

THE ELECTORAL EXPRESSION OF THE TERRITORIAL CLEAVAGE AFTER THE GREAT RECESSION: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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This is a working paper which is still on process. We kindly request that you not circulate this paper.

Abstract: This paper analyses the effect of the Great Recession on territorial voting in 18 regions across five Western European states, assessing whether its evolution depended more on economic deterioration or on their position along the centre–periphery axis. To this end, it proposes the Centre Distance Index (CDI), a multidimensional indicator integrating territorial, sociocultural and political dimensions. The results show almost no variation in territorial voting in regions close to the centre, larger increases in those further away, and considerable heterogeneity among regions in intermediate positions. The association between the CDI and changes in territorial voting is positive and moderate, whereas its relationship with economic impact is weak. The centre–periphery position therefore has greater explanatory power than economic deterioration. The Great Recession appears to have acted as an activating factor for pre-existing territorial conflicts, whose electoral expression depended on the political, sociocultural and institutional conditions of each region. Thus, crises may reactivate existing cleavages without necessarily generating new divisions or pro-independence radicalisation. The results are exploratory in nature.

Key Words: Territorial Politics, Cleavages, Crisis, Elections, Political Parties

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1. INTRODUCTION

The centre–periphery conflict constitutes one of the fundamental cleavages for understanding political organisation and electoral competition in Western Europe (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Rokkan, 1970). Its origins lie in the construction of nation-states, a process that generated resistance among territorial communities seeking to preserve distinct identities, languages and traditions in the face of state-led homogenisation (Deutsch, 1953; 1961; Shils, 1975). With the consolidation of contemporary party systems, these tensions were expressed through stateless nationalist and regionalist parties (SNRPs), in opposition to state-wide parties, consolidating the territorial dimension as a stable element of electoral competition (Rokkan, 1970; Hepburn, 2009).

The literature has explored multiple causes of the persistence of territorial conflict in contemporary societies. It has highlighted the continuity of distinct territorial and ethno-linguistic identities (Caramani, 2004), decentralisation and the creation of regional self-government institutions (Keating and Salmon, 2001; Hepburn, 2009), the emergence of new political spaces resulting from European multilevel governance (Hooghe and Marks, 2002), and disputes between central and sub-state governments over powers, resources and political recognition (De Winter and Türsan, 1998). Other studies have examined how economic crises can intensify territorial conflict by altering perceptions of resource distribution and territorial capacity to influence decision-making (Keating, 2013; Hooghe and Marks, 2018).

The Great Recession is particularly relevant for examining this possibility. There is evidence that it reinforced territorial demands in regions where the conflict was more institutionalised and actors capable of channelling such demands existed, such as Catalonia (Crameri, 2014; Muñoz and Tormos, 2015; Serrano, 2013) and Scotland (McCrone and Bechhofer, 2015; Mitchell et al., 2012). However, it remains less well understood whether an economic crisis can generate territorial political effects in regions with less differentiation or less established regionalist and nationalist movements (Duerr, 2015; Massetti and Schakel, 2016). This limitation makes it difficult to identify the conditions under which a crisis translates into electoral outcomes in territorial terms.

From a comparative perspective, it is essential to contrast alternative explanations in order to determine the extent to which the increase in SNRP voting following a crisis responds primarily to regional economic deterioration or, conversely, to structural factors linked to the position of territories along the centre–periphery axis, through a systematic

comparison of cases. This paper draws on the idea that economic crises act as conditional activating factors; that is, they generate discontent, but its electoral translation depends on pre-existing territorial differences and on the ability of political actors to turn these into territorial demands.

Based on this approach, the article analyses whether the Great Recession altered the electoral expression of territorial conflict in Western Europe and the extent to which these changes were conditioned by the prior structural position of each territory.

