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# Issue salience in regional party manifestos in Spain

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**Abstract:** This article analyses the dynamics of electoral competition in a multi-level setting. It is based on a content analysis of the party manifestos of the Spanish PP and PSOE in eight regional elections held between 2001 and 2003. It provides an innovative coding scheme for analyzing regional party manifestoes and on that basis seeks to account for inter-regional, intra-party and inter-party differences in regional campaigning. We tried to explain the inter-regional variation of the issue profiles of state-wide parties in regional elections on the basis of a model with four independent variables: the asymmetric nature of the system; the electoral cycle; the regional party systems; and the organization of the state-wide parties. Three of our hypotheses are rejected, but the stronger variations in the regional issue profiles of the PSOE corroborate the assumption that parties with a more decentralized party organization support regionally more diverse campaigning. The article concludes by offering an alternative explanation for this finding and by suggesting avenues for further research.

## State-wide parties in a multi-layered setting: constraints and opportunities

In a multi-levelled democracy with a strong regional tier of government, state-wide parties face an important electoral dilemma. On the one hand, electoral competition in general (or state-wide) elections requires that parties behave as single unitary actors and present a single and coherent program to the electorate. However, in order to maximize votes in regional elections, state-wide parties must give some leeway to their regional party branches in order to appeal to regional sensibilities. Reconciling state-wide with regional party interests is most problematic when the regional party systems differ substantially from the state-wide party system. Most studies on party competition focus on general elections, whilst party competition in regional elections has been much less studied. Devolution or the regionalization of formerly unitary states increases the need to study party competition in regional elections and its interaction with electoral dynamics at the state-wide level.

This article seeks to contribute to this objective by examining party competition in Spanish regional elections, focusing on Spain's two largest state-wide parties, the PP (Conservatives) and the PSOE (Social-Democrats). Spain is an ideal test case for our analysis: both parties compete directly in 16 of the 17 regional elections, and parties of the same political family

with organizational links to the state-wide parties compete in the remaining region<sup>1</sup>. All 17 regions have received a significant degree of autonomy, yet regional variations in autonomy persist, particularly between the Basque Country, Catalonia, Navarre and Galicia on the one hand and the remaining regions on the other. The Spanish regions also vary in the nature of their party systems, generating the expectation that electoral strategies will diverge significantly between the regions.

In this article, we consider the electoral strategies of the PP and PSOE parties by studying eight regional elections held between 2001 and 2003. The eight regions in which party strategies are analyzed constitute a representative sample of all Spanish regions. Our analysis seeks to test whether the electoral strategies of both parties reflect the asymmetric division of competences between the centre and the regions, the (non-) concurrence with elections in other regions, the structure of the regional party system and the structure of the party organization. We operationalize a party's electoral strategy by applying the *salience approach to content analysis of party manifestos*. We are among the first authors to apply such an approach to *regional* party manifestos. While our article only focuses on regional party manifestos in one country, our methodology should be applicable across a wider group of regional manifestos in regional elections elsewhere. In this sense, we hope to have advanced the methodology of comparative party manifesto analysis.

The article is divided into four sections. In the first section, we present the essence of salience theories of party competition and discuss some methodological issues. Next, we formulate four hypotheses that try to explain the inter-regional variation of the issue profiles of state-wide parties in regional elections. We then justify the selection of our eight regions for comparative analysis on the basis of a detailed description of the Spanish case. In the final section, we test the four hypotheses on the basis of the Spanish data.

### **Salience: Theory and methodology** <sup>ii</sup>

Salience and 'issue ownership' theories emerged in response to Anthony Downs' 'proximity theory' of electoral competition (Downs 1957). The premise of the proximity theory is that parties compete by taking diverging *positions* along a set of given issue dimensions. Voters are expected to vote for the party that comes closest to their own positions.

In contrast, the 'salience' approach to party competition, first proposed by Robertson (1976), and later reformulated by Budge and Farlie (1983: 23), states that parties 'do not compete by arguing directly with each other, but by trying to render their own areas of concern most prominent'. According to this approach, it is not so much party positions on issues that matter, but the extent to which parties *emphasize* different issues in their campaign. The more a party emphasizes a topic or issue (makes it 'salient'), the more likely it is to attract voters who are concerned with this topic. If a party does not expect a considerable benefit from an issue, it will say very little about it, attempting instead to prioritize other issues. Elaborating on the salience theory, some authors suggested that party stances could be better interpreted through issue salience than issue position (Budge et al. 2001: 6-7).

Measuring salience rather than issue position could be accomplished by analyzing a variety of relevant party or electoral documents, such as party programmes, public events, party conference speeches, TV programmes and advertisements, printed media, as well as interviews with candidates and party officials. However, in this article, we only analyze party programmes or manifestos. We acknowledge that we may miss some dimensions of electoral

competition. For instance, the media may push a party to take a stance on issues that were not, or barely, mentioned in its manifesto. However, for pragmatic reasons it makes sense to focus on party manifestos. Party manifestos are the most frequently examined documents by the advocates of the salience theory (Budge et al. 2001). They have the important advantage of being a primary data source. Moreover, manifestos are major statements of parties intended to present the full picture of their stances and they are issued by the whole party and not by one particular faction. Furthermore, we can build upon the methods that were introduced by the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) research team (Budge et al. 2001). This method implies that the manifestos are split into statements or ‘quasi-sentences’ each representing an argument expressed by a sentence or part of it. The CMP-researchers assign each quasi-sentence to one exclusive issue category and then calculate the percentages of quasi-sentences devoted by a party to each issue category from the total number of quasi-sentences in a manifesto to calculate the salience of this issue (Volkens 2001: 34-36).

