

**Working Paper: Pathways to the Political Elite:
Career Trajectories of Danish Ministerial Advisors ***

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*Early draft for DPSA 2024. The paper is part of my wider PhD project on careers of policy professionals and revolving door lobbyism. Final project description have yet to be formulated. I would therefore be interested in receiving comments not only on this paper, but also on the different avenues i can pursue in my wider project. Looking forward to hear your comments

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ABSTRACT

Ministerial advisors are a unique category of government employees because the serving minister politically appoints them. Their unique role in modern-day politics raises several questions about the legitimacy and privileged access to power. Yet, very little research has been conducted on this elite group and their backgrounds. Utilizing sequence analysis on a novel dataset containing career information on 149 current and former ministerial advisors appointed between 2001 and 2024, I identify seven unique career pathways. The analysis reveals that political parties are central in the formation of the political elites. Furthermore, whilst the number of advisors with a background in businesses and business associations is constant over time and across governments, fewer advisors have backgrounds in media whilst only left-wing governments employ advisors with career backgrounds in labour unions. Finally, I show that the position of ministerial advisor is used as a stepping stone for private sector employment. Similar findings have been made for Danish ministers and permanent state secretaries but have not yet been described in such detail for the ministerial advisors.

Keywords: Ministerial advisors, political elites, sequence analysis

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INTRODUCTION

Ministerial advisors work at the nexus between politics and the bureaucracy. Although their specific tasks and employment types vary between national contexts and over time, a ministerial advisor can be defined as a *'person appointed to serve an individual minister, recruited on political criteria, in a position that is temporary'* (Hustedt et al., 2017: 300). In the academic literature, ministerial advisors are seen as vital political actors that play an indirect coordinating role, connecting the minister with the wider field of political actors, including but not restricted to other ministries, party members, and stakeholders such as unions or business organizations (Blach-Ørsten et al., 2020; Hustedt et al., 2017; Shaw and Eichbaum, 2015).

Ministerial advisors are important to study for three reasons. First, because they are part of a political elite and hold potentially significant levels of power, especially considering their unique position as neither parliamentary elected nor politically neutral civil servants appointed based on bureaucratic merit. Second, the wide-spread use of ministerial advisors in otherwise politically neutral bureaucracies, can be linked to increased levels of functional politicization of the bureaucracy. The emergence of ministerial advisors can thus be linked with civil servants' perception of policy advisors as a threat to political neutrality (Öhberg et al., 2016). Third, ministerial advisors act as gatekeepers to the policy-process and open the door for specific interests and close it for others, thus compromising the process of policy formulation (Tiernan, 2007). Considering their unique roles in contemporary politics as well as their prevalence in public discourse, the literature research on ministerial advisors is quite underdeveloped. This paper is an attempt to further develop the literature on the careers of ministerial advisors. I do so by asking: *"What are the patterns in ministerial advisors' careers before and after leaving office"*

The research questions have to parts. Firstly, I am interested in describing the careers of ministerial advisors before they take office. To answer this question i have assembled a novel dataset

covering 178 (out of 200) ministerial advisors appointed in Denmark between 2001 and September 2024. Building upon former work on the careers of Danish parliamentarians (Binderkrantz et al., 2020) and permanent secretaries (Trangbæk, 2022), I use sequence analysis and an optimal matching algorithm to cluster similar career pathways leading to the appointment as ministerial advisor. I identify seven distinct career clusters: *partysoldiers*, *PA professionals*, *journalists*, *unionists*, *interest group staffers*, *civil servants* and *business-people*. These clusters represent the 7 ‘ideal-typical’ career pathways of Danish ministerial advisors. I find that partysoldiers (career backgrounds primarily within political parties) and journalists (career backgrounds in the media industry) are the most common career pathways among the advisors. But whilst the share of partysoldiers has remained stable across all election cycles, fewer journalists are appointed over time, with the exception of the recent government appointed in 2022. Furthermore, an increasing share of advisors are recruited in the pool of ‘policy professionals’ (Selling and Svallfors, 2019) working in policy related jobs elsewhere, such as the civil service, interest organizations and public affairs firms. The findings indicate, that the pre-office careers of ministerial advisors are heterogeneous, but cannot be understood without reference to the expanding policy labor market that characterize modern day politics and lobbying.

Secondly, I am interested in uncovering the post-office careers of ministerial advisors. Building upon previous work on post-office careers of special advisers (Orchard et al., 2024; Askim et al., 2021; Blach-Ørsten et al., 2020; Sellers, 2016a; Selling and Svallfors, 2019), the revolving door for political staff in the US (Strickland, 2020; Blanes i Vidal et al., 2012; McCrain, 2018; LaPira and Thomas, 2017; Eggers, 2010) and how policy professionals offer ‘politics for hire’ (Svallfors et al., 2020), I record the jobs that advisors hold immediately after leaving office. The data shows that the ministerial advisor position acts as a stepping-stone for private-sector employment. Thus, 57% of advisors find jobs in the private sector immediately after leaving government offices, mostly in public-affairs agencies or private business firms and associations. Previous research has shown that Danish MP’s and state secretaries also utilize their positions as stepping stones to private-sector employment (Trangbæk, 2022; Rasmussen et al., 2021). This paper’s contribution lies in

uncovering, in detail, how this pattern also characterizes the career transitions of Danish ministerial advisors.