To this end, the study compares 18 regions across five Western European states. Its main contribution is to extend the analysis of Territorial Studies beyond territories where territorial conflict is highly institutionalised, incorporating regions with different levels of integration and differentiation vis-à-vis the state. To this end, it proposes the Centre Distance Index (CDI), a multidimensional indicator drawing on the contributions of Rokkan and Urwin (1982; 1983), which measures the regional position through spatial, sociocultural and political factors. The research examines whether this position better explains the evolution of territorial voting following the Great Recession than the intensity of regional economic deterioration.

The article is structured as follows. The second section develops the theoretical framework and hypotheses; the third presents the methodological design, case selection and operationalisation of the variables; the fourth sets out the results of the comparative analysis; the fifth develops the discussion and addresses the main limitations of the study; and, finally, the sixth presents the conclusions.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

2.1. The Centre–Periphery Conflict and Electoral Mobilisation

The centre–periphery conflict constitutes one of the main dimensions for understanding political competition in Western Europe (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Rokkan, 1970). Its origins lie in the very construction of nation-states, when certain political centres expanded their institutions and capacity for integration over territories with varying degrees of economic, cultural and political incorporation (Deutsch, 1953; Shils, 1975). This process generated resistance among territorial communities seeking to preserve their identities, languages and traditions in the face of state-led homogenisation, giving rise to opposition between elites from peripheral and central territories (Deutsch, 1961; Pisciotta, 2016, p. 196).

From this perspective, Rokkan and Urwin (1982; 1983) conceptualise the centre–periphery relationship as a territorial dimension of political power in which regions occupy differentiated positions according to their proximity to the state political centre. This position depends on geographical distance and on historical, sociocultural and political factors related to collective identity, ties of belonging, and territorial capacity to develop their own institutions and projects. Therefore, distance from the state centre constitutes a structural condition that may facilitate the transformation of territorial differences into political divisions (Rokkan and Urwin, 1982; 1983). In this sense, the centre–periphery axis constitutes a potential structure for mobilisation which, when politically activated and territorially articulated, can develop into territorial conflict and find electoral expression.

However, the existence of territorial differences does not necessarily entail their electoral expression. For these differences to become a relevant dimension of political competition, the intervention of political actors capable of formulating collective demands and mobilising citizen support is necessary. In Western Europe, stateless nationalist and regionalist parties (SNRPs) have played a central role in articulating demands for territorial recognition, autonomy or sovereignty through distinct electoral platforms (De Winter and Türsan, 1998; Hepburn, 2009). The consolidation of these parties depends on the interaction between territorial identities, institutional opportunities and organisational resources capable of transforming social differences into competitive political projects (Brancati, 2008).

The persistence of these actors and territorial demands has been associated with the continuity of distinct regional identities (Caramani, 2004), the expansion of decentralisation and regional self-government processes (Keating and Salmon, 2001; Hepburn, 2009), and the emergence of new arenas for political action arising from European multilevel governance (Hooghe, 1996; Hooghe and Marks, 2018). These conditions help explain why some territories develop stable regionalist and nationalist movements, while others maintain closer relationships with the state and channel their demands primarily through state-wide parties.

Consequently, regions may occupy different positions along the centre–periphery axis. Thus, some territories display high levels of political and cultural integration with the state, while others combine greater territorial differentiation with their own institutions

and actors capable of mobilising collective demands. Between these two extremes are regions occupying an intermediate position.

2.2. Economic Crises and the Activation of Territorial Conflict

Although the structural position of regions conditions the capacity to politicise the centre–periphery conflict, external factors may alter the intensity and form in which these divisions are expressed electorally. The literature on political behaviour has shown that economic crises can alter electoral competition by generating discontent, changing preferences and opening up opportunities for new mobilisation frames (Kriesi et al., 2012; Kriesi, 2015). However, these effects are not automatic, but depend on pre-existing politically relevant divisions and on the ability of actors to interpret economic problems through specific mobilisation frames.

