δ Seats (share)	5.15***			4.76***		
	(0.46)			(0.47)		
Δ Seats (number)		0.04***	0.04***		0.04***	0.04***
		(0.005)	(0.01)		(0.005)	(0.01)
Nagelkerke pseudo R^2	0.244	0.249	0.264	0.250	0.255	0.269
Observations	15505	15505	12876	15505	15505	12876
State F.E.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Party F.E.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
State × Party F.E.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Only Mixed-Member			✓			✓

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

term duration correspond to lower levels of personnel turnover. Overall, re-election and return rates of SMD legislators are respectively 11 and 10 percentage points higher than those of list PR MPs. Across states, parties, genders, seniority, age and term duration subgroups, for virtually all cases where the sample sizes are meaningfully large, being elected in a single-member district appears more likely to guarantee reelection and permanence in the legislature than being elected via the lists.

The multivariate regression results in table 3 essentially confirms this conclusion. Across models specifications of the sample (including or excluding pure PR legislatures) and of the party seat change controls, the log odds coefficients for tier of election are negative for both dependent variables. The average marginal effects for models 3 and 6 are respectively -0.15 and -0.12, implying that holding everything else constant list PR legislators are 15 percentage points less likely to be re-elected and 12 percentage points less likely to be returned to Parliament than single-member district MPs. Within the limitations of the measurement and of the modelling strategy, the estimates are highly significant. As expected, likelihood of permanence in the State legislature is negatively related to term duration and positively related to party change in number or share of seats.

7 Level-Hopping Attempts

Let us now turn to a descriptive analysis of State legislators' candidacies to the Federal level from the information contained in the *core dataset*. In total, 717 level-hopping attempts were identified - a number which confirms that the phenomenon of level-hopping is relatively rare, but not insignificant. On average, 4% of sitting State legislators run in any given Federal election, 3.1% of major parties' candidates in each Federal election are sitting State legislators (though with significant variation across parties and elections, as shown in figure 1). More importantly, State legislators tend to win seats relative to the average non-incumbent candidate. Level-hoppers make up a considerable share of each new cohort of members of the Bundestag: on average 11% of newly elected Federal legislators are legislators moving straight from the State parliaments over the period considered. Of the 717 level-hopping attempts, 511 sitting State legislators ran for Federal office only once, 72 twice, 18 three times and two did so four times

over the period considered: former Minister-President of Saarland Oskar Lafontaine (SPD, then Die Linke) and CDU member of the Hamburg Parliament Klaus Peter Hesse.

