

**Position change in regionalist parties and multilevel politics:
the case of Convergència i Unió**

Astrid Barrio

Universitat de Valencia

astrid.barrio@uv.es

First draft

To be reviewed by an English-speaker

Paper presented at the XI Congreso Nacional AECPA
Sevilla, 18-20 September 2013

**GT 3.8 Cambio organizativo y democracia interna
en los partidos políticos españoles**

Introduction

The September 11, 2012, a mass demonstration in Barcelona for the National Day of Catalonia, under the theme "Catalonia, a new state in Europe", organized by the Catalan National Assembly (an association supporting the independence of Catalonia) eventually lead to a call for an early regional election. Only two years before, *Convergència i Unió* (CiU), the main Catalan political party, had regained the regional government and had come very close to an absolute majority (November 2010), and one year later the *Partido Popular* (PP) did the same in the national government. However, the big majority obtained by the later in the November 2011 general election prevented CiU to have any decisive role in the Spanish parliament. Finally, in the 2012 November regional election, CiU electoral platform proposed to call a referendum on Catalonia independence and launched a set of measures aiming to gain secession.

CiU's invocation of the right to self-determination is not new. Since the 90s, it has been claimed in all the party conferences, especially in CDC (*Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya*, the major partner of CiU), and was explicitly included in the 2010 electoral platform. Nevertheless, this question monopolized the electoral debate in the 2012 election, and later on it has captured the Catalan political agenda, specially after the parliamentary agreement between CiU and ERC (*Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya*, the main Catalan secessionist party), containing a commitment to call a referendum during the current parliamentary term. Hence, ERC pushes to organize this referedum in 2014, in order to coincide with the tercentenary of the defeat of 1714, which marked the end of medieval privileges of Catalonia and the beginning of Spanish national hegemony. Interestingly, the novelty lies not only in the transformation of an ideological principle and a policy proposal but also in the on-going implementation of a set of public policies to lead the way to the secession of Catalonia from Spain.

This paper aims to demonstrate that CiU has changed its policy position in the center-periphery cleavage and has evolved from being a moderate nationalist party to be a secessionist party. We argue that this policy change is due in part to the multilevel nature of the Spanish political system. The interest of the case study is that it may contribute to the knowledge of policy change in nationalist parties. It also helps to test the influence of institutional variables in policy change, largely ignored by the literature so far.

The first section explores the literature on party policy change. The second section presents our research hypotheses. The next two sections depict how CiU have changed its position and how the multilevel politics has affected this change. Finally, we discussed our preliminary findings and set the next steps in our research.

Party position change: a review of the literature

The first studies on the change of party position relied on the theory of spatial competition. Particularly, they focused party changes in the left-right axis (Budge 1994). These scholars identified factors that explain why parties change their position, facing the same dilemmas that the general theory of partisan change, although this one which has focused mainly on the organizational perspective. However, as noted by

Harmel (2002), the organizational change may have implications for other dimensions, such as ideology or policy positions, aspects that until recently have received little attention.

Panbianco (1990) carried out one of the major works party organizational change, where he identifies several dimensions producing party change. Amongst them, two are especially relevant for the analysis of party position change: the degree of intentionality and its origin. The change can be conceived as an adaptive process (Katz and Mair, 1990), under which parties gradually fit environmental changes, or as a process in which party leaders have a role (Wilson, 1980; Harmel and Tan, 1995). In the first case the party leaders have little room to manoeuvre while in the second case they are the cause of the change. This issue is closely linked to the discussion about the origin of the change, explained by two views that be be alternative or complementary. While some authors emphasize external factors as the main factor for change (Panbianco, 1990; Harmel and Janda, 1994; Muller, 1997), other scholars affirm that internal factors also produce changes even in the absence of external incentives (Harmel et al. 1995).

The most widespread interpretation to explain organizational change is that internal factors play a decisive role when combined with external factors (Harmel and Tan 2003). However, the first studies on the party position change tend to consider that the change has an external origin to which party elites respond. The spatial model generates two main predictions about the interrelationships between the programs of the parties, the policies of the opponents and the political preferences of voters. Firstly, parties adjust their policy agendas to movements in the public opinion. Adams et al. (2004, 2006 and 2009) have analyzed how party elites react to changes in the public opinion and to the interpretations of the electoral outcomes. They have shown that parties are very reluctant to change their ideological positions, and when do it, it is mostly in response to changes in public opinion while there is less evidence of the effect of the electoral results. Secondly, parties adjust their programs according to their competitors, i.e., party strategies are determined by the positions of the other parties in the system. According to Adams and Somer-Topcu (2009), parties adjust their policies to the movements of rivals in the same ideological family and tend to move in the same direction as those competitors in the previous election. Hence, the theory of contagion suggests that a party seeking to compete with its opponents has to look like them.

The fact that political parties consistently change their ideological positions in response to changes in public opinion and changes in their rivals strengthens the argument that parties are vote-seeking and office-seeking. However, Müller (1994) suggests that there are empirical and theoretical reasons to doubt it. Sometimes party leaders and activists are policy-motivated, so they tend to prioritize ideological commitments. Accordingly, to assess party position change we must be taken into account the main objectives of the party, as suggested by Harmel and Janda (1994) in the analysis of the organizational change. Indeed, party position depends on what is the main objective for each party. Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to the inner life of the party.