The Great Recession constitutes a particularly relevant episode for analysing this interaction, as it intensified disputes over the distribution of resources, political decision-making capacity, and relations between central and sub-state governments (Keating, 2013; Hooghe and Marks, 2018). Nevertheless, the evidence suggests that the crisis did not generate new territorial conflicts where none had previously existed, but rather reinforced divisions where favourable conditions for their politicisation were already present.

Catalonia and Scotland are the most extensively studied examples. In both territories, the crisis coincided with an increase in demands for self-government and independence, facilitated by the capacity of nationalist movements to link the economic effects of the recession to the political and fiscal relationship maintained with the central state (Crameri, 2014; Mitchell et al., 2012; Muñoz and Tormos, 2015; Serrano, 2013). Other studies have compared the two cases to examine this relationship (Bourne, 2014), while subsequent research has extended the analysis to other European territories, showing more heterogeneous results (Duerr, 2015; Massetti and Schakel, 2016).

The studies mentioned above raise a central question: whether territorial mobilisation responds primarily to the intensity of economic deterioration or whether it depends first and foremost on pre-existing structural characteristics. From this perspective, the Great Recession can be understood as a conditional activating factor. This paper draws on the idea that the crisis generated a widespread context of discontent, but that its electoral translation depended on the existence of distinct territorial identities, organisational

capacities, and political frames capable of turning its economic consequences into territorial demands.

Accordingly, it is assumed that the intensity of economic deterioration does not in itself provide a sufficient explanation for the increase in SNRP voting. In regions further removed from the state political centre and possessing greater political resources for articulating territorial demands, the costs of the crisis are more likely to be interpreted through centre–periphery conflict frames. Conversely, in territories with greater state integration, economic discontent is more likely to be channelled primarily through state-wide parties.

To analyse this territorial variation, the article proposes the Centre Distance Index (CDI) as a multidimensional measure of the regional structural position along the centre–periphery axis. The index draws on the contributions of Rokkan and Urwin (1982; 1983) and combines three dimensions: territorial distance from the state political centre, distinct sociocultural characteristics, and the problematisation of the relationship of dependence on the state. The CDI makes it possible to compare regions with different levels of territorial integration and differentiation and to assess the extent to which their structural position explains the evolution of territorial voting following the Great Recession, as opposed to the intensity of economic deterioration.

2.3. Research Hypotheses

Based on the framework outlined above, the study's general hypothesis is as follows:

- HG. Distance from the state political centre constitutes the main explanatory factor for variation in territorial voting following the Great Recession, outweighing the intensity of the economic impact experienced by each region.

The general expectation is specified through the following specific hypotheses, linked to the characteristics of each regional typology. Thus:

- H1. Centripetal regions, with a low degree of distance from the state political centre, will display small or negative changes in territorial voting following the Great Recession, due to their high degree of political, territorial and sociocultural integration.
- H2. Ambivalent regions, occupying intermediate positions along the centre–periphery axis, will show greater heterogeneity in the evolution of territorial

voting, as the electoral translation of the crisis will depend on the ability of political actors to activate territorial frames.

- H3. Centrifugal regions, with a high degree of distance from the state political centre, will display larger increases in territorial voting following the Great Recession, as they possess distinct identities and political structures capable of channelling economic discontent in territorial terms.

The fourth hypothesis focuses on the interaction between the economic impact and the structural position of regions along the centre–periphery axis:

- H4. The relationship between the economic impact of the Great Recession and changes in territorial voting will be stronger in regions with greater distance from the state political centre.

Finally, the transnational hypothesis states that:

- H5. Regions occupying similar positions along the centre–periphery axis will display more similar patterns in the evolution of territorial voting than regions belonging to the same state but occupying different territorial positions.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1. Comparative Design

The research adopts a small-N comparative design aimed at analysing the conditions under which a common economic crisis can generate differentiated electoral responses across different territories. The objective is not to draw generalisable statistical inferences, but to identify comparative patterns and assess the explanatory capacity of the structural position of regions along the centre–periphery axis through a systematic comparison of different cases (George and Bennett, 2005; Gerring, 2007).