Figure 1: Descriptive Statistics: election trends in level-hopping by party.
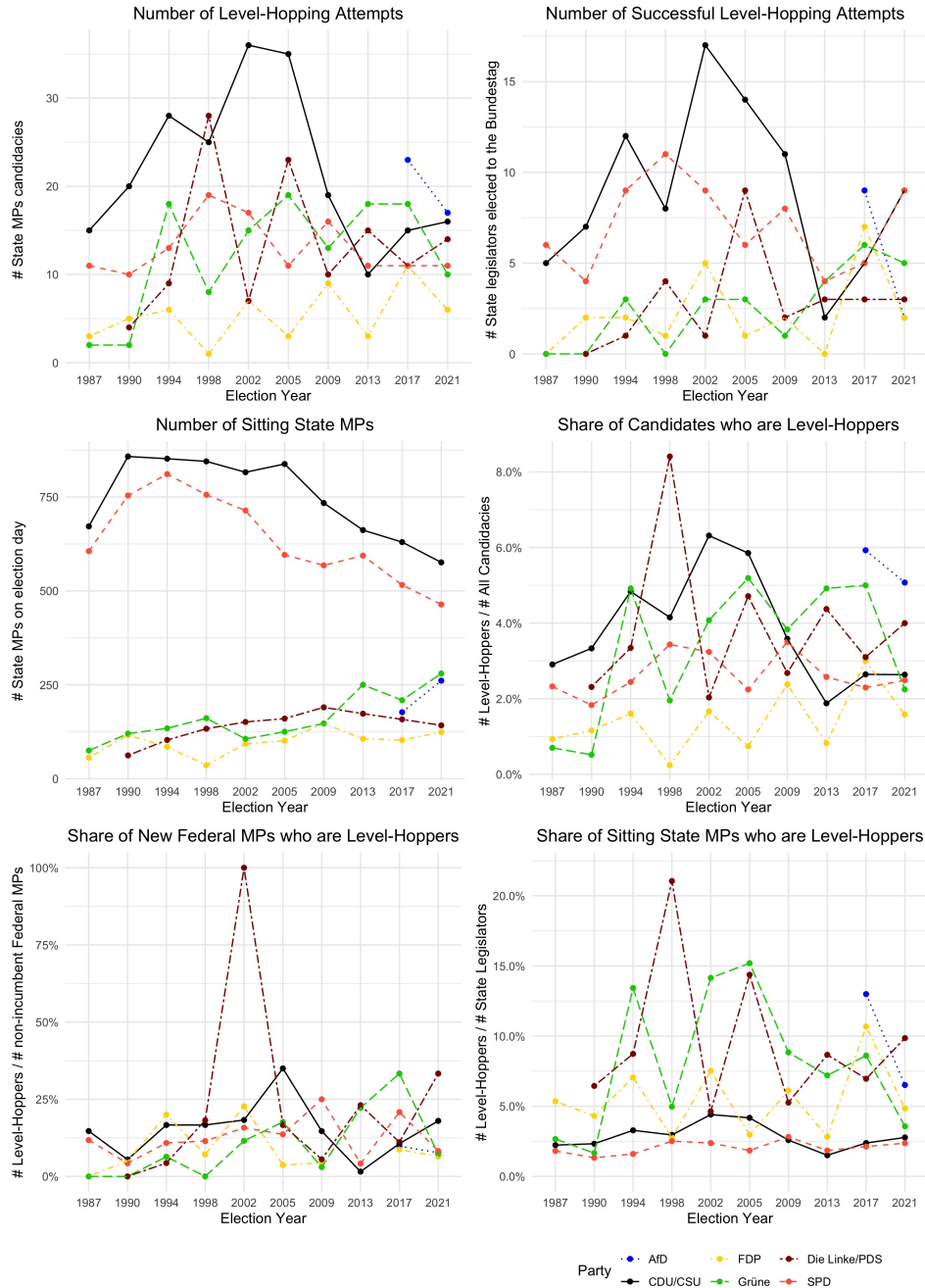
After excluding entries from legislatures for which either data on legislative posts[9] or infor-

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[9]These include State legislatures elected just before the Federal election, where committee assignments had not been realised – it is the case for example of the 17th Bavarian legislature, which was elected just one week before the 2013 Federal election.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics: Level-Hopping