The main limit of this argument is that political parties are not unitary actors. In this sense, Budge, Ezrow and McDonald (2010) have analysed how internal factional process influences the positioning of parties. They conclude that if a party loses votes as a result of the change, it will tend to return to the starting position as a consequence the

resultant weakness of the leading faction. On the contrary, if the party wins votes, the leading faction will be reinforced and the change will be maintained.

Yet if it is assumed that the parties are not unitary actors, the interpretation of the electoral results will also be controversial. Not surprisingly Ekegren and Oscarsson (2011) have found that party strategies vary depending on the perception that party elites have on voters' behaviour. Depending on the approach employed by elites to interpret the electoral outcome (the Downsian model, the salience model or the competent directional model) the type of strategy adopted will also vary. Consequently, the main factor to explain the party strategy will not rely as much on what actually happens as on what party elites interpret. Moreover, party elites pay very much attention to the position change of opinion leaders (Adams and Ezrow, 2009). In sum, to explain the party position change we must take into account the internal dynamics of parties as well as the perception of party leaders on the political environment.

Finally, another important group of scholars have been more interested in the effect of the type of parties on the party position change, rather than on the internal/external causes. Hence, the distinction between 'mainstream' and 'niche' parties becomes relevant (Meguid, 2005), where the nationalist parties are catalogued amongst the niche category. Following this distinction, it seems that niche parties are less permeable than mainstream parties to the change of voters' position (Adams et al., 2006), although they may respond to changes amongst their own voters (Ezrow, et al., 2011). Consequently, the mainstream parties are more likely to respond to the general electorate model and to the primacy of the median voter, while the niche parties would fit rather to the constituency partisan model that emphasizes the links with their supporters. From a different perspective, Schumacher (2011) also consider the type of party essential to explain the party change. This author argues that the organization of the parties is crucial to understand why the parties respond rather to some environmental incentives (movements of the median voter, changes in the party's voters, exit of the government and electoral defeat) and not to others, and suggests that the answer depends on whether the party is dominated by their leaders (leadership-dominated) or activists (activist-dominated). Indeed, the internal party characteristics permit to explain why parties responds differently to environmental challenges. In this vein, more recently some scholars have started to pay attention to the influence of the globalization and the economical situation to the party position (Haupt 2009; Adams and Ezrow, 2011).

Our review has shown that the literature on party position change has improved substantially and has provided a rich framework for analysis. As in the research on party organizational change, the main dilemma has been to determine whether the change have an exogenous or endogenous origin. Early research tended to emphasize the importance of endogenous factors such as changes in the position of the public opinion, in the opinion leaders, the rival parties, changes in the average voter or the voter 's own, and recently the economic situation. Later on, scholars have devoted more attention to party organization, defining a set of independent variables that would impact on party position, such as factional division, the interpretations of the election results or the type of party. However, these contributions are insufficient to explain the changes in the position of the nationalist parties because they ignore the influence of the multilevel politics.

Party position change in regionalist parties within multilevel systems

As we explained in the previous section, scholars have mostly employed the theories of spatial competition to analyse party change in the left-right axis. Also more recently, others applied the distinction between mainstream and niche parties, proposed by Meguid (2005). While some authors consider the nationalist parties as niche parties, most of the literature rejects it. Elias believes that this category is not satisfactory to understand the ideological nature of this type of parties. Even more, such parties have become a permanent feature of the political landscape (Hepburn, 2009).

Therefore, there is a significant gap in the analysis of the change in the position of the nationalist parties, despite recognizing the multidimensionality of its ideology (De Winter and Tursan, 1998; De Winter et al., 2006). Hence, regionalist parties should not be considered just single-issue parties, but parties with structured positions and ideological preferences regarding the territorial and economic cleavages, which are not exclusive (Gómez-Reino, 2006). Consequently, regionalist parties not only may experience changes in the left-right axis (Elias, 2009, Lynch 2009) but also in the national/territorial axis, particularly since the empirical evidence suggests that the regionalist family is much more heterogeneous than other party families in the left-right ideological spectrum (De Winter, 1998) as well as in the center-periphery cleavage, which ranges from the autonomist positions to secessionism (De Winter, 1994, 1998, Seiler, 1982).

Paradoxically, scholars have tended to consider nationalist parties very static from the ideological point of view, at least regarding the national question. While scholars have paid attention to classify these parties, position changes have received only exceptionally interest (Perez-Nievas, 2006). However, if nationalist parties are based on the center-periphery cleavage, and one of their main concerns is the territorial distribution of political power, any change (or absence of change) in such distribution may lead to a change in the position of the party in this dimension. In this regard, Masseti (2009) suggests distinguishing between autonomist and secessionist parties. The former are classified between assertive autonomists parties seeking to extend the autonomy of their region through federal reforms and moderately autonomist parties supporting lower levels of autonomy than the assertive ones. The secessionists in turn are divided amongst extremist or violent secessionists (those who keep ties to terrorist organizations) and ambiguous secessionists. However, the distinction between the assertive autonomist and the moderately separatist parties is subtler. The former may claim self-determination in their public discourse and party documents while accepting to bargain not really secessionist outcomes. The later may use ambiguous formulas or give up explicit their aspirations of independence for some time. Accordingly the following hypothesis is proposed.