Why Do the Careers of Ministerial Advisors Matter?

Early academic inquiries into ministerial advisers include Blick (2004), who characterizes UK special advisers as the “people who live in the dark”. Whilst this characterization is deduced from the tendency of advisers to avoid the public eye, it can also be seen as an analogy of the underdeveloped academic literature on the subject at his time of writing. Nonetheless, researchers have spent the last decade shedding light on this particular part of the political elite (Maley, 2023; Shaw and Eichbaum, 2015).

I follow the notion from Svallfors (2017) that ministerial advisers can be described as ‘*policy professionals*’ – a new group of policy workers whose organizational field spans jobs in ministers’ offices, political parties, the private sector, think tanks and public affairs agencies. In general, the policy professionals are all hired to influence political processes, advocate policy and give political advice. Their profession is simply politics and they bring their network and knowledge to the job: they “*know the game*” (Svallfors, 2017: 40). The authors highlight three skills that characterize policy professionals in the labor market (Selling and Svallfors, 2019: 988f)

- Framing problems (Using research and other sources to frame social and political problems in advantageous ways)
- Knowing the game (First-hand knowledge of how the political decision-making machinery works)
- Accessing information (knowing whom to contact for fast and reliable information)

The proposed skills are broadly representative of the characteristics presented in other strands of literature, for instance Defillippi and Arthur (1994) highlights the know-how, know-why and know-whom competencies acquired through so-called ‘*boundaryless careers*’. The notion of ‘*boundaryless*’, implies high levels of flexibility, individual ambition and accumulation of competencies through frequent shifts in employment (Blach-Ørsten et al., 2020). The widespread use of ministerial advisers should therefore not only be viewed as an administrative phenomenon. Instead, it is fruitful to view the ministerial advisers in relation to the rapidly expanding labor market in the lobbying and communications sector (Maley, 2023).

It is therefore no wonder that researchers have linked the careers of ministerial advisors with questions regarding the presence of a revolving door or the use of public-office as a stepping stone (Maley, 2023). These questions highlight the possibility that actors in the political elite serves the interest of future employers or that some lobbyist groups gain an unfair advantage through the recruitment of actors in the political elite (Shepherd and You, 2020; Blanes i Vidal et al., 2012; Egerod, 2021). In the wider literature, scholarly attention has therefore been directed towards the post-politics careers other actors at the summit of the political system, namely MP's, Ministers and top-level bureaucrats (Binderkrantz et al., 2023; Trangbæk, 2022; Rasmussen et al., 2021; Claveria and Verge, 2015). Binderkrantz et al. (2023) argue that there are limits to elite career similarity across elite positions due to the varying recruitment criteria and the type of reputational cargo carried by different actors in the political elite. Reputational cargo, defined as "*the political brand carried by especially elected positions in politics or civil society*" (Binderkrantz et al., 2023: 4), sheds light on the varying degrees of mobility across elite positions. Thus, reputations can function as relevant political ballast in some transfers, but if actors attempt to transfer into organizations with opposing political brands or politically neutral sectors, reputational cargo "may also be an unwanted load hindering transfer into elite positions" (Binderkrantz et al., 2023: 4).

Askim et al. (2021) note that ministerial advisors have a better opportunity structure compared to MP's and ministers. This is due to their relatively young age when leaving office and that they, to a lesser extent than politicians, have "nailed their political colors to the mast" (Askim et al., 2021: 541). In that sense, ministerial advisors can be expected to carry less reputational cargo and more easily transfer between various sectors and organizations. In that sense "living in the dark" might be a beneficial strategy for ministerial advisors who seek to use public office as a stepping stone for employment, for instance in the private sector. Theoretically, this underlines the importance of studying the careers of ministerial advisors, because the theoretical assumption of varying degrees of career mobility makes it probable, that ministerial advisors are some of the most mobile actors in the political elite. In the Danish case, this notion is reinforced by the fixed-term contracts and political recruitment criteria of Danish ministerial advisors, for example that advisors

are not recruited on the background of bureaucratic merit.

Research on Danish ministerial advisors has primarily focussed on their role in government coordination. Öhberg et al. (2016) thus show how the increased politicized recruitment correlates with civil servants' perception of policy advisors as threatening political neutrality. Comparing politically chosen employees in Sweden and Denmark, Hustedt et al. (2017) argue that the indirect control possessed by the Danish ministerial advisors reproduces the functional politicization of the bureaucracy in the shadows. In the only study on the career backgrounds of Danish ministerial advisers, Blach-Ørsten et al. (2020) argue that ministerial advisors are a part of an emerging group of partisan policy professionals characterized best as having 'boundaryless careers'. Furthermore, the researchers show that the job of ministerial advisor functions as a stepping stone to employment in private sector PR. Ministerial advisors are thus able to 'cash in' on their experience in the political elite by crossing the border between government affairs and the lobbying industry, a feature also found in studies of Norwegian and UK ministerial advisors (Askim et al., 2021; Sellers, 2016b; Orchard et al., 2023). This article adds to the insights of Blach-Ørsten et al. (2020). Firstly by expanding the data to include advisors appointed between 2017 and 2023 and by treating the data at a more granular level. This implies expanding the employment categories to distinguish different types of private sector employment, employment in labour unions and third sector organizations. With the use of sequence analysis, I am also able to more finely analyze individual career paths than Blach-Ørsten et al. (2020). I will elaborate this in the following section.