	# Entries	Candidacies	% Insecure	% Secure	% Moved up
Electoral Tier					
SMD	6258	131 (2.1%)	42.0%	58.0%	54.2%
List PR (all states)	8060	495 (6.1%)	76.0%	24.0%	29.1%
List PR (Mixed only)	6134	327 (5.3%)	71.9%	28.1%	33.3%
State					
Brandenburg	606	28 (4.6%)	71.4%	28.6%	39.3%
Berlin	1107	113 (10.2%)	72.6%	27.4%	19.5%
Baden-Württemberg	1132	17 (1.5%)	52.9%	47.1%	47.1%
Bavaria	1343	19 (1.4%)	42.1%	57.9%	47.4%
Bremen	680	63 (9.3%)	85.7%	14.3%	15.9%
Hessen	1143	39 (3.4%)	56.4%	43.6%	46.2%
Hamburg	939	95 (10.1%)	85.3%	14.7%	20.0%
Mecklenburg WP	558	31 (5.6%)	83.9%	16.1%	25.8%
Lower Saxony	1220	27 (2.2%)	29.6%	70.4%	81.5%
NR Westphalia	1700	39 (2.3%)	38.5%	61.5%	71.8%
Rhineland Palatinate	808	24 (3.0%)	62.5%	37.5%	45.8%
Schleswig-Holstein	583	24 (4.1%)	62.5%	37.5%	41.7%
Saarland	307	10 (3.3%)	60.0%	40.0%	60.0%
Saxony	743	51 (6.9%)	72.5%	27.5%	35.3%
Saxony Anhalt	829	14 (1.7%)	64.3%	35.7%	42.9%
Thuringia	620	32 (5.2%)	75.0%	25%	28.1%
Party					
CDU/CSU	5629	178 (3.2%)	55.1%	44.9%	42.7%
SPD	4840	109 (2.3%)	45.0%	55.0%	53.2%
Greens	1371	116 (8.5%)	84.5%	15.5%	21.6%
PDS/Die Linke	1081	110 (10.2%)	83.6%	16.4%	21.8%
FDP	766	46 (6%)	69.6%	30.4%	45.7%
AfD	438	40 (9.1%)	87.5%	12.5%	27.5%
DVU/NPD/REP	77	24 (31.2%)	100%	0%	0%
Other Minor Party	116	3 (2.6%)	100%	0%	0%
Gender					
Female	4354	221 (5.1%)	75.1%	24.9%	32.1%
Male	9963	405 (4.1%)	65.4%	34.6%	35.6%
Government Status					
In Government	8246	250 (3%)	59.2%	40.8%	39.2%
In Opposition	6072	376 (6.2%)	75.3%	24.7%	31.1%
Office					
Executive Position	647	18 (2.8%)	11.1%	88.9%	72.2%
State Party Leadership	2282	163 (7.1%)	66.3%	33.7%	36.2%
Legislative Position	3132	165 (5.3%)	66.7%	33.3%	36.4%
None	9693	377 (3.9%)	72.1%	27.9%	31.6%
Seniority					
1st term	5373	230 (4.3%)	81.7%	18.3%	22.6%
2nd term	3746	169 (4.5%)	75.1%	24.9%	30.8%
3rd or 4th term	3779	171 (4.5%)	58.5%	41.5%	44.4%
5th term or more	1420	56 (3.9%)	28.6%	71.4%	62.5%
Age					
< 40 years old	2112	123 (5.8%)	86.2%	13.8%	17.9%
40-50 years old	4038	218 (5.4%)	68.3%	31.7%	36.2%
50-60 years old	5567	223 (4%)	59.6%	40.4%	43.5%
≥ 60 years old	2589	62 (2.4%)	69.4%	30.6%	27.4%
Overall	**14318**	**626 (4.4%)**	**68.8%**	**31.2%**	**39.1%**

mation on candidacy quality[10] were unavailable, the *core dataset* comprises 14,318 legislator-Federal election pairs, with 6,429 unique legislators from 106 distinct State legislatures. Of the 626 level-hopping attempts remaining, 31.2% (195) were in secure positions and 68.8% (431) in insecure positions; 12.7% (55) of candidates in insecure positions effectively moved up to the Bundestag, against 82.1% (160) of candidates in secure positions. Table 4 shows how entries, candidacies, candidacy quality and candidacy success break down by electoral tier, State, party, gender, government status, office held, seniority and age groups.

Table 4 shows patterns of variation in the frequency of level-hopping attempts as a share of sitting members of State parliaments, as well as in their breakdown across candidacy type. Consistently with the main hypotheses, list PR legislators are over twice as likely to run for Federal seats than single-member district ones, and their candidacies tend to be of lower quality. Level-hopping attempts are also particularly frequent among legislators from smaller states (Berlin, Hamburg, Bremen) and from opposition parties at the State level, which chimes with the intuition that less valuable posts are associated with stronger temptations for level-hopping. MPs from smaller parties (Greens, the Left, the AfD and – particularly – the smaller radical right parties) are more likely to run than CDU/CSU and SPD members of parliaments. An interesting pattern emerges from the breakdown of candidacies by type of office held by members of parliament in addition to their legislative seat: those with an executive post (cabinet ministers) are somewhat less likely to run than simple backbenchers, while those with a post of influence in the parliamentary party (leaders and deputy leaders) do so more frequently. However, members of the State executive running for Federal office are especially likely to do so in secure positions, while leaders in the party have only slightly above-average levels of candidacy security. The observed frequency of level-hopping attempts decreases with age and – to a lesser extent – with seniority, though the security of the candidacies these legislators obtain is generally increasing in the same variables.