Hypothesis 1. CiU has evolved from an assertive autonomist party to a moderately secessionist party.

The other issue largely ignored by the literature is that these parties, more and more, operate in multilevel environments. Indeed, the analysis of political parties tends, albeit implicitly, to focus on one level, disregarding the fact that parties are actually operating

in multilevel politics in decentralised countries (Deschouwer, 2003). Studies on party position are not an exception and have neglected this question so far. However, there is an increasingly prolific line of research examining the impact of decentralization on political parties, especially at regional level (Hopkin 2003 and 2009, Van Biezen and Hopkin, 2006). This has also permit to observe the coalitional dynamics at various layers of government (Stefuriuc, 2013). Party can have implications for a major party's office-, policy- and vote-seeking aspirations at other territorial levels (Elias, 2009). Similarly, the Manifesto Research Project (Fabre and Martinez-Herrera 2009) and Regional Manifestos Project (Alonso and Gomez 2011) have also begun to analyse how decentralization affects party platforms. Scholars have even addressed how state level parties face the national question (Maddens and Libbretch 2009). Indeed, the main purpose of these research have been the national parties, in part because it is considered that decentralization does not affect their internal party organization (or at least is not so much) and also because, as noted earlier, the nationalist parties tend to be considered stable in their national claims. Following our argument, if nationalist parties are based on the center-periphery cleavage and one of their main concerns is the territorial distribution of political power, any change (or not change) in such distribution, specially where such a change necessarily takes place in a multilevel framework, may affect the position of the party in the center-periphery dimension. Accordingly, it is expected that the parties will be influenced by the institutional environment. In this sense, one can argue that multilevel dynamics can cause changes of position in the national center-periphery dimension nationalist parties. It follows the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2. CiU has become a secessionist party as a result of the dynamic of the Spanish multilevel political system.

Finally, scholars haven identified several external factors that may influence the party position changes (changes in public opinion, changes in rival parties, changes in the median voter or the own voter, changes in opinion leaders). However, the literature has ignored the relevance of interest groups, social movements and media. Lawson and Merkl (1988) had argued that the failure of parties raises the competition from emerging interest groups or minor political parties. As a consequence, one can expect that the existence of these external actors force nationalist parties to change their position. This is an adaptation of the theory of contagion, because in the case of nationalism the boundaries between political parties and other associations are very fluid. Thus it is argued that the environment may push nationalist parties to position change:

Hypothesis 3. CiU has been pushed to change by the reaction of the environment against multilevel politics.

In the following pages we analyse the change of position of CiU and will attempt to explain it by employing congressional documents, party platforms and parliamentary speeches.

The long way of sovereignty: From the declaration of principles to government platform

CiU has been characterized throughout its history as a moderate nationalist force (Caminal, 2000; Barbera and Barrio, 2006). Although the two political parties under this label (CDC and *Unió Democràtica de Catalunya*, UDC) have some differences based in ideological nuances, the federation match perfectly with Massetti's category of assertive nationalist (Massetti, 2009). Both UDC, created in the 30s, and CDC, born before the Spanish Transition, have always considered Catalonia a nation that has its roots in the Middle Ages and with Catalan language as the main distinguishing feature. The political aspiration of both parties has always been to provide Catalonia with the maximum level of self-government, as well as to obtain recognition and respect for its cultural identity. However, they have never supported secessionism. Since its foundation in 1931, UDC has defended a confederal solution for Spain while CDC has always been more ambiguous with respect to the territorial organization of state as long as Catalonia could feel comfortable (Barbera and Barrio, 2011). This moderate position regarding both the national/territorial and the left-right cleavages as well as its electoral weight in the Spanish parliament (not only the largest of the non-state-wide parties in Spain but also one of the four main Spanish parties) have given CiU a prominent position in Spanish politics. It was a key actor in drafting of the 1978 Constitution, focusing most particularly in Title VIII that led to the Autonomous State, and since then has performed a central role as a hinge party supporting minority governments at the Parliament (but without never entering the cabinet). Despite being a non-statewide party, CiU can be considered as a founding father of the Spanish political system emerged from the transition, and has been committed to stability of Spanish political system in numerous, relevant occasions, acting as a third force and as a party of government at the regional and at the national level (Aguilera de Prat, 2001).

However, since the end of the 90s, CiU and CDC in particular start to show symptoms of change of position on the national dimension. Indeed, CDC starts claiming a reinterpretation of the Constitution in order to permit the recognition of the plurality of the state and of the national identity in Catalonia. Following this argument, the national recognition of Catalonia would lead, in turn, towards a higher level of political power and a greater level of sovereignty. Consequently, CiU supported the right of self-determination¹ for Catalonia although this right did not the claim for secessionism but for a multinational state. Actually, this argument was an updated version of the classic CDC idea that Catalonia could become comfortable within Spain. Since the constitutional and statutory framework was seen as an obstacle for this aim, CiU move its position towards a new one supporting a reform of the Constitution and the Statute of Autonomy. This change produce some differences between both members of CiU: while CDC deepened its sovereignist profile, UDC opted for a more social and less essentialist nationalism and continued to support a confederal solution within a multinational state². Thus, UDC rejected any secessionist 'adventure' and considered that a secessionist position had no place in the constitutional and statutory framework.