Research Setting

Ministerial advisors were first introduced as a formal employment category in Denmark in 1998 following a series of parliamentary debates on the political neutrality of top civil servants. In the description of the position, it was noted that the advisors' main task was to facilitate the ministers' contact with journalists and media (Ministry of Finance, 2013). Although all government ministers were able to appoint advisors, the use of ministerial advisors grew slowly until the use of advisors became widespread in the late 2000's. Ministers are only allowed one advisor with the exception of

ministers with heavy workloads and/or special government coordination roles. 8 of the 25 current ministers have more than one ministerial advisor, with the maximum of 4 serving the Minister of Finance.

The observations covers ministerial advisors appointed across 7 elections periods between 2001 and 2024. In this period, four prime ministers have served and 7 political parties have participated in government coalitions. With the exception of the current government appointed in 2022, governments have alternated between center-left and center-right coalitions, with various participating parties. The current centrist government is formed by a coalitions between the two traditional government-leading parties, the Social Democratic party (Socialdemokratiet) and the Liberal Party (Venstre) together with the centrist party *Moderaterne*, formed by former PM Lars Løkke Rasmussen.

DATA AND METHODS

In the wider literature, elite groups are studied using a vast array of both quantitative, qualitative, and mixed research methods. What many of these approaches have in common is the idea of creating an elite ‘prosopography’ - a type of collective biography of a given elite group (Maley, 2023; Lunding et al., 2020). This perspective is also guiding my approach to answering the research question. In the case of Danish ministerial advisors, the prosopography approach allows for the deduction of general observations about the elite group that move beyond basic description of their individual careers. One way to do this is to develop specific typologies or ‘ideal-typical’ career pathways to the political elite. These typologies can then be used to describe the changes in this elite group over time and in relation to factors such as the political orientation of government. The typologies identify the common attributes of the group and the career steps leading to them attaining positions in the political elite. To develop these typologies, I will utilize sequence analysis on a biographical dataset, an approach that has been widely applied to studies on career backgrounds in elite groups (Araujo, 2017; Binderkrantz et al., 2020; Bühlmann, 2008; Koch et al., 2017; Lunding et al., 2020; Stovel et al., 1996; Trangbæk, 2022).

Dataset

Identifying the Ministerial advisors. To construct the dataset, I needed to acquire a full list of every ministerial advisor since 2001. The Danish Agency for Public Finance and Management (Økonomistyrelsen) have kept records of all ministerial advisors appointed since October 2013 (see Økonomistyrelsen, 2022). They keep an updated list of current ministerial advisors on their webpage and provided me with the full list of former advisors upon request. However, it proved more difficult to gain access to records of ministerial advisors before 2013. For this data, I have relied on the help from Blach- Ørsten et al. (2020), who helped supply me with the list of ministerial advisors used in their analysis (covering all ministerial advisors appointed before 2017). Because no central register was kept before 2013, their list was compiled by submitting a request for documents at ministries and later cross-referenced with an internal list from the Ministry of

Finance (Blach-Ørsten et al., 2020: 306). By compiling the two data sources, I identified 200 ministerial advisors between the 2001 Anders Fogh Rasmussen Government and the current Mette Frederiksen Government (data collection stopped on September 1st 2024). Once the advisors were identified, individual career data was obtained from their profiles on publicly available professional network sites (LinkedIn) and supplied with data from newspaper reports and the websites of their ministries. In general, LinkedIn provided the largest share of data. Still, whenever data was unavailable, I turned to Altinget.dk, a Danish digital media platform that covers Danish politics and holds resumes on many ministerial advisors. Unfortunately, Altinget.dk's data proved less useful since it did not hold employment start and end dates. Nonetheless, their records were still helpful in terms of cross-referencing the data I collected on LinkedIn. I only collected data on the full-time jobs reported. This means that board positions, part-time jobs or other occupations are not included in the dataset. Due to lacking and insufficient data, 22 ministerial advisors had to be excluded from the analysis, resulting in the final $n=178$ (11% missing). The missing advisors and the data collection strategy cause two concerns: The analysis risk distortion due to (1) systematic patterns in the 23 advisors left out of the analysis and (2) distorted data due to the self-reporting of career experience (especially on LinkedIn). Of all governments in the 2001-2024 period, only the 2011-2015 Helle Thorning-Schmidt has a larger share of missing observations (15.8% missing). This is due to the low coverage of the former ministerial advisors for the Socialist People's Party (SF) ministers. For the total 14 SF ministerial advisors in the period, data is only available for 9 of them. This, of course, distorts the findings regarding SF but has no further impact on the analysis. Furthermore, there is no indication of systematic patterns in the ministries from which advisor data is missing. It is harder to estimate the consequences of the use of self-reported data. Whenever possible, I have cross-checked data with public records and newspaper articles. Still, for most advisors, little public information exists besides newspaper articles posted about them while in office. To account for coding reliability, 10% of the sample was recoded by to other coders. The reliability test showed a discrepancy of only 5%, indicating a high degree of inter-coder reliability.