The design combines the logics of Most Similar Systems Design and Most Different Systems Design (Anckar, 2008). The former makes it possible to compare regions belonging to the same state but occupying different positions along the centre–periphery axis, thereby reducing the influence of common state-level institutional factors. The latter allows for comparisons between regions in different states that occupy similar structural positions, assessing whether these similarities are associated with similar electoral patterns despite their national and institutional differences.

The Great Recession is considered an external shock common to all regions, whose electoral impact is not assumed to have been homogeneous. This paper draws on the idea

that the crisis generated a widespread context of discontent, but that its electoral translation depended on pre-existing territorial conditions and on the ability of political actors to turn its economic consequences into territorial demands.

3.2. Variables and Operationalisation

Dependent Variable: Change in Territorial Voting (ΔCTV)

The main dependent variable is Change in Territorial Voting (ΔCTV), defined as the change in electoral support obtained by stateless nationalist and regionalist parties (SNRPs) before and after the Great Recession. SNRPs are defined as political parties that seek to represent and promote the particular interests of territories —whether referred to as regions, nations, peoples or *Heimat*— whose interests may be economic, political, social, cultural or symbolic in nature (Hepburn, 2009: p. 482). The variable is calculated using the following expression:

$$\Delta CTV = \text{SNRP}_{\text{post}} - \text{SNRP}_{\text{pre}}$$

where:

- SNRP_{pre} represents the percentage of the vote obtained by these parties in the period preceding the crisis.
- $\text{SNRP}_{\text{post}}$ represents the percentage of the vote obtained by these parties in the period following the crisis.

Positive values indicate an increase in the electoral weight of SNRPs, while negative values reflect a decline in their support.

Given the small number of cases and the presence of potential outliers, ΔCTV is analysed using complementary measures of central tendency. In addition to the mean, the median is calculated for each regional typology in order to identify the central pattern of each group of regions and assess the extent to which extreme values may affect the mean. This makes it possible to assess more accurately the differences between centripetal, ambivalent and centrifugal regions.

This variable makes it possible to measure the electoral evolution of territorial conflict without assuming that the economic crisis necessarily altered the structure of the centre–periphery cleavage. In this sense, ΔCTV captures an observable manifestation of territorial conflict through changes in electoral support for SNRPs.

As a complementary indicator, Change in Independence Voting (ΔIV) is included, defined as the change in electoral support obtained by pro-independence parties. This includes those SNRPs that, at least since the beginning of the recession, have been characterised by advocating an independence project. The variable is calculated using the following expression:

$$\Delta IV = IND_{post} - IND_{pre}$$

where:

- IND_{pre} represents the percentage of the vote obtained by pro-independence parties before the crisis.
- IND_{post} represents the percentage of the vote obtained by these parties after the crisis.

This indicator makes it possible to distinguish between the electoral spread of territorial conflict, measured through the growth in SNRP voting, and its political intensity, reflected in support for parties advocating the most advanced form of self-government: independence.

Main Independent Variable: Centre Distance Index (CDI)

The main explanatory variable in the study is the Centre Distance Index (CDI), designed to measure the structural position of regions along the centre–periphery axis. Its construction draws on the approach developed by Rokkan and Urwin (1982; 1983), which makes it possible to analyse centre–periphery relations by considering dimensions related to territorial distance, sociocultural differentiation and the relationship of dependence on the centre. The CDI does not seek to directly reproduce these authors’ conceptual model, but rather to adapt its analytical dimensions to an empirical operationalisation that allows regions with different levels of territorial integration and differentiation to be compared. In this regard, the index integrates three complementary dimensions: territorial distance from the state political centre, sociocultural differentiation, and the political problematisation of the relationship between the region and the state. On this basis, the following sub-indices are constructed:

1. Territorial Distance Index (TDI).
2. Sociocultural Configuration Index (SCI), composed of three sub-indicators: SCI1. Territorial identity; SCI2a. Social prevalence of the regional language; and SCI2b. Official status of the regional language.
3. Political Problematisation Index (PPI), intended to measure the degree to which the relationship between the region and the state centre is problematised.