Table 5 presents the regression output for a series of binomial logit models aimed at gauging the change in probability of attempting level-hopping associated with legislators' tier of election.

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[10]These include, for instance, legislators from Eastern States sitting in the first session of the State parliament following reunification in 1990, for which *candidacy quality* could obviously not be coded due to the absence of information on party performance in the previous election.

Table 5: Logistic Regression Models (heteroskedasticity-robust s.e. in parentheses)

	Dependent variable:		
	Candidacy (1 = Ran for Federal Election)		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Constant	−4.35*** (1.13)	−3.45*** (1.26)	−5.23*** (1.37)
List PR	0.48*** (0.13)	0.35** (0.14)	0.52*** (0.13)
Executive Position	0.30 (0.26)	0.33 (0.27)	0.30 (0.26)
Legislative Position	0.01 (0.11)	0.01 (0.11)	−0.01 (0.11)
State Party Leadership	0.23** (0.11)	0.23** (0.12)	0.23** (0.11)
Party in State Govt.	−0.30*** (0.10)	−0.23** (0.11)	−0.26** (0.11)
Age	0.12*** (0.04)	0.12*** (0.04)	0.12*** (0.04)
Age^2	−0.001*** (0.0004)	−0.002*** (0.0004)	−0.001*** (0.0004)
Seniority	0.38*** (0.09)	0.38*** (0.09)	0.41*** (0.09)
Seniority^2	−0.03** (0.01)	−0.03** (0.01)	−0.03*** (0.01)
Preferential Vote	0.14 (0.19)	0.16 (0.22)	0.15 (0.20)
Time to Next State Election	−0.15*** (0.04)	−0.14*** (0.04)	−0.14*** (0.04)
Male	−0.06 (0.10)	−0.07 (0.10)	−0.05 (0.10)
Nagelkerke pseudo R^2	0.157	0.183	0.174
Observations	14305	14305	14305
State, Party, Election FE	✓	✓	✓
State × Party FE		✓	
Party × Election FE			✓
Only Mixed-Member			

	(4)	(5)	(6)
Constant	−5.46*** (1.40)	−4.79*** (1.52)	−6.80*** (1.64)
List PR	0.41*** (0.13)	0.34** (0.15)	0.47*** (0.14)
Executive Position	0.19 (0.28)	0.22 (0.29)	0.16 (0.28)
Legislative Position	0.003 (0.13)	−0.005 (0.13)	−0.02 (0.13)
State Party Leadership	0.11 (0.13)	0.11 (0.14)	0.10 (0.13)
Party in State Govt.	−0.42*** (0.12)	−0.37*** (0.14)	−0.31** (0.13)
Age	0.16*** (0.05)	0.18*** (0.05)	0.17*** (0.05)
Age^2	−0.002*** (0.001)	−0.002*** (0.001)	−0.002*** (0.001)
Seniority	0.37*** (0.12)	0.32*** (0.12)	0.40*** (0.12)
Seniority^2	−0.02 (0.02)	−0.01 (0.02)	−0.02 (0.02)
Preferential Vote	−0.03 (0.52)	0.37 (0.75)	0.05 (0.55)
Time to Next State Election	−0.17*** (0.04)	−0.16*** (0.04)	−0.15*** (0.04)
Male	0.05 (0.11)	0.05 (0.12)	0.05 (0.11)
Nagelkerke pseudo R^2	0.160	0.187	0.182
Observations	12387	12387	12387
State, Party, Election FE	✓	✓	✓
State × Party FE		✓	
Party × Election FE			✓
Only Mixed-Member	✓	✓	✓