However, unlike most studies that use the CMP methodology, we are concerned with analyzing regional election manifestos rather than party manifestos for state-wide elections. The CMP applies a classification scheme of 56 major issue categories, but we had to use a different coding scheme to capture the regional dynamics of multi-level electoral competition. Because we want to find out whether the division of competences between the centre and the regions is reflected in the parties’ regional issue profiles, we adopted the EUROVOC thesaurus employed by the European Commission to code EU-documents, which is better able to reflect the multi-level dimension of policy competences (<http://europa.eu/eurovoc>). The EUROVOC codebook contains no less than 127 categories and 6645 subcategories. We used the former as the basis of our analysis but expanded this further to 153 categories, in order to obtain a categorization that matches the division of competences in Spain. For practical reasons of presentation, these had to be reduced further to the 24 categories, listed in Tables 2 and 4 below. While the presentation and quantitative analysis of the data is based on this rougher classification, we kept an eye on these more precise categories when interpreting the results<sup>iii</sup>.

Crucially, the use of the issue categorization based on the EUROVOC thesaurus enables us to compare *regional* party manifestos in *any* multi-layered polity in which regional elections are held.

The analysis below is based on a comparison of the number of sentences (as a percentage of the total number of sentences in the manifesto) devoted to each of the 24 issue categories in the various manifestos. The issue profile is defined as the distribution of the sentences over these issue categories. The larger the intra-party and inter-regional differences in issue profile, the more the party seems to tailor its electoral campaigns to the territorially specific context in which regional elections are held.

### **Explaining regional variations of issue-profiles**

The dependent variable in our analysis is operationalized as the difference between the issue profile per party per region and the average issue profile for that party over all the regions. The extent to which parties stress specific issues in a regional election may be determined by a number of factors.

A first factor is the nature of the federal system and more in particular the *division of competences* between the central and the regional governments. If all the regions of the state

have similar competences, the inter-regional differences in issue profiles are expected to be small. In contrast, if the division is asymmetric, that is, if some regions have more competences than others, the inter-regional differences of the issue profiles are expected to be larger. More specifically, in a region with substantially more or less competences than most of the other regions, the difference between the issue profiles in the region and the overall mean are expected to be larger. This leads to the following hypothesis:

H1: The issue profile of state-wide parties in regional elections will reflect the asymmetric division of competences between the regions. The issue profiles of regions with more competences than most of the other regions should be the most distinctive.

A second factor, which is also institutional, concerns the *election cycle*. The underlying assumption is that when state-wide and regional elections are held on the same day, that is in a scenario of vertical concurrence, regional party profiles will be largely determined by the general election campaign. This should result in issue profiles that are quite similar across the regions. By comparison, if the central and the regional elections do not concur, which is the most normal scenario, regional elections may function as a quasi-general election if they concur horizontally, that is if they are all held on the same day (Deschouwer 2003: 223). In this case we can also expect that the central party authorities will attempt to streamline the party profiles in the various regions, thereby reducing the level of inter-regional variation. The regional manifestos are expected to be most dissimilar across regions when the regional election concurs neither horizontally nor vertically with other elections. Therefore, we suggest the following hypothesis:

H2: State-wide parties will have the most distinctive regional issue profiles when regional elections do not concur either vertically (with a national general election) or horizontally (with other regional elections).

The type of issues that are emphasized in regional elections can also be expected to vary with the character of the *regional party systems*. We hold two factors to be of particular significance. The first factor is the degree of fragmentation of the regional party system compared to that of the state-wide party system.

The party systems literature suggests that party systems that are more fragmented, that is having a larger number of 'relevant' parties, generate a distinctive pattern of electoral competition (Sartori 1976). More specifically, in a two-party system, parties will tend to compete not only by adopting converging issue positions, but also by addressing similar issues. By comparison, more fragmented party systems usually coincide with a larger number of dimensions of competition, resulting in more diverse issue emphases during the campaign (Grofman 2001: 32; Lijphart 1999: 78-79). Hence, the state-wide parties are likely to adopt a more distinct issue profile when they are campaigning in a relatively fragmented party system. The concentration of a party system can be expressed by calculating the effective number of electoral parties (ENP) and the combined share of the vote of the two largest parties: the lower the ENP or the higher the level of support for the two largest parties, the more concentrated (or less fragmented) the party system.

The second factor, which is partially related to the first one, refers to the significance of ethno-regionalist parties in the regional party system. Indeed, where the fragmentation of the party system is due to the relevance of ethno-regionalist parties, state-wide parties may attempt to beat these competitors on their own terrain by addressing regionalist issues. We

define regionalist issues as those in which parties emphasize their regional identity (expressed as issue category 4 in our list) or issues in which parties demand more regional autonomy through institutional reform or a reform of the political system (expressed as issue category 13 in our list). As a result, the issue profiles of these regional branches will differ from those of the same party in regions with a less fragmented party system or without ethno-regionalist parties. In light of the assumptions stated above, we formulate the following two hypotheses:

H3a: The more the regional party system differs from the overall party system in terms of its fragmentation, the more distinctive the regional issue profile.

H3b: The stronger the ethno-regionalist party, the more state-wide parties will emphasize ethno-regionalist issues.

Finally, party campaigning in state-wide and regional elections is likely to be influenced by the *degree of autonomy of the regional party branches*. Manifestos for general elections are normally drafted by central party bodies, but there may be important differences as to which body drafts regional party manifestos. It may be the regional party branches alone, the central bodies of the party, or both. In theory, a central party branch may prefer its regional campaigns to diverge more from the general election campaign to strengthen its electoral support in the region. However, in practice, a more centralized party is less likely to tolerate such divergence than an internally decentralized one. Thus we formulate the following hypothesis:

H4: We expect more similarity between the regional issue profiles of centralized parties than between those of decentralized parties.

### **The case of Spain**

Spain is a good case to test some of the hypotheses outlined above. Its two main state-wide parties (PP and PSOE) compete directly in 16 of the 17 regional elections, and indirectly through a party of the same political family with organizational links to the state-wide parties in the remaining region.