¹ Conference paper No. 1: "El nacionalisme català als inicis del segle XXI. Xè Congrés Convergència. La força decisiva per a Catalunya".

² "La sobirania de Catalunya i l'Estat plurinacional", UDC, National Council, 31-05-1997.

Paradoxically, despite of the wear produced by two decades of uninterrupted rule in Catalonia, the main challenge faced by CiU had nothing to do with their ideological position but with the succession of Jordi Pujol, its charismatic leader until then. The succession implied a redefinition of the organizational model of the alliance that also lead eventually to a change of position (Barrio, 2008). In this sense, the new leader of the formation, Artur Mas proposed the elaboration a new statute of autonomy for Catalonia³, an issue that until then CIU had rejected. This process was launched in the next 2003-2006 legislative term, when CiU lost the government after the 2003 November regional election. The new statute was approved by referendum on June 18, 2006 (although it was subject to various claims of unconstitutionality). Despite of being at the opposition, CiU had a key role in the reform process, which produced strong disagreements within the left coalition government. Therefore, the approval of the new statute was a success for the nationalist party. Nevertheless, some months later, in the early regional elections in November 2006, although being the first electoral party, couldn't form a majority and remained at the opposition.

As some scholars have pointed out, the electoral results are a powerful incentive for changes in party position. Hence, it might explain why in 2007 CDC launch a call for re-founding the Catalanist movement, aiming to recover the centrality in this cleavage. This initiative was entitled "Casa Gran del Catalanisme", a political discourse to support explicitly the right of self-determination⁴. This proposal was included in the electoral platform in November 2010, although the electoral campaign was framed mainly by the economic crisis and the proposals to restore it. In the 2010 regional election, the debate about the national question was linked to the improvement of the funding system of the regional government, which was widely seen as deeply unbalanced. CiU proposed to adopt a 'fiscal agreement', similar to the Basque model, in order to finish the fiscal deficit between the central and the regional government. The rationale behind this debate was the fact that Catalonia paid more to the state's coffers than it receives afterwards. The consequence of this unbalanced situation was that after the redistribution, decided by the central government, Catalonia was in a lower regional rank in revenue per inhabitants than in tax payment per inhabitant. In this situation of forced austerity, the regional government was forced to make higher budgetary cuts than it would be necessary with a more equitable distribution. CiU regained power in this elections but it only could form a minority government, which open a complicated parliament in huge economical crisis context.

After a two-years difficult term, in the November 2012, Artur Mas decided to call for early elections as a result of the state of public opinion produced by the massive demonstration on the occasion of the National Day of Catalonia, as we mentioned in the introduction, organised by the Catalan National Assembly (although the formal justification for the early election provided by the regional prime minister was the unwillingness of the Spanish government to respond the Catalan proposal to bargain a new fiscal status for Catalonia).

The focus of the campaign turned to an explicit secessionist debate, framed by the CiU electoral motto 'The will of a nation' (*La voluntat d'un poble*), conceived as a prelude to the creation of a new state. CiU's electoral program for 2012 means a real turning

³ "Catalunya sense límits: els nous horitzons del nostre projecte de país", party document obtained in electronic form in www.convergencia.cat/media/128.pdf

⁴ www.ciu.cat/media/21719.pdf.

point in its position, now clearly oriented towards secessionism. Thus, the new parliament was expected to be a ‘national transition to the statehood’ where a set of policies should be implemented to achieve the full sovereignty, the main amongst these being a secessionist referendum⁵. With such a secessionist orientation, CiU expected to achieve a big parliamentary majority (as many polls also predicted).

However, the results were absolutely far from the expectations. CiU not only remained far from the majority but it even got worst results than in 2010, losing more than 100,000 votes and 12 seats (almost 20% of the previous representation). Only the horrible results of its main opponent, the Catalan Socialist Party, permit CiU to keep the power after achieving a parliamentary agreement with ERC, who doubled its representation. The ‘Agreement for the national transition and to ensure the parliamentary stability of the government of Catalonia’ signed by CiU and ERC set the commitment to call a referendum and displayed a set of policies seeking the creation of a state⁶. Both formations are declared to launch of exhaustion negotiating with the central government so that the process could be implemented in legal terms. However, if the central government disdains this proposal to negotiate a secessionist referendum, unilateral secession is not discarded by the agreement.

Since then, the government has systematically advanced in fulfilling the agreement aiming to call a referendum before December 31, 2013. So the first plenary session of the regional parliament a Declaration of Sovereignty⁷ was approved, in order to launch the process for implementing the right of self-determination and to urge the central government to make its best to hold it. In this vein, the cabinet approved two decisions in the first months of the new government: an Advisory Council for the National Transition was conceived aiming to support the secessionist process, and a ‘National Pact for the Right to Decide’ was promoted seeking to involve parties, institutions and pressure groups of the civil society. The parliament has also initiated the development of a Referendum Act to provide legal cover to a secessionist referendum, in case that the central government (the only one who has the legal right to call it) refuses to do it. The latest step of this incremental scheme is a letter that the Catalan prime minister sent the July 26th to the Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy, asking to set up the formal process for the consultation.

As we have seen, although CiU already did include the claim for the right of self-determination in their Congressional Documents since the nineties, this proposal did not become an electoral pledge until 2010 and afterwards government policy in an on-going implementation. So we can conclude that CiU has ceased to be a moderate nationalist force to become a secessionist party. In the following pages we explore the reasons for this change of position.