Only a few top-level ministers appointed advisors when ministerial advisors were first

introduced. In the last decade, the appointment of ministerial advisors has become common across all ministries, and high-level ministers often appoint two or even three advisors (Økonomistyrelsen, 2022). This results in a low N (=13) in the first election cycles of the sample, whilst more recent election cycles have more than 30 advisors. Though this is not a case of missing data, the difference in N over time affects the results because individual observations become more influential when N is lower.

Coding career backgrounds. To construct the career sequences of the ministerial advisors, I coded each employment spell prior to appointment as ministerial advisor by the start and end year and assigned a state to the spell. The career states are reported in table 1. The business, civil service, business association, politics and union career states are roughly derived from Lunding et al. (2019). They correspond to the dominant sectors found in the analysis of the Danish power elite (Ellersgaard et al., 2019) and the fields of power described by Bourdieu (1996) - with the important exception that no advisor had a background in the field of science and education. That state was therefore dropped. Furthermore, Blach-Ørsten et al. (2020) find that many ministerial advisors have employment backgrounds in media and public affairs firms. Because of the prevalence of these career backgrounds, I also include them in the analysis as separate states to provide a more detailed analysis. Especially the media sector, often portrayed as the *quatrième pouvoir* (fourth estate of power), holds relevance for this analysis because of its centrality in the formation of public opinion. I also included a state for employment in the third sector which was not included in any of the above states

In a meta dataset, I collected data on the specific places of employment and the subsectors to allow for a finer decomposition of the career states later in the analysis. The meta dataset also holds background variables reported in table 2

Identifying the Career Typologies of Ministerial Advisors

Originally introduced to the social sciences by Abbott and Hrycak (1990), sequence analysis is a quantitative method that allows for the analysis of arrays of categorical data and the clustering of

Table 1: Coding career states

Sector	Code	Description
Business	B	Employment in business firms, financial corporation, and other private sector firms
Business Association	BA	Employment in business or employer organization
Civil Service	CS	Employment un the civil service (national, regional, and municipal) including courts, army and police
Media	M	Employment in media, including freelance work
Party	P	Employment in political parties, including European Parliament groups
Public Affairs	PA	Employment in Public Affairs or Public Relations firms
Third Sector	T	Employment in third sector, including charities, NGO's and think-tanks
Union	U	Employment in labour unions

these arrays by their resemblance using an optimal matching (OM) algorithm. Sequence analysis is an inherently descriptive methodology used to organize and typologize observations and prepare the data for further analysis. In the case of studying careers, the sequence represents the career trajectory consisting of an array of observations of different career states. Each career state resembles a year of employment in a sector. The career sequences are analyzed using the R package TraMineR (Gabadinho et al., 2022) which allows for the analysis and exploration of sequence data. Having defined and coded the career states of every individual in the dataset, a good measure of the distance between the sequences is needed to group and typologize the sequences in the dataset. This is done by applying an Optimal Matching (OM) algorithm (Abbott and Hrycak, 1990; Macindoe and Abbot, 2004). Although other matching techniques also exist and could be applied to the sequences, I have chosen the OM algorithm because of its widespread use in political science (for a review of matching techniques, see Liao et al. (2022), for uses in political science, see Binderkrantz et al. (2023); Binderkrantz (2020); Blair-Loy (1999); Trangbæk (2022)).

Rather than measuring distance by the share of common attributes or state distributions, the OM distance can be defined as an ‘edit-distance’ (Studer and Ritschard, 2016). This is because the distance between the sequences is measured as the cost of transforming one sequence into another by either replacement, deletion or insertion (indel) of states (Abbot and Tsay, 2000). The distance between two sequences is thus a function of “the minimum number of these elementary operations

Table 2: Background variables

Variable	Values	Description
ID	Numerical	Individual ID ascribed to each MA
Degree	Categorical	Type of tertiary Degree (MSc level)
University	Categorical	Name of the university
Birth	Numerical	Year of birth
Female	Binary	1=female, 0=male
Age first	Numerical	Age at first MA job
Big 4	Binary	MA in Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Party	Categorical	Party of the minister they advised
Left-wing	Binary	1= Appointed in left-wing government (Parties: S, SF, R)
Cycle	Ordinal	Election cycle of first employment (2001=1, 2005=2, 2007=3, 2011=4, 2015=5, 2019=6, 2022=7)
More periods	Binary	1=MA in more than one cycle

required to accomplish this transformation” (Macindoe and Abbot, 2004: 4). The distance is affected by the cost assignment of the different operations. Having no prior experience with the relative similarity of the different sectors included in my analysis, I rely on the transition rates empirically generated from the probabilities in my data as an inverse proxy for similarity. This means that the cost of substituting one state with the other is high when it is empirically unlikely to go from one state to the other. I follow the recommendations of Lunding et al. (2019) and assign the indel cost to a little more than half of the maximum substitution cost - in this case, an indel cost of 1. Furthermore, the sequences in the dataset have different lengths because some advisors have had longer careers than others before their appointment. This risks distorting the computed distances by assigning lower distances to sequences that have similar lengths but are otherwise very different (Abbott and Hrycak, 1990: 168f). I therefore normalize the distances by dividing the final pair-wise difference by the length of the longest sequence (Macindoe and Abbot, 2004).