The index is calculated using the following formula:

$$CDI = 0.20 \times TDI + 0.40 \times SCI + 0.40 \times PPI$$

Where:

- CDI = Centre Distance Index; TDI = Territorial Distance Index; SCI = Sociocultural Configuration Index; and PPI = Political Problematisation Index.

The weighting assigns greater importance to the sociocultural and political problematisation dimensions, following a multidimensional conception of the centre–periphery relationship (Rokkan and Urwin, 1982; 1983). From this perspective, distance from the centre is not merely a spatial condition, but acquires political relevance when combined with distinct identities and varying degrees of problematisation of the relationship between the region and the state.

The CDI takes values ranging from 0 to 1. Values close to 0 indicate a position close to the state centre, characterised by a high degree of territorial and sociocultural integration and a low degree of problematisation of territorial relations. Conversely, values close to 1 reflect greater distance from the centre, associated with higher levels of sociocultural differentiation and problematisation. Intermediate values represent positions of partial integration and differentiation along the centre–periphery axis. Table 1 presents the composition of the index and the values obtained for the 18 regions analysed.

Operationalisation of the Dimensions of the CDI,

1. Territorial Distance Index (TDI)

The TDI is operationalised using an ordinal scale that captures geographical proximity to the state political centre and the existence of territorial discontinuities that may hinder spatial integration. The coding is as follows: 0 = region that is physically integrated and close to the state political centre; 0.5 = region that is physically integrated but located at

a medium or considerable distance from the state political centre; and 1 = region with insularity or significant maritime separation from the state centre.

2. Sociocultural Configuration Index (SCI)

The SCI measures sociocultural differentiation from the state centre by combining three indicators: territorial identity, the social prevalence of the regional language, and the official status of that language. The index is calculated using the following formula:

$$SCI = (SCI1 + SCI2a + SCI2b) / 3$$

Where:

- SCI1 = Territorial identity; SCI2a = Social prevalence of the regional language; and SCI2b = Official status of the regional language.
- SCI1. Territorial identity. This measures the predominance of a regional territorial identity over a state identity. The coding is as follows: 0 = predominance of state identity; 0.5 = coexistence of state and regional identities (duality); and 1 = predominance of regional identity.
- SCI2a. Social prevalence of the regional language. This measures the social presence of a distinct regional language in relation to the state language. The coding is as follows: 0 = fewer than 10% of speakers; 0.5 = between 10% and 50% of speakers; and 1 = more than 50% of speakers.
- SCI2b. Official status of the regional language. This measures the degree of institutional recognition of the regional language. The coding is as follows: 0 = no official recognition; 0.5 = legal or institutional recognition without full co-official status; and 1 = official recognition with co-official status alongside the state's hegemonic language.

3. Political Problematisation Index (PPI)

The PPI draws on the dimension of dependency formulated by Rokkan and Urwin (1982, 1983), understood as the economic, political and cultural subordination of the periphery from the centre. However, historically subordinated peripheries do not necessarily retain this position today and may even constitute the economic vanguard of their states (Scantamburlo et al., 2018, p. 190). Moreover, relations of subordination are not always perceived as problematic (Daponte-Smith, 2023, p. 71). Therefore, the PPI is

operationalised through the degree of political problematisation of the centre–periphery relationship, distinguishing between regions where the state’s territorial framework is accepted and those where it generates demands for change.

The PPI thus constitutes a pre-existing structural characteristic independent of the electoral outcome, as it is not constructed on the basis of electoral behaviour or changes in such behaviour. It is measured prior to the period used to calculate ΔCTV and therefore does not incorporate information from the outcome it is intended to explain. This makes it possible to treat it as a pre-existing territorial condition and reduces the risk of circularity between the explanatory variable and electoral change. Accordingly, the PPI measures the degree of acceptance of the state territorial framework vis-à-vis its political problematisation, based on the presence of demands for territorial recognition.