⁵ Electoral platform for the regional election in 2012: www.ciu.cat/media/76990.pdf

⁶ Coalition agreement for the X Catalan Parliament, 19-12-2012: “Acord per a la transició nacional i per garantir l’estabilitat parlamentària del govern de Catalunya” in www.ciu.cat/media/78434.pdf

⁷ “Declaració de sobirania i del Dret a decidir del Poble de Catalunya”, www.ciu.cat/media/78744.pdf

⁸ www.ciu.cat/media/80946.pdf

The influence of the multilevel politics and the pressure groups

This paper argues that one of the key explanatory factors for understanding the changes in the position of the nationalist parties is the multilevel nature of the political systems in which they operate. One of the main issues addressed by the nationalist parties, if not the central one, is the territorial distribution of political power. By definition a nationalist party aspires to a specific territorial distribution of political power. We have already noted that CiU is a founding party of the political system emerged in the transition, so it is one of the architects of the institutional design created then. For more than 20 years, CiU considered that the opportunities offered by the constitutional framework to develop Catalan self-government were adequate and there was no reason for a modification. With the new millennium, coinciding with the organizational change motivated by the succession of Jordi Pujol, CiU increase the level of exigency and set the reform the Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia as a new objective⁸. However, the new aim faced serious formal obstacles: since any amendment of the Catalan Statute of Autonomy needs to be approved by the regional assembly, then approved again by an absolute majority in the Congress of Deputies and finally has to be supported by a majority of the electors in a referendum, parliamentary coordination in both regional and national levels becomes a determinant of the success of any reform.

The process of reform of the Statute of Autonomy was launched in 2003, coinciding with the loss of the Catalan government by CiU. Although CiU was the first parliamentary party, a coalition of the Socialists, the secessionists of ERC and the radical left formed a majority government headed by Pasqual Maragall, who had been the first to propose the reform of the Statute. The new Catalan government had the support of the Spanish Socialist leader at the opposition, Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, who had pledged to back 'any' reform of the Statute approved by Catalan Parliament. However, the total opposition of the PP, the ruling party at that moment, blocked any expectation of such a reform. The political landscape changed dramatically in the national election in March 2004, held just 3 days after the terrorist attack in Madrid. Against all odds, the Socialist obtained a clear victory, although they failed to obtain the parliamentary majority. The new government was supported then by a parliamentary coalition including all the parties that formed the government of Catalonia. Interestingly, CiU decided not to give support to the new government although it was predisposed to cooperate, especially in exchange of the support of the PSOE (the Spanish Socialist party) to the reform of the Statute. Meanwhile Zapatero, in his inaugural address reiterated its commitment to reform the statute announced during the campaign⁹.

The September 30, 2005 the Catalan Parliament approved the new Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia with the only opposition of the Popular Party. Thus, the reform passed to the Spanish parliament. Throughout this second stage, the statute underwent several modifications until the PSOE, CiU and some small parties approved the final draft. However, ERC decided to withdraw its support, unsatisfied with the changes made to the original text. Even more, forced by their grassroots, ERC opposed to give support

⁸ Although ERC had claimed for a reform of the Statute since the 1980s, the first serious proposal to reform it was made by the leader of the PSC –Pasqual Maragall- during the 1999-2003 parliament.

⁹ *Diario de Sesiones del Congreso de los Diputados* (Journal of the Spanish Low Chamber), 2004, VIII Legislatura, numero 2 www.congreso.es/public_oficiales/L8/CONG/DS/PL/PL_002.pdf

and canvassed for a negative vote in the referendum. This opposition to the reform led to the breakdown of the governing coalition in Catalonia and led to early elections.

In June 2006, the referendum on the Statute had a participation of 49.4% of the total electors and was approved with the support of 73.9% of votes. The PP rejected the new Statute because, from its point of view, some contents contravened the Constitution. Hence, he decided to submit the new norm to the Constitutional Court, as also some regional governments and Ombudsman did. The process of constitutional revision was very controversial, because some of its members had an expired mandate due to the political tactics of PP and PSOE that make the renewal almost impossible. Moreover, the political pressures and the amount of other critical topics to be reviewed by the Court delayed the decision for more than three years. As a consequence, when the Court made the final review in July 2010, many people, political parties and even the main Catalan newspapers were very critical with the decision (although only a few but important articles were declared unconstitutional) and considered it illegitimate. The rejection to the decision by most Catalan parties that had supported the statute marked the beginning of a series of actions in favour of the right of self-determination and independence of Catalonia. It started with a massive demonstration on July 2010, some days after the Constitutional decision, with the motto "We are a nation and we have to decide".

This expression of protest was actually the culmination of an increasing mobilization in the secessionist political space: since 2005 new parties emerged supporting openly the independence, beside numerous new associations and pressure groups that start to employ collective action in favour of self-determination.