Clustering sequences and developing typologies. To construct the career typologies from the pair-wise distance matrix, I relied on hierarchical agglomerative clustering. I use the Ward criterion, which groups the observations in a way that step by step minimizes the increase in

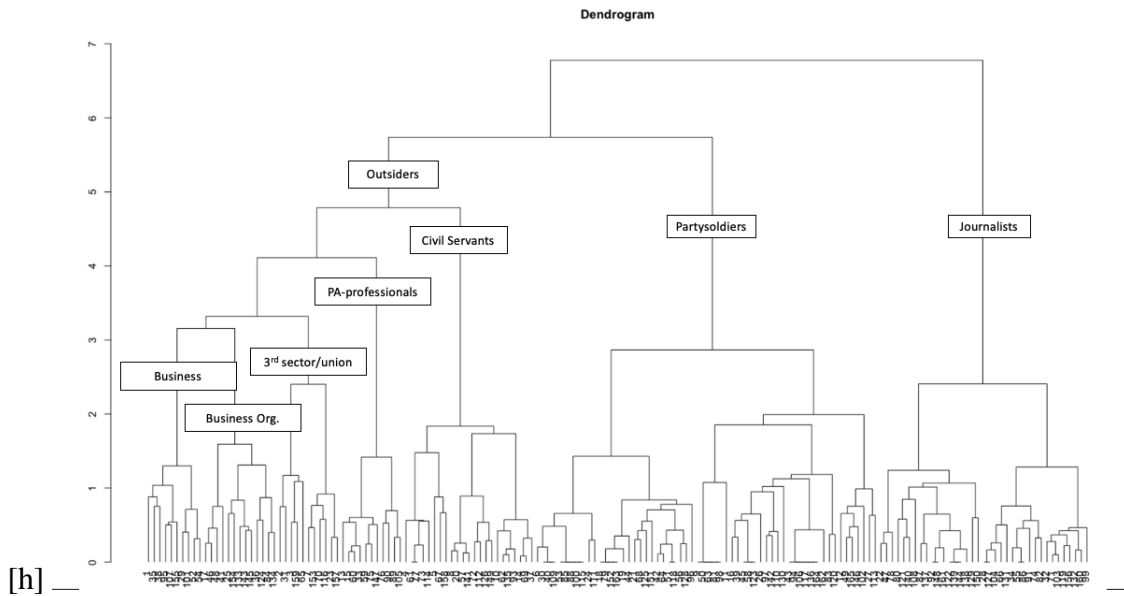


Figure 1: Dendrogram

internal variance within groups in relation to the variance between groups (Ward, 1963). From this, a dendrogram can be derived. I arrive at seven unique clusters due by heuristics. This approach is used to ensure an analytically interpretable differentiation between the clusters and is a common approach within sequence analysis (Lunding et al., 2019). In appendix A1, I have included figures of the clusters if 6 or 8 were identified, respectively. From the composition of states within each cluster, I have derived a typology that will be used to reference the clusters in the following sections. The typologies refer to the most common state within the cluster. Notably, third sector employment is very limited in the career backgrounds of ministerial advisors and does not show as a unique cluster.