PPI. Political problematisation. This measures the degree to which the relationship between the region and the state centre is problematised. The coding is as follows: 0 = high degree of integration and conformity with the state framework, with no significant demands for political differentiation from the centre; 0.5 = intermediate position, with general acceptance of the state framework, but the presence of demands for recognition, decentralisation or an expansion of regional decision-making capacity; and 1 = high degree of problematisation of the relationship with the state centre, with persistent demands for self-government, sovereignty or a redefinition of the territorial relationship.

Based on the values obtained through the CDI, an analytical classification of regions into three groups is established, whose names follow a spatial physical metaphor:

- *Centripetal regions* (CDI between 0 and 0.33): these present a low degree of distance from the state political centre, characterised by high levels of territorial and sociocultural integration and a low degree of problematisation of the relationship with the state.
- *Ambivalent regions* (CDI above 0.33 and up to 0.66): these occupy intermediate positions along the centre–periphery axis, combining different degrees of territorial distance and sociocultural differentiation with an intermediate degree of political problematisation of the relationship with the state.
- *Centrifugal regions* (CDI above 0.66 and up to 1): these present a high degree of distance from the state centre, associated with higher levels of sociocultural

differentiation and a high degree of political problematisation of the relationship with the state.

This classification will subsequently be used in the comparative analysis to assess whether the structural position of regions along the centre–periphery axis can explain differences in the evolution of territorial voting following the Great Recession.

Contextual Variable: Recession Impact Index (RII)

To assess whether the intensity of economic deterioration directly explains changes in territorial voting, the Recession Impact Index (RII) is incorporated. The index measures the relative economic impact on each region across four dimensions: changes in regional GDP, changes in regional GDP per capita, employment deterioration, and increases in unemployment. The selection of these dimensions is based on the literature on economic voting, which identifies economic growth and employment trends as key indicators of the economic impact on political preferences (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2000; Duch and Stevenson, 2008), as well as on studies of territorial inequality that highlight the importance of measuring the spatial distribution of the costs of economic crises (Rodríguez-Pose, 2018). Each dimension is normalised using a Min–Max transformation ranging from 0 to 1, where higher values indicate greater economic deterioration. The final index is calculated as an arithmetic mean:

$$RII = (ZGDP + ZGDPpc + ZEmployment + ZUnemployment) / 4$$

where:

- ZGDP corresponds to the normalised value of the change in regional GDP.
- ZGDPpc corresponds to the normalised value of the change in GDP per capita.
- ZEmployment corresponds to the normalised value of employment deterioration.
- ZUnemployment corresponds to the normalised value of the increase in unemployment.

The RII is included as a variable to assess whether the economic impact of the crisis has independent effects on territorial voting or whether such effects are conditioned by the pre-existing territorial structure.

Contextual Institutional Variable: Electoral System Permissiveness (ES)

Finally, the analysis incorporates electoral system permissiveness as a contextual variable. Electoral rules may condition the translation of electoral support for SNRPs into parliamentary representation and therefore affect their prospects for electoral consolidation. This dimension is consequently included as a contextual variable, since factors such as district magnitude, effective thresholds and the electoral formula influence the conversion of votes into seats (Rae, 1967; Taagepera and Shugart, 1989). Moreover, in the case of SNRPs, the territorial concentration of the vote may interact with institutional design, either enhancing or limiting their prospects for representation (Brancati, 2008).

The variable takes into account the proportionality of the electoral system, district magnitude, the existence of electoral barriers, and the presence of majoritarian mechanisms. It is operationalised using an ordinal scale normalised between 0 and 1: 0 = low permissiveness: high institutional barriers to territorial representation; 0.5 = medium permissiveness: allows territorial representation, although subject to certain restrictions; and 1 = high permissiveness: low institutional barriers and greater ease of representation. To incorporate this variable into the comparative analysis, its relationship with the evolution of territorial voting (ΔCTV) is examined exploratorily, taking into account differences between cases and the institutional conditions of each electoral system.