There have always been secessionist parties in Catalan politics, with especial mention to ERC, the historic party (created in the 30s), but except for them none of any other party secessionist parties had obtained parliamentary representation before 2010. At that election, a new secessionist party, *Solidaridad Catalana per la Independencia* (SCI)¹⁰, entered the regional parliament just some months after being created from a split in ERC. They had a fleeting presence as they lost parliamentary representation in 2012, being replaced by the *Candidatura d'Unitat Popular* (CUP), a secessionist, extreme-left party with strong local supports in some small municipalities. These new parties reflect the increasing support for secessionism amongst the electorate. According to the theories of spatial competition, the existence of new parties in the nationalist space affects the positioning of the parties of the same ideological family. As a consequence of this, both CiU and ERC have been pushed to radicalize their position.

Hence, not only new parties emerge in the political landscape. Since 2005, following the parliamentary discussion on the amendments to the Statute, various associations and organizations that defend the integrity of the text adopted by the Parliament and declared in favour of self-determination (Plataforma pel Dret a Decidir, Sobirania i Progrés, Cercle Català de Negocis, etc..) were created. These organizations carry out different types of collective actions: demonstrations, collecting signatures, information campaigns. Many of them create the Catalan National Assembly (ANC) in 2012. This is a pressure group in favour of the independence of Catalonia created following the 'National Conference for a Own State' organised by activists linked to various

¹⁰ Amongst the new parliamentarians from SCI: Uriel Bertra (EC), López Tena (DCD) (Cercle d'Estudis Sobiranistes) and Joan Laporta (Democràcia Catalana).

movements, organizations and pro-independence parties¹¹. As we mentioned before, the ANC promoted the "march to the independence" which culminated in the demonstration in Barcelona under the slogan "Catalonia, a New State in Europe" which took place on September 11, 2012. After the demonstration the President of the Generalitat received their leaders and assumed their request to hold a plebiscite election and hold a referendum on self-determination in 2014. Only a week later, after a failed initial talks meeting with the prime minister of Spain regarding the fiscal pact, Artur Mas endorsed the agenda of the ANC, calling for early elections and pledging to make the referendum.

The influence of this pressure group has been decisive not only in the change of position of CiU but also in the evolution of the whole process. In 2013 it launched a campaign for Fiscal Sovereignty in order to persuade individuals, companies and institutions to pay their taxes in a virtual Tax Catalan Agency. It also canvassed for a petition campaign to call a referendum, attempting to persuade catalan regional MPs to approve a unilateral secessionism if the central government do not permit it. In June 2013 organized a 'Freedom Concert' in the FC Barcelona stadium. Currently, it is preparing a 400 km human chain along the route of the old Catalan Via Augusta for the next September 11th in order to call the attention of an international audience in favour of Catalan independence.

Finally, the institutional field is also experiencing an increasing amount of initiatives supporting the right to self-determination. Since 2009 several Catalan municipalities had non-binding consultations on the independence. In 2011 most of them adhered to the Association of Municipalities for Independence (AMI), a sort of institutional pressure group aiming to bring together local organizations supporting independence. Until August 2013, 670 municipalities, 28 district councils and two county councils have joined the AMI.

Many of these initiatives also are counting on the support of private and public media. The Catalan public television broadcast live the demonstration of the September 2012 as well as and the "Concert for Freedom". Equally, there is considerable space devoted to the problems in the news on the radio and public TV and on talk shows.

Discussion and prospects for future research

This paper is a case study of the Catalan nationalism and its main party, CiU, with two aims. First, we aim to prove that a nationalist party is susceptible to change its position in the center-periphery cleavage. As we have shown, Catalan nationalism, like other ideologies, does not have a static nature and so it may experience oscillations in its ideological and policy positions. Indeed, CiU has changed position in the last decade and has become a secessionist party not only from a discursive perspective but also regarding its policy platform and the government plan, including measures to advance for the secession.

Second, we attempted to show that the factors employed until now to explain party position change are not enough. It has been argued that in the case of nationalist parties,

¹¹ The amount of attendants was computed between 600.000 and 2.000.000 individuals, depending on the sources.

taking into account that their political aims are closely linked to the discussion on the territorial distribution of political power, institutional design and multilevel politics may have a relevant impact. Moreover, given that social movements and pressure groups are also important in the politics of nationalisms, we also have to assess their influence in the changes of nationalist parties. Indeed, multilevel politics and the irruption of new political actors in the Catalan political landscape are a decisive factor to explain the change in CiU's position. Finally, we showed that role of judiciary politics may also be important, as happened in Catalonia: the features of the process of reform of the self-government and the role of the Constitutional Court have exerted a decisive influence on the change of party position, although this final factors certainly could not force such a sudden party change without the role played by the pressures coming from the nationalist environment.

Of course, this work could only partially explain CiU's position change since it only intended to shed light on the importance of institutional factors. We are also aware of the relevance of others approach, like the contributions of the elitist or the sociological theories. There are other factors that are likely to influence and should be considered in future research. Firstly, we have to take into account the possible impact of the economic crisis. Secondly, we must analyse the positioning of the militants and leaders, since if they would have not been very predisposed to change this probably would not have occurred. In this respect there is some evidence pointing in this direction and suggesting a certain radicalisation of the activists and party leaders in the national cleavage (Baras et al 2009). Thirdly, the electoral analysis could help to determine if the party acts as a niche party and looks at the changes in the supporters or, on the contrary, it acts as a mainstream party and pay attention to changes in the average voter. And closely linked with it we must assess the impact of the interpretations of the leaders to the movements of the electorate. The analysis of all these factors shall contribute to give a much more accurate picture of the reasons for the change in position of CiU.