The 17 Spanish regions (or autonomous communities) have received a significant degree of autonomy, yet regional variations in autonomy persist, particularly between on the one hand the Basque Country, Catalonia, Navarre and Galicia and on the other hand the remaining 13 autonomous communities (ACs). In the Spanish quasi-federal system, a distinction is made between exclusive competences (of the centre and of the autonomous communities, respectively), concurrent competences and shared competences (Aja 2003: 127-134; López Guerra et al. 2003: 323-339). A concurrent competence implies that the centre determines the basic legislative framework within which the regions have secondary legislative powers and executive competences. A shared competence implies that the centre has full legislative powers, while the regions only have executive powers. On some matters, the centre or the regions hold exclusive (legislative and administrative) competence in distinct, but closely related, aspects of a policy. For instance, the regions control intra-regional railway traffic but the centre controls inter-regional railway transport. The various types of competence are listed in Table 1.

Table 1 about here

The table also mentions the asymmetric features of the Spanish quasi-federal system (Aja 2003). Although a process of convergence in regional competences has taken place particularly from the 1990s to 2006, some competences are still exclusive to a limited number of regions. For the period during which regional party manifestoes were analyzed, the level of asymmetry could be summarized as follows. First, seven regions have a separate civil code, relating to matters such as inheritance and land contracts (Aragon, Balearic Islands, Basque Country, Catalonia, Galicia, Navarre and Valencia). Second, the competence over language policy is, logically, limited to the regions with their own languages: the Balearic Islands; the Basque Country; Catalonia; Galicia; Navarre; and Valencia. Third, there are autonomous police forces in the Basque Country, Navarre and Catalonia. Fourth, this asymmetry extends to the finance system (Swenden 2006: 133-136). In comparison to the other ACs, and also with federal systems for that matter, the Basque Country and Navarre have an exceptionally high level of fiscal autonomy.

**Comment [RK1]:** I took "foral" out because it is not a standard English term – ie, I doubt most readers would gain anything by its inclusion. Assuming I understood it, 'separate' probably is adequate. (I assumed it is the same as Foral (from Carta de Foral) in Portuguese law – a grant of administrative competence from the center to a locality. If I did not understand it correctly, then please specify what you mean more clearly.

**Comment [IJ2]:** Dit kan volgens mij inderdaad wel vervangen worden door separate als dit het de lezer gemakkelijker zou maken.

There is only one case of vertical simultaneity: Andalusia. (This is a coincidence, as a premature dissolution of the Spanish or Andalusian parliament would result in non-concurrent general and regional elections). The three so-called historic communities (Galicia, Catalonia and the Basque Country) hold regional elections separate from the sixteen other regions (non-concurrent; held in 2001 in Galicia and the Basque Country and in 2003 in Catalonia), while the other regional elections are held on the same day (horizontally simultaneous elections). The presence and type of electoral concurrence for each of the seventeen autonomous communities is summarized in Table 2. As the historic regions with more competences are also the regions that hold non-concurrent elections, the case of Spain does not allow for a separate test of hypotheses 1 and 2.

Table 2 about here

The Spanish regions also vary considerably in the nature of their party systems. Table 2 also provides an overview of the 17 regional party systems, based on the regional elections covered in our analysis. Following Ocaña and Oñate (2000), we make a distinction among three types of party systems on the basis of two variables: (1) the fragmentation of the system, measured on the basis of the effective number of electoral parties (ENP), and a concentration index (combined percentage of two largest parties); and (2) the percentage obtained by the regionalist party or parties in the region. Table 2 shows how the 17 regional party systems score on these three variables in the period preceding the election that we will investigate.

A first group ('type 1 regions') comprises thirteen regional party systems that closely mirror the state-wide party system. They can be labelled as quasi-two-party systems, with an effective number of electoral parties (ENP) around 2.5. The two state-wide parties are clearly dominant, with a mean percentage between 67 (Aragon) and 89 (Castile-La Mancha). The degree of concentration is largely a function of the relative weakness of the ethno-regionalist party or parties. Andalusia is the only region where the two main contenders face a major threat from a third state-wide party, namely the left-wing IU. In the other regions, PP and PSOE either more or less monopolize the system or have lost some ground to one or more ethno-regionalist parties. Galicia stands a little apart, as up until the 2003 election the ethno-regionalist BNG and PSOE always competed for the second place behind the PP.

A second group ('type 2 regions') comprises the party systems of the Canary Islands and Catalonia. They are characterized by a relatively moderate degree of fragmentation (with an ENP of around 3) and a dominant ethno-regionalist party (CC in the Canary Islands and CiU

in Catalonia). Like type 1 regions, their party systems are relatively concentrated, but unlike type 1 regions, one of the two leading parties is an ethno-regionalist party. The party system of the Canary Islands used to be more fragmented, but the formation of the Coalición Canarias in 1993 put an end to this (Hernández-Bravo 1998).

A third group of regions ('type 3 regions') is made up of Navarre and the Basque Country. Their party systems are characterized by a high degree of fragmentation (with an effective number of parties between 4 and 5) and a concomitant low degree of concentration. Taking into account the high degree of polarization in these systems, that is the distance between the extreme ethno-regionalist and extreme unitary parties (Ocaña and Oñate 2000), they can be labelled as polarized pluralist (Sartori 1976).

Compared to other West European political parties, the PP and PSOE are fairly centralized parties (van Biezen 2003; Montero 2005). To evaluate the level of autonomy of the regional branches of state-wide parties, we looked at a number of aspects of party organization: how the regional branches are organized and their ability to organize freely; how the regional branches select their leaders and candidates for regional elections; and how they elaborate their regional manifestos and the level of central influence on this process (Fabre 2008; Fabre and Méndez-Lago forthcoming).