RESULTS

Pre-Office Careers of Ministerial Advisors

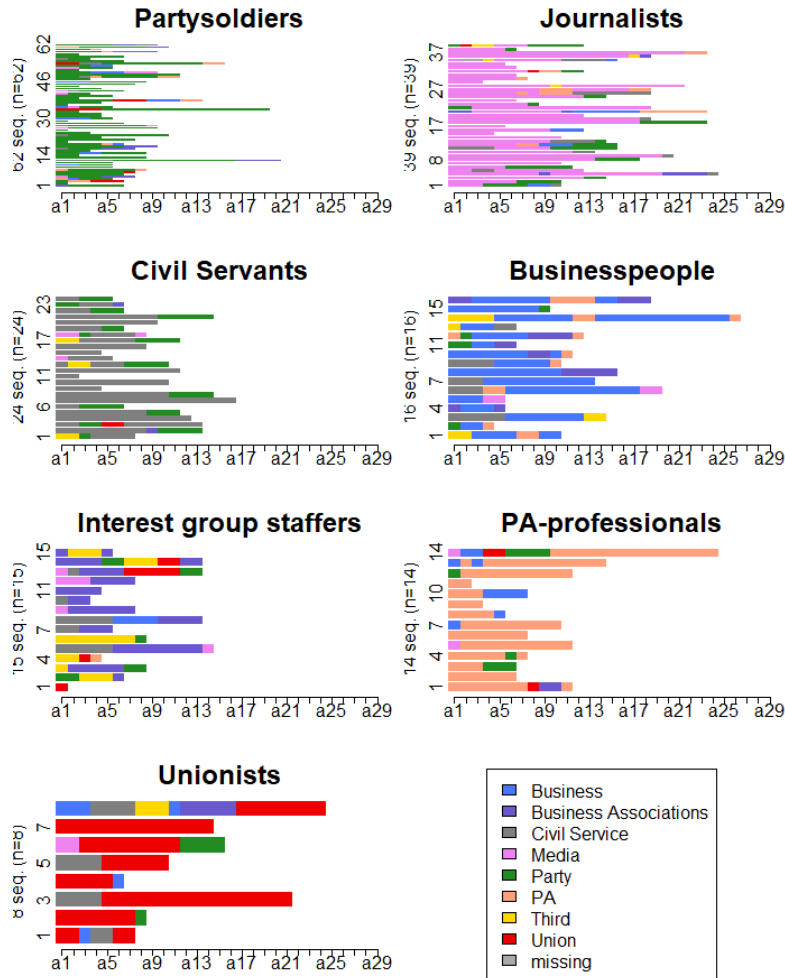


Figure 2: Pre-office careers: the seven career clusters

Figure 2 shows the seven clusters of distinct career paths. For each cluster, the x-axis is years after entering full time employment and the y-axis shows the number of sequences attributed to the cluster. Year 1 is thus the first full time job, followed by the other positions held before appointment as ministerial advisor. The first cluster, *partysoldiers*, consists of ministerial advisors who have mainly worked in political parties before appointment. They are characterized by the lowest levels of transitions between states and the shortest careers before appointment. Thus, the average partysoldier have only been on the labor market a little over 6 years before appointment and have

had 0.9 state transitions. Between party transitions are also very rare. Only 1 adviser has worked for two different parties. With 62 out of 178 advisors following this path, it is by far the most common career pathway. The second cluster, *journalists*, consists of advisors who have primarily worked in the media industry. This cluster covers 39 of the advisors. The advisors in this clusters have mainly worked as journalists and editors at various newspapers and broadcasters and have had longer careers (avg 13 years) than the partysoldiers. On average, they also have more experience from other sectors than the partysoldiers with an average of 1.4 transitions between states. The third cluster, *civil servants*, covers 24 of the 178 advisors. Their careers are characterized by their time in the civil service at either state, regional and municipal levels, although the state bureaucracy is the most common pre-appointment position for this group of advisors. Here they often work in generalist rather than specialist jobs, most commonly as press officers or communication consultants. Neither do they hold senior positions in the bureaucracy. Thus, no former permanent secretaries or head of divisions has been appointed as ministerial advisor.

I call the fourth cluster *Businesspeople*. It covers 16 of the advisor who have spent most of their time in private sector companies prior to appointment. On average they have long careers before appointment (11.4 years) and are the most boundaryless cluster with 2.3 transitions between states before appointment. The 16 advisors in this group have worked for a variety of different corporations: giants such as Novo Nordisk and Maersk Shipping, infrastructure and telecoms such as TDC and Ørsted and highly regulated industries such as gambling and tobacco. The fifth cluster covers the advisor who worked in interest groups and the third sector prior to appointment. They have been given the name *interest group staffers* and covers 15 advisers. The group is diverse in terms of the types of interest groups present in the advisors biographies; employer organizations, charities and NGO's. Yet, advisors in this group have relatively short careers before appointment and have on average worked 7.4 years before appointment. The sixth group consists of 14 advisors who all have had pre-appointment careers in public affairs firms. This sector is relatively young in a Danish context and many of the major firms are founded by former ministerial advisors who served in the mid 2000's. The emergence of the public affairs sector is a key feature of the recent

changes in the wider political system and is often connected to the increased marketization of political expertise (Tyllström, 2013) and the political economy of expertise (Esterling, 2004). The last cluster covers 8 ministerial advisors who all have their main experience in labour unions. They have the longest careers with an average pre-appointment career of 13.1 years. The *Unionists* cluster is the smallest career cluster, indicating that career paths from labour unions to government are relatively rare. Historically, the labour unions have had close organizational ties to the social democrats and are seen as vital actors in the making of the Nordic welfare states (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Korpi, 1985). The small amount of unions in the career pathways of ministerial advisors reflects findings elsewhere that organizational and career ties between the political system and unions are diminishing. This is both seen in the post-office destination of Danish parliamentarians (Blach-Ørsten et al., 2017: 27) and the organizational background up of staffers in the Swedish social democratic party (Mudge, 2011: 367).