REFERENCES

Adams, J. and Ezrow, L. (2009) "Who Do European Parties Represent? How Western European Parties Represent the Policy Preferences of Opinion Leaders", *The Journal of Politics*, 71, 1, 206-226. 1

Adams, J. and Somer-Topcu, Z. (2009): "Policy Adjustment by Parties in Response to Rival Parties' Policy Shift: Spatial Theory and The Dynamics of Party Competition in Twenty-Five Post-War Democracies", *British Journal of Political Science*, 39, 825-846.

Adams, J. et al. (2004): "Understanding Change and Stability in Party Ideologies: Do parties respond to Public Opinion or to Past Election Results", *British Journal of Political Science*, 589-610.

Adams, J. Clark, M. Ezrow, L. and Glasgow, G. (2006): "Are Niche Parties Fundamentally Different from Mainstream Parties? The Causes and the Electoral Consequences of Western European Parties' Policy Shifts, 1976-1998", *American Journal of Political Science*, 50, 519-539.

Adams, J, Haupt, A.B. Stoll, H. (2009): "What Moves Parties? The Role of Public Opinion and Global Economic Conditions in Western Europe", *Comparative Political Studies*, 42, 605-639.

Aguilera de Prat, C.R. (2001): "Convergència i Unió ante los pactos de gobernabilidad de 1993 y 1996", *Sistema*, nº 165.

Alonso, S. and Gómez, B. (2011): "Partidos nacionales en elecciones regionales: ¿coherencia territorial o programas a la carta?", *Revista de Estudios Políticos*, 152, 183-209.

Barberà, O. i A. Barrio (2006): "Convergència i Unió: from Stability to Decline?" a De Winter, L. M. Gómez Reino i P. Lynch (eds.): *Autonomist Parties in Europe: Identity Politics and the Revival of the Territorial Cleavage*, Barcelona, Institut de Ciències Polítiques i Socials.

Barrio, A, (2009) "Alianzas entre partidos y cambio organizativo: el caso de Convergència i Unió", *Papers*, 92, 51-74.

Barrio, A. and Barberà, A. (2011): "Convergència i Unió", Elias, A. and Tronconi, F. (eds). *From protest to power: minority nationalist parties and the challenges of representation*, Wien, Baumüller.

Budge, I. (1994) "A new Spatial Theory of party Competition: Uncertainty, ideology and Policy Equilibria Viewed Comparatively and Temporally", *British Journal of Political Science*, 24, 443-467.

Budge, I, Ezrow, L. and McDonald, M. (2010): “Ideology, Party Factionalism and Policy Change: An integrated dynamic theory”, *British Journal of Political Science*, 40 (4), 781-804.

Caminal, M. (2001): “El pujolisme i la ideologia nacionalista de Convergència Democràtica” a Culla, J. B. (coord.): *El pal de paller. Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya (1974-2000)*, Barcelona, Pòrtic.

Coakley, J. (1992), *The Social Origins of Nationalist Movements and Explanations of Nationalism: a Review*, in J. Coakley (ed.), *The Social Origins of Nationalist Movements: The Contemporary West European Experience*. London: Sage.

Deschouwer, K. (2003): “Political parties in Multi-Layered Systems”, *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 10, 3, 213-226

De Winter, L. (ed.) (1994): *Non-state wide parties in Europe*, Barcelona, Institut de Ciències Polítiques i Socials.

De Winter, L. (1998a), *A Comparative Analysis of Electoral, Office and Policy Success of Ethnoregionalist Parties*, in L. De Winter and H. Tursan (eds), *Regionalist Parties in Western Europe*. London: Routledge.

De Winter, L. and Tursan, H. (eds) (1998), *Regionalist Parties in Western Europe*. London: Routledge.

De Winter, L., Gomez-Reino, M. and Lynch, P. (2006), *Autonomist Parties in Europe: Identity Politics and The Revival of the Territorial Cleavage*, Barcelona: ICPS.

Ekegren, A-M. and Oscarsson, H. (2011): “Party elites’ perception of voting behaviour”, *Party Politics*, 19, 4, 641-664.

Ezrow, L (2008): “On the inverse relationship between votes and proximity for niche parties”, *European Journal of Political Research*, 47, 206-220. Research Note.

Ezrow, L. De Vries, C. Steebergen, M. Edwards, E. (2011): « Mean voter representation and partisan constituency : Do parties respond to the mean voter positions or to their supporters », *Party Politics*, 17 (3), 275-301.

Elias, A. (2009): “From Protest to Power: Mapping the Ideological Evolution of Playd Cymru and Bloque Nacionalista Galego”, *Regional & Federal Studies*, 19: 4, 533 — 557.

Fabre, E. Y E. Martínez-Herrera (2009): “Statewide Parties and Regional Party Competition: An Analysis of Party manifestos in the United Kingdom”, en Swenden, W. Y B. Maddens: *Territorial Party Politics in Western Europe*, palgrave-Macmillan

Gómez Reino M. de Winter, L. Lynch, P. (2006): “Conclusión: The Future Study of Autonomist and Regionalist Parties” in De Winter, Gómez-Reino, M. and Lynch, P. *Autonomist Parties in Europe: Identity Politics and The Revival of Territorial Cleavage*, Vol II, pp. 247-269, Barcelona, Institut de Ciències Polítiques i Socials.