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

The coefficient for List PR tier of election is positive and strongly significant across alternative specifications of the fixed-effect variables and of the sample, with average marginal effects ranging from a 1.1 percentage point increase (model 5) to a 1.8 percentage point increase (model 3), which are substantial for an event that interests only 4.4% of the observations. These results provide evidence in favour of hypothesis 1. Being in opposition at State level remains predictive of level-hopping attempts net of other variables, as observed in the table 4. Positions of power in the executive, state party and the legislature are not consistently associated with the outcome variable. This suggests that holding a position of power at State level may be to some extent counterbalanced by the fact that politicians with ties to the leadership are better positioned to obtain high-quality candidacies. As expected, legislators are more likely to run for a Federal election the closer it falls relative to the next scheduled State election. No significant effects of preferential voting rules or gender emerge from the analysis. Likelihood of level-hopping attempt peaks at 40 years of age, and increases with with the number of legislative terms served in the State Parliament roughly linearly for most of the values of the seniority variable observed.

Hypothesis 2 is tested by substituting a categorical variable taking the values 'Didn't Run', 'Ran in Secure Position' and 'Ran in Insecure Position' to the binary outcome variable in the models 1 and 4 of Table 5.[11] The regression coefficients in the multinomial model of table 6 show therefore the change associated with each independent variable in the log-odds of running in a Secure or Insecure position relative to the referent level 'Didn't Run'. Although subdividing what is already a rare event into categories with quite low cell count comes at the cost of statistical power, in both model specifications, list PR tier increases significantly the probability of running for an insecure position. This does not seem to be the case for the probability of running for a secure position, although the point estimates are also positive. In the full sample model, list PR increases the average probability of an insecure candidacy by 1.8 percentage points and of a secure candidacy by 0.4 percentage points; in the mixed-member system only model, the average marginal effects are respectively 1.12 and 0.37 percentage points. The difference between the two estimates is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level for the full-sample model, but not for the mixed-member only model. Hypothesis 2 is therefore

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[11]State, Party and Election interactions could not be added due to issues of collinearity.

Table 6: Multinomial Regression Models (heteroskedasticity-robust s.e. in parentheses)

	Insecure	*Secure*	*Insecure*	*Secure*
	Dependent variable:			
	Candidacy Type (Ref.: *Didn't Run*)			
	(1)		(2)	
Constant	-3.01^{**}	-14.21^{***}	-3.95^{***}	-12.80^{***}
	(1.22)	(3.29)	(1.51)	(3.45)
List PR	0.80^{***}	0.31	0.60^{***}	0.28
	(0.18)	(0.19)	(0.19)	(0.19)
Executive Position	-1.04	0.54^{*}	-0.89	0.46
	(0.72)	(0.30)	(0.73)	(0.32)
Legislative Position	0.01	-0.03	0.02	-0.05
	(0.13)	(0.18)	(0.16)	(0.20)
State Party Leadership	0.13	0.42^{**}	-0.08	0.38^{*}
	(0.14)	(0.18)	(0.17)	(0.20)
Party in State Govt.	-0.33^{***}	-0.15	-0.48^{***}	-0.23
	(0.12)	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.18)
Age	0.07^{*}	0.37^{***}	0.11^{*}	0.33^{***}
	(0.04)	(0.11)	(0.05)	(0.12)
Age^2	-0.001^{**}	-0.004^{***}	-0.001^{**}	-0.004^{***}
	(0.0005)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Seniority	0.41^{**}	0.59^{***}	0.63^{**}	0.52^{***}
	(0.17)	(0.15)	(0.28)	(0.17)
Seniority^2	-0.06^{**}	-0.03	-0.09^{*}	-0.01
	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.05)	(0.02)
Preferential Vote	0.08	0.46	0.40	0.22
	(0.23)	(0.38)	(1.08)	(0.65)
Time to Next State Election	-0.08^{*}	-0.24^{***}	-0.10^{*}	-0.25^{***}
	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.05)	(0.06)
Male	-0.11	0.04	0.11	-0.07
	(0.12)	(0.17)	(0.14)	(0.18)
Observations	14305		12387	
McFadden's R^2	0.163		0.172	
State, Election, Party FE	✓		✓	
Only Mixed-Member			✓	

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

supported, although the evidence for it is somewhat weaker than for hypothesis 1: list PR legislators are clearly more likely than SMD MPs to run for the Bundestag in insecure candidacy positions; the effect of list PR tier of election on likelihood to run in secure position is – as expected – small and non-significant, but still positive. It is also interesting to note how leadership roles predict differently level-hopping across candidacy type. Party leadership and executive office are positive predictors of a secure candidacy, but the effect on the probability of an insecure candidacy is inconsistent in its direction and non-significant. This suggests that, while overall ministers and members of the State party leadership are neither more nor less likely to run for Federal office than other legislators (table 5), *when they do* they are more likely to obtain secure positions. Whether we consider age or seniority, probability of level-hopping attempts peaks later on in a legislator's career with respects to secure candidacies than insecure candidacies.