Patterns in Pre-Appointment Careers

Figure 3 and 4 shows the patterns in pre-appointment careers. Figure 3 thus show variance over time, with the x axis displaying election cycles by the year the Government took office. The stacked bars represent the relative distribution of clusters in that government. The number of advisors in each cycle is stated. The variance in the number of appointed advisors reflect (1) that the use of advisors varies over time and (2) that the number of ministers in government vary, both due to resignations and parties entering and exiting the government coalitions. Figure 4 decomposes the cluster according to the political orientation of the government. The x axis thus displays the coalition type (with N showing the number of advisors serving in those coalition types) and the stacked bars reflect the relative distribution of advisors.

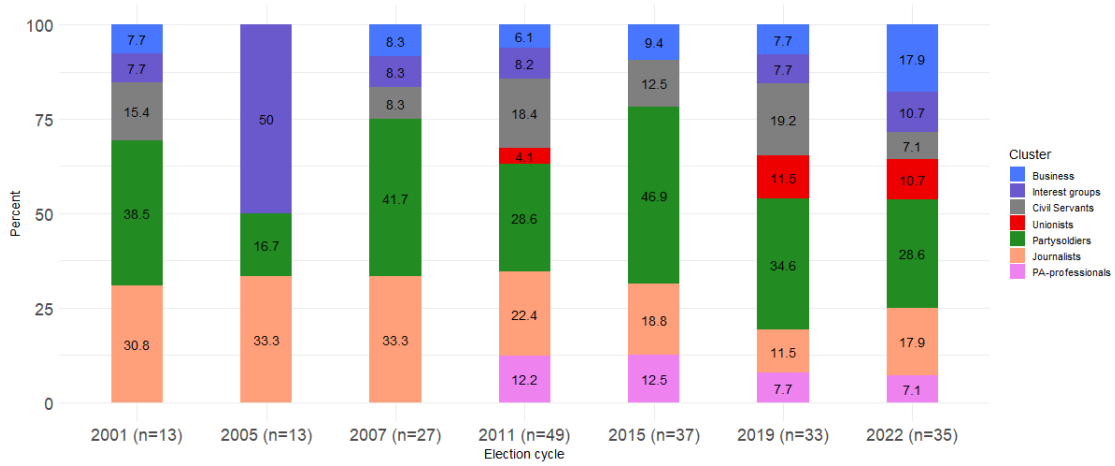


Figure 3: The distribution of clusters over time

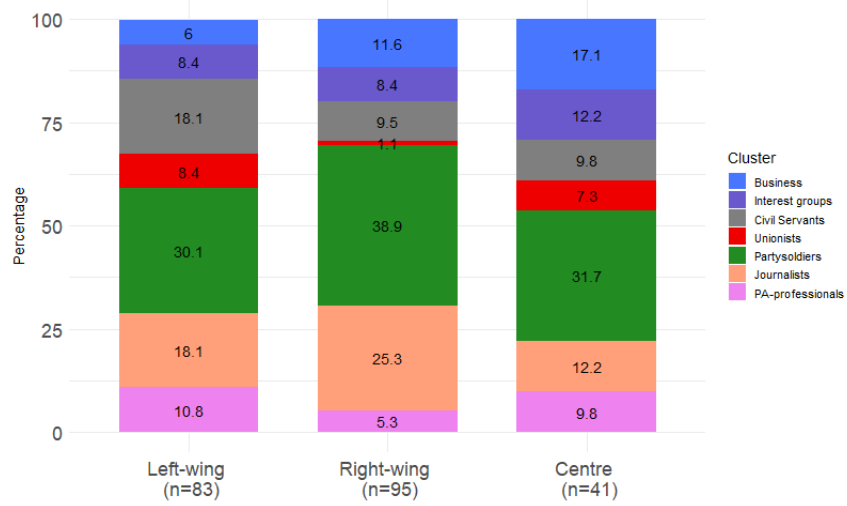


Figure 4: The distribution of clusters over in left-wing, right-wing and centrist government coalitions

The data shows both time and government variance on the pre-appointment careers of ministerial advisors. For example, right-wing governments (2001–2007) were characterized by a high proportion of party soldiers and journalists among special advisors, although the representation of advisors from the civil service and business sectors fluctuated. By contrast, the red government in 2011 saw the emergence of trade unions and public affairs agencies as sources of recruitment. This relationship between recruitment patterns and government composition persisted, as seen when trade union representatives disappeared under the blue governments of 2015 but reemerged in the red-led administration of 2019. Public affairs professionals saw increased representation over time journalists maintained a more fluctuating presence. Overall, the presence of party soldiers remains a consistent feature across all governments, regardless of ideological orientation.

Post-Office Careers and the Revolving Door

Figure 5 presents a Sankey diagram illustrating the transition between the pre-office cluster and the first post-office job (using the coding scheme for states in table 1). The flows between the two sides represent the percentage of individuals moving from each origin cluster to their respective post-office destinations.

Note: Here my working paper ends in its current edition. In the above i have presented a brief theory section and motivation for the study of the careers of ministerial advisors. Additionally i present my data, method and preliminary results. I hope you have found it interesting and I invite you to reflect not only on the paper, but the wider research agenda i try to develop. All comments, both on the paper at hand and potential avenues of my research project will be most welcome. My current thoughts is to do something more with the post-office careers, for instance to investigate the revolving in a more detailed manner. One way to do this is to follow Orchard et al. (2023) and to analyze what explains variability in the post-office roles ministerial advisors take on. Are they restricted by ideology? (are right-wing advisors for instance more likely to undertake roles in corporate lobbying?) Or do we observe occupational path dependency (do advisors land in the types of policy fields they worked in before or during appointment?)