Complementary Analysis

As a complementary analysis, bivariate Spearman correlations were calculated between the Centre Distance Index (CDI), the Recession Impact Index (RII), and changes in territorial voting (ΔCTV). This coefficient was used due to the small number of cases, the possible presence of outliers, and the partially ordinal nature of some of the variables. The correlations were calculated only for cases with valid information and are exploratory rather than causal in nature. The CDI– ΔIV relationship is not included in the main analysis because pro-independence voting is present in only a small number of cases.

Since no multivariate models are estimated, H4 is assessed through a joint comparison of centre–periphery position, economic impact and changes in territorial voting, complemented by the exploratory correlations. This procedure makes it possible to assess the descriptive consistency of the hypothesis, but not to formally estimate an interaction between CDI and RII.

A regression model is not estimated due to the small number of cases ($N = 18$) and the exploratory nature of the study. Accordingly, the ES variable is used for contextualisation and comparison, while the correlations are considered exploratory evidence only.

The results should be interpreted with caution: they allow descriptive patterns and associations to be identified, but do not establish causal relationships or permit generalisable inferences to be drawn about the regions of Western Europe as a whole.

3.3. Case Selection and Period of Analysis

The study analyses 18 regions belonging to five Western European states: Spain, France, Italy, the United Kingdom and Belgium. The selection follows a criterion of maximum theoretical variation, incorporating territories with different levels of territorial differentiation, regional identity and dependency. Given the small-N comparative design, case selection does not seek to maximise statistical representativeness, but rather to cover different values of the main explanatory variable and assess their potential effects on changes in territorial voting.

The sample includes regions occupying the three positions along the centre–periphery axis identified through the CDI: centripetal, ambivalent and centrifugal regions. This strategy makes it possible to analyse whether the prior territorial position conditions the way in which the same economic shock translates into differentiated electoral changes.

Table 1: Composition of the CDI by region

Region	TDI	SCI1	SCI2a	SCI2b	SCI	PPI	CDI
<i>Centripetal</i>							
Île-de-France	0,00	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,00
Centre-Val de Loire	0,00	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,00
Community of Madrid	0,00	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,00
Castile-La Mancha	0,00	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,00
Lazio	0,00	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,00
Umbria	0,00	0	0	0	0,00	0,00	0,00
<i>Ambivalent</i>							
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	0,50	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,50	0,50	0,50
Wales	0,50	0,5	0,5	1	0,67	0,50	0,57
Brittany	0,50	0,5	0	0,5	0,33	0,50	0,43
Canary Islands	1,00	0,5	0	0	0,17	0,50	0,47
Valencia	0,50	0,5	0,5	1	0,67	0,50	0,57
Sicily	1,00	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,50	0,50	0,60
<i>Centrifugal</i>							
Scotland	0,50	1	0	0,5	0,50	1,00	0,70
Flanders	0,00	1	1	1	1,00	1,00	0,80
Corsica	1,00	1	0,5	0,5	0,67	1,00	0,87
Basque Country	0,50	1	0,5	1	0,83	1,00	0,83
Catalonia	0,50	1	0,5	1	0,83	1,00	0,83
Veneto	0,50	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,50	1,00	0,70

Source: Author's own elaboration.

The analysis compares two electoral periods. The pre-crisis period comprises the most recent regional elections held before the economic shock caused by the Great Recession reached its greatest intensity in each region, which are used as a reference point for the pre-crisis electoral equilibrium. The post-crisis period corresponds to elections chronologically closer to the phase of greatest economic impact, following the electoral timetable specific to each territory. This criterion is adopted because this period coincides with a stage in which the political effects of the crisis began to manifest themselves more clearly, following the initial economic contraction and the increase in social and political tensions associated with the European sovereign debt crisis (Lane, 2012; Kriesi et al., 2012). Comparing these two points in time makes it possible to identify the observed change in territorial voting following the crisis and to analyse whether this evolution displays differentiated patterns according to the structural position of regions along the centre–periphery axis.