Harmel, R. (2002): “Party organisational change: competing explanations?” a Luther, R. i F. Müller-Rommel (eds.): *Political Parties in the New Europe*, Oxford, Oxford Univerity Press.

Harmel et al. (1995): “Performance, leadership, factions and party change: an empirical analysis”, *West European Politics*, 18, 1-33.

Harmel, R. i K. Janda (1994): “An integrated theory of party goals and party change”, *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, vol 6, n° 3.

Harmenl, R. and Tan, A. (2003): “Party actors and party change: Does factional dominance matter”, *European Journal of Political Research*, 42, 409-424.

Hechter, M. (1975), *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development 1536–1966*. London: Routledge.

Hepburn, E. (2009) “Introduction: Re-conceptualizing sub-state Mobilization”, *Regional and Federal Studies*, 19, 4-5, 477-499.

Hopkin, J. (2003): “Political Decentralization, Electoral Change and Party Organizational Adaptation: A Framework for analysis.” *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 10: 227-237

Hopkin, J. (2009): *Party Matters: Devolution and Party Politics in Britain and Spain*, *Party Politics*, 15, n° 2, pp. 179-198

Jeffrey, C. (2009), “New Research Agendas on Regional Party Competition”, *Regional and Federal Studies*, 19, 4-5, 639-650

Katz, R. i P. Mair (1993): “The Evolution of Party Organizations in Europe: Three Faces of party Organisation”, *American Review of Politics*, n° 14.

Katz, R. i P. Mair (eds.)(1994): *How parties organize?*, London, Sage Publications.

Lawson, K. and Merkl, P. (1988): *When parties fail: emerging alternative organizations*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.

Lynch, P. (2009) 'From Social Democracy back to No Ideology?—The Scottish National Party and Ideological Change in a Multi-level Electoral Setting', *Regional & Federal Studies*, 19: 4, 619 — 637

Maddens, B. y Libbretch, L. (2009) How state-wide parties COPE with the regionalist issue: the case of Spain en Swenden, W. Y B. Maddens: *Territorial Party Politics in Western Europe*, palgrave-Macmillan

Masseti, E. (2009) 'Explaining Regionalist Party Positioning in a Multi-dimensional Ideological Space: A Framework for Analysis', *Regional & Federal Studies*, 19: 4, 501-531

- Meyer, T. M. and Wagner, M. (2013): “Mainstream or Niche? Vote-Seeking Incentives and the Programmatic Strategies of Political Parties”, *Comparative Political Studies*, XX (X) 1-27.
- Müller, W.C. i K. Strøm (eds.) (1999): *Policy, Office, or Votes? How Political parties in Western Europe Make Hard Decisions*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press
- Müller, W. (1999) “Decisions for Opposition: The Austrian Socialist Party’s abandonment of Government Participation”, Müller, W.C. i K. Strøm (eds.) *Policy, Office, or Votes? How Political parties in Western Europe Make Hard Decisions*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press
- Müller, W.C. (1997): “Inside the black box: A Confrontation of Party Executive Party Behaviour and Theories of Party Organisational Change”, *Party Politics*, vol. 3, n° 3.
- Newman, S. (1997), Ideological Trends Among Ethnoregional Parties in Post-Industrial Democracies, *Nationalism & Ethnic Politics*, Vol.3, No.1, pp.28–60
- Panebianco, A. (1990): *Modelos de partido*, Madrid, Alianza Editorial.
- Perez-Nievas, S. (2006), The Partido Nacionalista Vasco: Redefining Political Goals at the Turn of the Century, in L. De Winter, M. Gomez-Reino and P. Lynch (eds), *Autonomist Parties in Europe: Identity Politics and The Revival of the Territorial Cleavage*, Vol. I. Barcelona: ICPS.
- Seiler, D.L. (1982): *Les partis autonomistes*, Paris, PUF.
- Somer-Topcu, Z. (2009): “Timely Decisions: The Effects of Past National Elections on Party Policy Change”, *The Journal of Politics*, 71 (1), 238-248.
- Schumacher, G., de Vries, C.E. and Vis, B. (2013). Why Do Parties Change Position? Party Organization and Environmental Incentives. *The Journal of Politics*, 75, pp 464-477.
- Van Biezen, I and J. Hopkin (2006). ‘Party Organization in Multi-level Contexts’, in Dan Hough and Charlie Jeffery (eds.), *Devolution and Electoral Politics: A Comparative Exploration*. Manchester: Manchester: University Press, pp.14-36.
- Van Houten, P. (2009): “Multi-level relations in Political Parties”, *Party Politics*, 12, 2, 137-156.
- Wagner, M. (2012): “Defining and measuring niche parties”, *Party Politics*, 18, 6, 845-864.
- Wagner, M. (2012). “When do parties emphasise extreme positions: How strategic incentives for policy differentiation influence issue importance”, *European Journal of Political Research*, 51, 64-88.
- Wilson, F.L. (1980): “Sources of party transformation: the case of France”, Merkl, P. H. (ed.) *Western European Party Systems: Trends and Prospects*, New York, Free Press.

Wilson F.L. (1994): “The Sources of Party Change: The Social Democratic Parties of Britain, France, Germany and Spain” a Lawson, K.: *How political parties work*, London, Praeger