Officially, the PSOE is a 'federal' party: the party statutes give the regional branches considerable autonomy over candidate and leadership selection and party policy. In practice, the central party retains some informal influence to advance some candidates over others at the regional level and to influence regional manifestos, in particular via its 'framework programme', which applies to the 13 concurrent elections. In Catalonia, the PSC (*Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya*- PSOE) is a separate political party federated to the PSOE. Officially, the Spanish PSOE has no power over the PSC. In practice, the level of independence of the PSC becomes more limited when the PSOE is in government in Madrid (Roller and van Houten 2003: 13-15). The autonomy of all the regional party branches increased after the party entered a period in opposition in the 1990s. Overall, while the regional branches do enjoy some genuine autonomy, the central party leadership remains dominant and normally prevails in case of conflict. The return of the party to government in Madrid in 2004 has also led to a number of central interventions in regional affairs, most notably in Catalonia and in Navarre.

The PP has adopted a more hierarchical and centralized party organization and has been more reluctant to mirror the federalization process of Spain in its internal structure. Still, the autonomy of the regional party branches has also increased in the 1990s as regional institutions gained more competences and regional party elites started to emerge (García-Guereta Rodríguez 2001: 377-378 and 401-402). The PP is, however, a strongly presidentialized party (Van Biezen and Hopkin 2005), and the central party leadership retains a veto power over the decisions taken by the regional branches.

Overall, both parties remain centralized, but the PP insists more on party cohesion and national uniformity than the PSOE (also see Méndez-Lago 2004: 45-49; Fabre et al. 2005). As a result, hypothesis 4 leads us to expect more similarity between the issue profiles of the regional party branches of the PP than between regional branches of the PSOE.

The number of elections covered by this study had to be limited because specific problems make the comparative analysis of party manifestos more difficult. First, the state-wide parties



do not always make a manifesto in every region. For instance the PSOE did not have a manifesto in Castile-La Mancha in the 2003 regional elections. At the other extreme is the PP in Valencia: its manifesto contained no less than eleven books, each of considerable size. Apparently the PP (in government in Valencia between 1999 and 2003) recycled a number of previously drafted policy briefs into a manifesto and did not summarize them for the voters. Consequently, Castile-La Mancha and Valencia were ruled out as possible cases<sup>iv</sup>. Second, Spanish party manifestos are quite long.<sup>v</sup> Therefore, for logistical reasons, we had to limit the analysis to eight regional elections (one per region) held during the period 2001-2003. As a result the analysis was also limited to 16 regional party manifestos (eight for each party).

Taking the above considerations into account we retained eight regions for comparative research: the Basque Country; Catalonia; Canary Islands; Cantabria; La Rioja; Asturias; Castile and Leon; and Murcia. These were chosen to maximize the variance on the four factors that we expect to influence issue profiles. Our sample includes two historic communities (Basque Country and Catalonia), which have slightly higher levels of autonomy and organize non-concurrent regional elections. Our sample also reflects the variety of the Spanish regional party systems: each cluster of regional party systems is represented by at least one of the regional elections that were selected for comparative analysis: Asturias, Cantabria, Castile and Leon, La Rioja and Murcia represent type 1 regions; the Canary Islands and Catalonia represent type 2 regions; and the Basque Country is a type 3 region. In broad terms, this division in clusters also reflects the varying strength of ethno-regionalist parties: their support is indeed highest in type 3 regions and lowest in type 1 regions.

### **Issue profiles of 16 party branches in 8 regions**

Before testing the hypotheses outlined above, we first take a closer look at the way in which the division of competences is reflected in the regional manifestos. Table 3 shows how much attention each of the two state-wide parties devote to the various clusters of issues distinguished in the analysis. Entries are the percentage of quasi-sentences devoted to a specific issue, calculated on the basis of the total number of quasi-sentences in the manifesto. The first column contains the average percentages across the eight regions. The ranking of issues reflects the division of competences; a relatively short list of exclusive regional competences is stated first, followed by a long list of shared and concurrent competences and a relatively short list of exclusive central competences.

The manifestos mainly deal with matters over which the regions are competent, either exclusively or in part. In general, we find that issues of exclusive central competence, such as international relations, defence and EU-related matters receive comparatively little attention. Nevertheless, there are some exceptions that deserve closer attention. For instance, the policies with regard to citizenship, immigration and asylum are exclusively central but draw considerable attention in the regional election manifestos. This is partly due to the fact that we attributed proposals regarding social services for, and the integration of, immigrants and asylum seekers to this category: personal assistance and social services are exclusively regional competences. In some regions, the state-wide parties also claim more autonomy over immigration and asylum policy; this is particularly visible in the PSOE regional election manifestos in the Canaries and Catalonia.

Another noteworthy finding is that EU-related matters are hardly mentioned in the regional manifestos. Although this is consistent with the allocation of EU-matters to the central level of government, the regions have always claimed a larger input in EU affairs, particularly in

those EU matters that touch upon their own competences. During the nineties, this dispute was more or less settled, as the Spanish government and the regions agreed on some new cooperation, thereby strengthening regional input in the formulation and implementation of European policies that affect their domestic competences (Börzel 2000: 40-41). It appears that this issue lost its salience after the appropriate intergovernmental machinery was set up to involve the regions more adequately in EU affairs.

Table 3 about here

### **Testing the hypotheses**

In this section we test the four hypotheses concerning the factors that we expect to influence the issue profiles of the PP and PSOE in the regional elections and present the relevant evidence for each hypothesis. The dependent variable, the difference between the regional issue profile of a party and the average issue profile of that party across the eight regions, is measured on the basis of a dissimilarity index (two bottom rows of Table 3). This dissimilarity index is the sum of the absolute differences between the issue percentages of each of the 24 selected issues in the region and the average percentage across the eight regions. The higher the value of a region relative to the other regions, the more distinct the issue profile for the party concerned. The general point of comparison is the average issue profile for the eight regions for each party. The result is the percentage of sentences for each program that is different from the average programme. A previous attempt to compare with the issue profile of the state-wide parties in state elections did not give a correct image of the general issue profile since it was dealing with another type of election with other competences at stake. By comparing with the average issue profile for regional elections, the electoral context remains constant.