8   Conclusion

The paper presents observational evidence for a relationship between electoral institutions and a previously overlooked aspect of legislator behaviour: level-hopping attempts. The analysis conducted on a novel dataset of members of German State legislatures – an interesting case of within-case variation in electoral rules – suggests that, although overall relatively rare, these occurrences are more frequent among list PR than SMD legislators. The finding is consistent with the theoretical argument that list PR mandates make legislators' position more insecure, but also less accountable. Moreover, there is some tentative evidence that the divide in behaviour across electoral tiers is somewhat more pronounced when legislators obtain insecure candidacies than when they can have strong priors about upwards career progression. Upward movement of political personnel seems therefore in part driven by a logic of necessity and survival: legislators facing electoral risks must seize a level-hopping opportunity when it presents itself, whereas for more established legislators it is often not worth the risk to forsake a secure post.

As a first stab at the puzzle of electoral system effects on progressive ambition, this study suffers from two key limitations. First, the research design does not distinguish whether the relationship between electoral tier and legislator behaviour is due to selection or incentive ef-

fects: it might be the case that politicians who take up a SMD seat are less attracted to a Federal career than those who enter the Landtag via the lists to begin with. The results of the analysis of 'secure' and 'insecure' candidacies partly assuage these concerns: when offered secure candidacies, the difference in behaviour between the two types of MPs is smaller. This suggests that the more they discount the prospect of retaining their 'type' of seat in the future, the more the likelihood of progressively ambitious behaviour converges. However, it remains impossible to fully disentangle whether the different electoral tiers attract different types of ambitions or whether they provide legislators that are (on average) equally ambitious with different incentive structures to behave on those ambitions.

A second limitation is the unavailability of complete candidacy data for State elections, which make it impossible to isolate dual candidacies and therefore to distinguish how much of the relationship between tier of election and level-hopping behaviour is due to 'constituency commitment' or 'electoral security' mechanisms. Due to German privacy laws, for most States we can only know the district of MPs elected via the districts and the list position of MPs elected via the lists, while candidacies that did not result in an election are expunged from electoral records. Therefore, it is not possible to know from publicly released data whether an SMD legislator held a list position (and how safe such position was), or if a list PR legislator also ran for a single-member district. Further data collection from primary sources may allow, in future research, to address this issue for a sufficient number of State legislatures. Once dual candidacy data is available, it will be possible derive a continuous 'electoral security' variable as a function of probability of re-election in the district and probability of re-election via the lists, along the lines of Stoffel's (2014) 'unified scale of electoral incentives'. If, controlling for such an index, there were still a difference in level-hopping probability across tiers, this could be attributed to a real divide in how list PR and SMD legislators interpret their mandate; otherwise, one might conclude that level-hopping attempts are a common response of all 'types' of MP to electoral insecurity, and list PR legislators just happen to be more at risk.

Nonetheless, the paper's findings advance our understanding of the role electoral institutions play beyond and below the commonly studied level of national politics. To the extent that the findings may be generalised beyond the institutional environment of mixed-member systems,

the implication of the argument presented is that sub-national electoral institutions constrain or enable progressive ambition by varying the competitiveness and accountability of an electoral mandate. Institutions like single-member districts, which grant legislators a strong incumbency advantage as long as they display constituency-oriented behaviour, will therefore reduce MPs' temptation to give up their mandate for careerist goals. Institutional settings that attenuate MPs' control over their career progression chances, as we observe in closed-list PR systems, on the contrary will enable progressive ambitions.

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