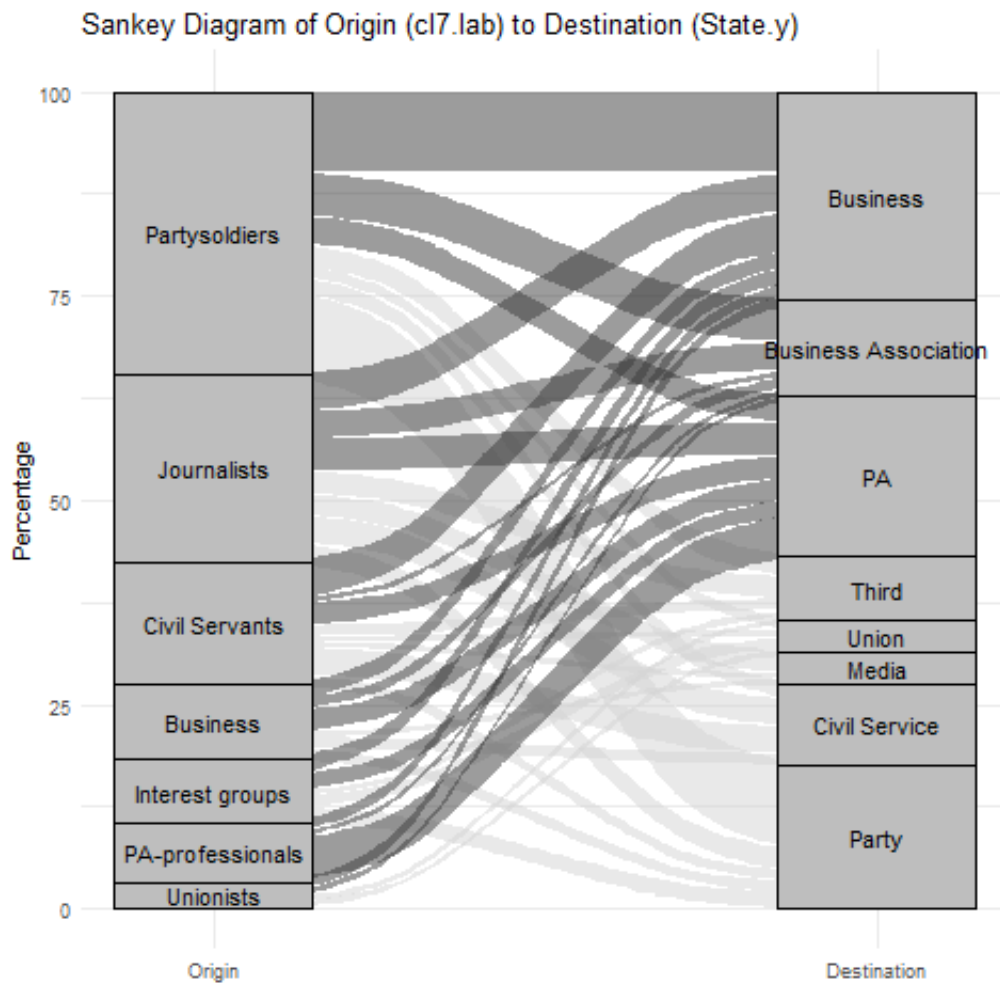


Figure 5: Pre-office cluster and first post-office job

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APPENDIX

Degree	University	Count
Political Science	University of Copenhagen	40
Journalism	DMJX	38
Economics	University of Copenhagen	14
Political Science	Aarhus University	12
Humanities	University of Copenhagen	10
Communication	Copenhagen Business School	9
Administration	Roskilde University	5
Communication	Roskilde University	5
Journalism	University of Southern Denmark	4
Law	University of Copenhagen	4
Economics	Aarhus University	2
Economics	Copenhagen Business School	2
International Economics	Copenhagen Business School	2
Journalism	Roskilde University	2
Political Science	University of Southern Denmark	2
Social Science	Roskilde University	2
Sociology	University of Copenhagen	2
Theology	University of Copenhagen	2
Administration	Aarhus University	1
Administration	Harvard University	1
Administration	Metropol	1
Economics	Niels Brock	1
Economics	Roskilde University	1
Economics	Sorbonne	1
Global Studies	Roskilde University	1
Humanities	Aarhus Kommune	1
Humanities	Roskilde University	1
Humanities	University of Southern Denmark	1
International Development	LSE	1
International Economics	CPH Business Academy	1
International Relations	LSE	1
Journalism	Columbia University	1
Law	Aarhus University	1
Management	Copenhagen Business School	1
Medicin	Aarhus University	1
Political Science	LSE	1
Political Science	University of Aarhus	1
Public Policy	University of Oxford	1
Teacher	UCC	1