Following hypothesis 1, we expect the manifestos in the regions with a special status and more competences (the Basque Country and Catalonia) to be more dissimilar. The findings only partially confirm our expectations. In the Basque Country, the state-wide parties have indeed a particularly distinct issue profile (32.30 for PP and 39.13 for PSOE). The Basque manifestos put a much stronger emphasis on language issues, the political system, the courts, the police and terrorism than their counterparts in the other regions. This comes at the expense of 'normal' regional issues that, with the exception of education, received less than average attention. The analysis of the manifestos confirms that in the 2001 campaign ordinary policy matters were largely overshadowed by issues such as terrorism and the Basque versus Spanish identity (Pallarés 2002). However, the comparable dissimilarity value in Catalonia is lower than average. The PP-manifesto in Catalonia is the least dissimilar of all the PP manifestos. The PSC-manifesto is less distinct than that of the PSOE in Asturias, Cantabria and the Canary Islands, even though these regions are not historical communities. In the 2003 Catalan elections, the state-wide parties did not put much emphasis on institutional politics or language politics. The salience percentages for the former (4.51 PP and 5.47 PSC) are below the mean for all regions, while percentages for the latter (6.67 PP and 8.95 PSC) are only marginally above the mean. Instead, in Catalonia, the state-wide parties sought to attract voters with social policy (particularly PSC) or infrastructural issues (particularly PP; Pallarés and Muñoz 2004: 776-777). Identity issues were primarily addressed by the Catalan ethno-regionalist parties. Our data on the ethno-regionalist parties (which are not included in this analysis) show that CiU devoted 11.3 per cent of its manifesto to identity issues and ERC 10.2 per cent, against an average of 7.8 per cent for the state-wide parties.

Conversely, the regional party branches in some of the non-historic regions, in particular the Canary Islands (PSOE) and Asturias (PP and PSOE), have a much more distinct issue profile than could be expected. In Asturias the issue of unemployment, important because of the consequences of the declining traditional heavy industries, contributed to a more distinct issue profile, with an emphasis on economic issues above the average (Cuartas 2002). The strong focus on health in Asturias can be partially attributed to the fact that this was a new competence for the region, transferred during the previous legislative period, and to a controversy between the centre and the region regarding the construction of a large new hospital in Oviedo (Piñeiro 2002: 184). In general, electoral competition in Asturias still reflected the highly turbulent political history of the region in the nineties. Intense inter- and intra-party conflicts emerged over privatizations and the role of trade unions (Piñeiro 2002: 160-186). In 1995, the PP voted a motion of no confidence against its own head of the regional government, Sergio Marqués, who subsequently founded the URAS, a conservative ethno-regionalist party. The next legislature was marked by sharp internal conflict in the governing PSOE on the management of the *Caja de Asturias*. In addition, the regional Socialist government colluded with the central PP government (and in particular with the ministry of public works headed by the leader of the PP in Asturias, Francisco Álvarez-Cascos) over the construction of new railways and the aforementioned hospital in Oviedo. Consequently, the PP regional manifesto heavily emphasized issues such as health care, infrastructure and the political system (Piñeiro 2002: 160-186).

This discussion on whether issue profiles comport with the partly asymmetric distribution of competences already enables us to gauge the validity of the second hypothesis, concerning the electoral cycle as an explanatory factor. The electoral agenda in the Basque Country and Catalonia (which have non-concurrent elections) is *not more* distinctive than that of the other regions. As discussed above, while the Basque regional manifestos are quite distinct, the Catalan manifestos show relatively little divergence from the mean profile for all regional manifestos. Therefore, we must reject Hypothesis 2.

Third, it was hypothesized that the regional issue profiles would be more distinct in regions with more fragmented party systems. We already noticed that the manifestos in the Basque Country (type 3) have a particularly distinct profile, but also that the manifestos in the type 2 regions (Catalonia and the Canary Islands) are not consistently more distinct than those found in type 1 regions (Cantabria, La Rioja, Asturias, Castile and Leon, and Murcia). The PP-manifestos in both Catalonia and the Canary Islands are not particularly distinct compared to the type 1 regions. The evidence concerning the PSOE is more mixed: the Canary Islands manifesto is highly distinctive, unlike the one in Catalonia. It seems then that the issue profiles of type 2 regions are not sufficiently dissimilar from type 1 regions to confirm Hypothesis 3a.

A related hypothesis predicted that the existence of a strong ethno-regionalist party would trigger a strong emphasis on issues of regional identity (category 4) or regional autonomy (category 13). The data support this hypothesis for both parties in the Basque Country, but not in Catalonia (at least not with respect to issues of category 13) or the Canary Islands, despite the significance of ethno-regionalist parties there. This seems to indicate that state-wide parties in these two regions evade such issues, rather than attempting to beat the ethno-regionalist parties on their own terrain. This is actually in line with issue-ownership theory, which predicts that the state-wide parties will attempt to prioritize their own issues rather than to help making the regionalist issue salient.

**Comment [DK3]:** It seems to me that here, and when the salience theory was introduced, that you have the idea of issue ownership slightly off. The point, as I understand it, is not that a party picks the issues that it thinks will resonate with the voter, but those that will favor it if they resonate with the voters. Hence if there is a strong regionalist party (ie, the regionalists own the regional issue), the expectation would be that a state-wide party would try to avoid making that issue salient.

**Comment [II4]:** Dit probleem hebben we zelf ook al eens aangekaart, we zijn hier meer uitgegaan van de directionele variant die stelt dat de meest intense partij de kiezers zal kunnen bekoren. Maar eigenlijk volgen we hier inderdaad de salience/issue ownership variant en kunnen we deze hypothese niet formuleren op basis van de theorie.

Conversely, in regions where the ethno-regionalist parties are relatively weak (type 1 regions), regional identity and institutional autonomy sometimes obtain a higher than average emphasis. This is the case in la Rioja (PP on identity issues) and Asturias (PSOE on identity and PP on institutional issues). In Asturias, the conflicts with the centre mentioned above may have pushed a besieged PSOE into highlighting the importance of the Asturian identity and into promoting and protecting its cultural heritage and local traditions. In Murcia, where there is no ethno-regionalist party, the salience of regional identity and autonomy approximates the overall average. In these cases, the state-wide parties seem to be more inclined to claim ownership of the issue rather than to dismiss it as unimportant.

The final hypothesis suggested that the variation between the regional issue profiles would be higher in a decentralized party compared to a more centralized party. As argued above, the PSOE has gone farther in adapting its party organization to the quasi-federal nature of the state than the PP. The data largely confirm this hypothesis. The mean dissimilarity for PSOE (31.9) is substantially larger than for PP (26.6). In six of the eight regions, PSOE has a more distinctive issue profile than PP. The exceptions are Asturias and Castile and Leon. In fact the most deviant of all the issue profiles is found for the PP in Asturias, where the PSOE also adopted a relatively distinctive issue profile. This can be explained by the idiosyncratic factors on Asturias mentioned earlier. Contrary to our expectations (given that the Catalan PSC is formally a separate party), the difference between the PSC regional manifesto and the PSOE general manifesto is relatively small, at least in terms of salience.

Notwithstanding these 'intra-party' variations, our findings predominantly confirm Hypothesis 4. Overall, the PSOE produces more deviant regional issue profiles than the PP. Nevertheless, as will be discussed in the conclusion, there could be an alternative explanation for this finding.

## **Conclusion**

In this article we studied the strategy of state-wide parties in a multi-level electoral setting by means of a comparative analysis of their regional party manifestos. Our article adapted the well-known techniques of the Comparative Manifesto Project to the study of party manifestos in regional elections. Spain is an interesting case for the study of the dynamics of party competition in a multi-level setting. Regional elections are important, as the Spanish regions have significant but not always uniform competences and distinctive party systems. State-wide parties compete in state-wide and regional elections, and as such they must seek to tailor their regional electoral campaigns to specific regional interests without jeopardizing the overall programmatic unity of the party. This article investigated how the PP and PSOE dealt with this strategic dilemma by analyzing their electoral manifestos in eight regional elections between 2001 and 2003.

A first finding was that issue emphases in regional manifestos to a large extent reflect the constitutional distribution of competences. Issues in which the regions are competent (either exclusively or jointly with the central government) are mentioned much more than issues over which the centre holds exclusive competence.

We tried to explain the inter-regional variation of the issue profiles of state-wide parties on the basis of a model with four independent variables: the asymmetric nature of the system; the electoral cycle; the regional party systems; and the organization of the state-wide parties. The

hypothesis that the issue profiles of regions with more competences than most would be most distinctive was not confirmed. We observed that Catalonia, unlike the other ‘historic community’ for which party manifestos were analyzed (the Basque Country), did not show a highly distinctive issue profile. Furthermore, the overall issue profiles of some ‘ordinary’ communities turned out to be more distinctive than anticipated. Second, and related to the previous point, the non-simultaneity of the Basque and Catalan elections does not really seem to have influenced the issue profiles of the state-wide parties in both regions. Contrary to what was hypothesized, separate regional elections do not automatically lead to a more distinctive issue profile.

Neither does the presence of a strong ethno-regionalist party necessarily generate a more distinctive issue profile. Our analysis did not fully support the assertion that the more a regional party system differs from the overall system, the more distinctive the regional issue profiles. Although our expectation was confirmed in the case of the Basque Country, it did not hold for Catalonia or some of the non-historical communities, which generated respectively less and more distinctive issue profiles than anticipated. Finally, the findings confirm our expectations on the association between the organizational autonomy of the regional party branches and the extent to which their issue profiles vary from region to region. The PSOE, being the more decentralized of the two state-wide parties, tolerates more regional divergence. However an *alternative* explanation could be that the PP campaign was more controlled from above because the party was in central government during the period under investigation. Therefore, it was potentially more vulnerable to contradictions between the policies enacted at the central level and the policies enacted or defended at the regional level. Since the PP controlled the central government for the entire period under investigation, we cannot test this alternative hypothesis.

We hope that this paper has demonstrated the extent to which coding regional party manifestos can offer new insights into testing the dynamics of party competition in a multi-layered environment. Although our analysis applied to Spain, our coding scheme is sufficiently refined to apply it to a much wider group of multi-layered states.

Our analysis can be extended in three different dimensions. First, a more longitudinal approach would allow us to control for variations in central incumbency (in which case we expect the variations in regional PSOE manifestos to decrease during periods when the party controls the central government, as has been the case since 2004). Second, extending our analysis to a wider universe of regional party manifestos in other multi-layered democracies would allow us to bring in more institutional variables, such as the effect of variations in the electoral system. Third, in regions with large ethno-regionalist parties, the party profiles of the state-wide parties may be less distinctive than initially hypothesized. This may be because as operationalized in this paper, distinctiveness is based on salience profiles alone. However, one could also map distinctiveness on the basis of the position that parties take with regard to certain issues, as proximity and directional theory suggest.

We acknowledge that the results presented in this paper offer mere trends, and, due to the limited number of elections analyzed, they do not yet present iron clad evidence. Yet we have demonstrated *how* such an analysis could be done by applying a modified version of CMP methodology so as to make it suitable for the analysis of regional election manifestos, something that has been overlooked by the CMP team. Furthermore, as a mitigating circumstance for our ‘limited time frame’ and case selection, we can only point to the fact that content analysis of manifestos is an extremely labour-intensive and time-consuming job. A

more extensive empirical analysis of regional manifestos would require a concerted effort along the lines of the CMP-project. Our article sets the agenda and indicates the direction that such an effort should take.

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Table 1: Competences of the Centre and the Regions

Exclusive AC competences	Concurrent Competences	Shared Competences	Exclusive Competences of the centre
Institutions of ACs	General regulation of the economy	Labour law	Defence
Agriculture	Education	Commercial law	International relations
Tourism	Local government	Penitentiary regulations	Citizenship, immigration and asylum
Personal assistance and social services	Health care	Intellectual and industrial property	External commerce and customs
Hunting and river fishing	Savings banks, credit system	Pharmaceutical regulations	Monetary system
Commerce and consumer policy	Public administration and civil servants		Banking and insurance
Industry	Environment		External health care
Town planning and housing	Media		Broadcasting
	Language*		Criminal law
Civil law**			Organization of the courts
	Police***		Civil law**
			Police***
Railways, transportation, hydraulic works, (air)ports, museums and libraries of AC's†			Railways, transportation, hydraulic works, (air)ports, museums and libraries of the state†

\*Only Balearic Islands, Basque Country, Catalonia, Galicia, Navarre and Valencia.

\*\*Aspects of civil law are an exclusive competence of the AC's Aragon, Balearic Islands, Basque Country, Catalonia, Galicia, Navarre and Valencia.

\*\*\*AC competence in the Basque Country, Catalonia and Navarre.

† Competence of AC or state depending on territorial scope and interests involved. Source: adapted from Aja, 2003: 131 and 175; Swenden, 2006.

Table 2: The Party Systems and timing of elections of the Spanish Regions

Region (year of previous election)	Type of party system#	# parties (ENP)	Concentration*	% regionalist parties**	Electoral concurrency##
Andalusia (1996)	1	3	78.6	7.53	Vertical
Aragon (1999)	1	3.5	70.5	24.82	Horizontal
Asturias (1999)	1	2.9	79.5	9.88	Horizontal
Baleares (1999)	1	3.6	67.2	19.39	Horizontal
Cantabria (1999)	1	3.1	77.3	17	Horizontal
Castile and Leon (1999)	1	2.6	85.9	5.23****	Horizontal
Castile La Mancha (1999)	1	2.2	95.2	-	Horizontal
Extremadura (1999)	1	2.4	89.6	2.85	Horizontal
Galicia (1997)	1	2.6	78	25.11	Non-concurrent
Madrid (1999)	1	2.4	89.4	-	Horizontal
Murcia (1999)	1	2.4	90.1	-	Horizontal
La Rioja (1999)	1	2.4	88.4	5.90	Horizontal
C.Valenciana (1999)	1	2.8	83.1	9.36	Horizontal
Canary Islands (1999)	2	3.3	68.5!	42.38	Horizontal
Catalonia (1999)	2	3.1	78.8!	46.81	Non-concurrent
Navarra (1999)	3	4	61.7	70.93***	Horizontal
Basque Country (1998)	3	5.2	48.1!	55.87****	Non-concurrent
MEAN		3	78.2		
General elections (1996)		3.3	76.4	11.2	

\*Source: Ocaña F. A. and P. Oñate, 2000.

\*\*Source: compilation of data from the [Archivo Histórico Electoral, Presidencia de la Generalitat Valenciana](http://www.pre.gva.es/argos/archivo/index.html)  
<http://www.pre.gva.es/argos/archivo/index.html>

\*\*\*These percentages include the votes for UPN (*Unión del Pueblo Navarra*), which is closely allied with PP. Both parties have an agreement according to which only UPN competes in regional elections and only PP in the general election. It is a matter of dispute whether UPN should be considered a separate 'regionalist' party. If the party is not included, the percentages change to 28,6% (1999) and 26,9 (average), as a result of which Navarre shifts to the second category.

\*\*\*\*The 'regionalist' parties in Castilla y León and are in fact 'sub-regionalist' parties in the sense that there is a party defending the interests of Castilla (*Tierra Comunera-Partido Nacionalista Castellano* – TC-PNC) and another one defending the interests of León (*Unión del Pueblo Leonés* – PNC). The same can be said from *Unidad Alavesa* in the Basque Country which defends the interests of the people from Alavés (this party was dissolved in 2005). These parties are here considered as regionalist.

#There are three types of party system depending on the fragmentation of the system.

##There can be held vertical concurrent elections, horizontal concurrent elections and elections that do not coincide with another election at the regional or state-wide level.

Table 3: Mean salience pattern of PSOE and PP (overall mean and by election and region)

categories	party	Mean all regions	Basque country	Catalonia	Canary Islands	Cantabria	La Rioja	Asturias	Castilla y León	Murcia	
<b>exclusive regional competences</b>											
1	agriculture, fishing, hunting	PP	5.97	7.15	5.98	4.52	7.9	5.7	9.83	2.99	3.67
		PSOE	4.73	2.22	2.84	5.92	5.49	6.57	7.09	4.98	2.73
2	tourism, leisure and sports	PP	5.73	2.07	6.36	6.58	8.6	4.94	7.53	5.47	4.3
		PSOE	4.35	1.5	2.61	4.88	2.15	6.34	4.79	8.22	4.33
3	town and country planning, housing	PP	3.18	2.7	2.62	1.96	4.22	4.57	2.15	4.57	2.66
		PSOE	4.15	4.33	3.91	3.17	4.55	4.42	4.48	3.9	4.41
5	personal assistance and social services	PP	3.35	2.32	4.44	2.38	3.1	3.17	1.87	5.87	3.62
		PSOE	3.37	1.8	4.32	2.56	5.67	2.05	3.76	3.71	3.07
<b>shared and concurrent competences</b>											
4	language, culture and identity, media	PP	6.2	9.22	6.67	7.11	6.95	5.51	4.52	3.38	6.21
		PSOE	8	9.98	8.95	5.06	4.46	10.95	11.28	6.14	7.18
6	social questions	PP	1.23	0.44	0.73	1.23	0.85	0.93	2.44	1.13	2.09
		PSOE	2.01	1.8	2.82	2.01	1.37	1.82	1.64	2.05	2.56
7	social policy	PP	8.76	6.46	11.69	12.78	8.76	8.27	5.03	8.3	8.76
		PSOE	7.61	7.21	7.47	6.28	13.91	6.43	3.15	7.43	9.03
8	education	PP	8.14	9.97	10.07	7.85	5.39	6.8	8.33	10.44	6.27
		PSOE	10.08	12.2	6.36	7.38	6.7	11.41	8.61	13.22	14.79
9	science and research	PP	2.26	1.07	3.28	1.37	3.15	3.13	2.3	1.92	1.87
		PSOE	2	0.9	1.82	2.87	1.37	0.65	4.97	1.32	2.06
10	health	PP	6.71	3.95	6.52	3.85	6.46	7.8	12.71	7.67	4.69
		PSOE	6.95	4.15	4.86	14.58	9.36	5.96	6.73	4.69	5.25
11	environment	PP	4.72	4.39	2.7	3.92	4.7	6.57	1.79	6.72	6.95
		PSOE	5.33	7.93	4.99	1.46	6.18	5.96	7.7	4.48	3.91
12	transportation/infrastructure (mobility and transport)	PP	4.91	5.08	4.05	5.85	2.78	5.9	6.89	3.84	4.86
		PSOE	4.09	4.33	9.42	3.48	2.32	2.05	2.85	3.9	4.33
13	local government, political system, institutions, political life	PP	6.94	10.22	4.51	4.73	8.59	4.66	10.05	5.02	7.74
		PSOE	6.94	14.91	5.47	3.24	6.95	6.66	4.37	9.07	4.88
14	labour and employment	PP	7.26	7.27	5.94	8.48	8.81	6.97	5.96	8.63	6.05
		PSOE	6.16	5.59	5.17	5.92	7.9	3.49	7.88	6.51	6.81

categories	party	Mean all regions	Basque country	Catalonia	Canary Islands	Cantabria	La Rioja	Asturias	Castilla y León	Murcia
15 taxes and budget	PP	2.96	2.82	2.82	2.49	2.67	1.4	4.67	3.78	3.05
	PSOE	1.65	0.24	2.91	1.77	1.72	1.91	0.97	2.61	1.09
19 courts, police, internal security, justice and law	PP	2.35	5.02	4.05	3.57	2.57	0.23	0	2.03	1.3
	PSOE	2.79	2.64	3.47	7.14	2.32	1.95	0.3	1.82	2.69
20 economy, trade, energy, production and industry	PP	10.46	8.02	9.22	10.47	8.54	9.94	11.77	9.47	16.22
	PSOE	8.7	6.19	11.6	7.2	6.96	8.85	13.51	9.07	6.22
21 finances	PP	0.82	0.69	0.77	0.63	0.69	1.33	0.65	0.45	1.36
	PSOE	0.93	0.78	2.8	1.1	0.43	0.28	0.61	0.84	0.63
22 organisation of the state	PP	3.03	3.39	2.47	2.84	2.99	4.83	0.79	3.61	3.34
	PSOE	3.27	1.26	2.02	4.58	4.12	4.7	2.06	1.53	5.92
23 terrorism	PP	0.34	2.63	0	0	0	0	0.07	0	0
	PSOE	0.61	4.87	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
24 rest (religion, extra-eurovoc, general)	PP	0.31	0.06	0.12	0.36	0.21	0.7	0.14	0.06	0.85
	PSOE	0.14	0	0.11	0.06	0.09	0.05	0.18	0.03	0.63
<b>exclusive state-wide competences</b>										
16 defence and security, international relations, development aid	PP	0.78	1.38	1.43	0.74	0.58	1.23	0	0.56	0.29
	PSOE	1.24	1.44	0.76	0.91	3	1.77	0.67	0.66	0.67
17 europe	PP	0.84	1.57	0.62	0.95	0.59	0.97	0.07	0.56	1.36
	PSOE	1.19	0.24	0.89	3.54	0.34	1.07	1.03	1.21	1.22
18 citizenship, immigration and asylum	PP	2.78	2.13	2.97	5.36	0.91	4.43	0.43	3.5	2.49
	PSOE	3.72	3.49	4.45	4.88	2.66	4.66	1.39	2.63	5.59
<b>Dissimilarity measure</b>	PP	<b>26.65*</b>	<b>32.30</b>	<b>21.26</b>	<b>23.84</b>	<b>21.81</b>	<b>22.29</b>	<b>42.45</b>	<b>25.36</b>	<b>23.89</b>
	PSOE	<b>31.90*</b>	<b>39.13</b>	<b>30.95</b>	<b>39.37</b>	<b>34.90</b>	<b>24.65</b>	<b>37.43</b>	<b>22.91</b>	<b>25.87</b>

\* the mean dissimilarity is the average of all regional dissimilarity indices

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>i</sup> These parties are the Unión del Pueblo Navarro, which campaigns for and instead of the PP in Navarre, and the Partit del Socialistes de Catalunya, which replaces the PSOE in Catalonia.

<sup>ii</sup> The authors wish to thank Dr. Robertas Pogorelis for his contribution to the theoretical part of this paper and the anonymous referees for their useful comments.

<sup>iii</sup> An overview of the detailed coding scheme, containing all 153 categories can be obtained from the authors.

<sup>iv</sup> Both PP and PSOE issued a *programa marco* or framework programme for the 2003 regional and local elections. This umbrella manifesto contained general policy proposals and guidelines for all 13 regional campaigns. We have chosen not to include them in our analysis because the status of these manifestos is somewhat ambiguous. The regional manifestos of both PP and PSOE never explicitly refer to the framework manifesto. Another problem is that PSOE framework manifesto also covers the local elections (not in a separate section but throughout the document) while the PP manifesto does not. As a result, it is not possible to compare the PSOE- framework manifesto with the other regional manifestos or with the PP framework manifesto.

<sup>v</sup> The 16 manifestos which we analysed for this article included on average 2257 quasi sentences.