4. RESULTS: CHANGES IN TERRITORIAL VOTING FOLLOWING THE GREAT RECESSION

The comparative analysis of the 18 regions makes it possible to assess the extent to which the Great Recession altered the electoral expression of territorial conflict and whether this evolution is explained primarily by the structural position of regions along the centre–periphery axis or by the intensity of the economic shock. Given the small number of cases, the analysis is exploratory in nature: it does not seek to estimate generalisable statistical effects, but rather to identify comparative patterns and assess the explanatory capacity of the Centre Distance Index (CDI).

The central expectation is that the economic crisis acted as a conditional activating factor. That is, it generated a common context of discontent, but its electoral translation depended on pre-existing territorial conditions and on the ability of political actors to transform economic discontent into territorialised demands. As shown in Table 2, this pattern receives exploratory support, as the centre–periphery position displays a more consistent association with changes in territorial voting than the economic impact considered in isolation.

Table 2. Main Indicators of the Comparative Analysis by Regional Typology

Region	ΔCTV	ΔIV	CDI	RRI	CDI $\times$ RRI	ES
<i>Centripetal</i>						
IDF	-	-	0,00	0,17	0,00	0,00
CVL	-	-	0,00	0,27	0,00	0,00
COM	-0,01	-	0,00	0,45	0,00	0,50
CLM	-0,20	-	0,00	0,91	0,00	0,50
LAZ	1,31	-	0,00	0,44	0,00	0,50
UMB	-	-	0,00	0,50	0,00	0,50
<i>Ambivalent</i>						
FVG	-2,47	-	0,50	0,42	0,21	0,50
WAL	-1,90	-1,90	0,57	0,21	0,12	0,50
BRI	7,87	0,62	0,43	0,21	0,09	0,00
CAN	-4,51	-0,03	0,47	0,85	0,40	0,50
VAL	18,37	-0,49	0,57	0,89	0,51	0,50
SIC	-10,65	0,65	0,60	0,63	0,38	0,50
<i>Centrifugal</i>						
SCO	10,70	10,70	0,70	0,18	0,13	0,50
FLA	13,65	-18,28	0,80	0,10	0,08	1,00
COR	13,02	7,54	0,87	0,06	0,05	0,50
BC	5,83	6,60	0,83	0,48	0,40	1,00
CAT	4,54	33,55	0,83	0,65	0,54	1,00
VEN	31,70	5,22	0,70	0,34	0,24	0,50

Where: ΔCTV = Change in Territorial Voting (main dependent variable); ΔIV = Change in Independence Voting (complementary indicator); CDI = Centre Distance Index; RII = Recession Impact Index; CDI $\times$ RII = interaction between distance from the centre and economic impact; ES = Electoral System Permissiveness.

Note: IDF = Île-de-France; CVL = Centre-Val de Loire; COM = Community of Madrid; CLM = Castile-La Mancha; LAZ = Lazio; UMB = Umbria; FVG = Friuli-Venezia Giulia; WAL = Wales; BRI = Brittany; CAN = Canary Islands; VAL = Valencia; SIC = Sicily; SCO = Scotland; FLA = Flanders; COR = Corsica; BC = Basque Country; CAT = Catalonia; VEN = Veneto.

Source: Author's own elaboration.

4.1. Distance from the Centre as an Explanatory Factor for Changes in Territorial Voting

H1, H2 and H3 set out differentiated expectations according to the position of regions along the centre–periphery axis. The results reveal a clearer pattern when the mean and median of ΔCTV are considered jointly. Centripetal regions have a mean of 0.37 points and a median of -0.01, indicating a high degree of stability in territorial voting. Ambivalent regions show a mean of 1.12, but a median of -2.19, revealing considerable heterogeneity and showing that the mean is influenced by some exceptional increases. By contrast, centrifugal regions have a mean of 13.24 and a median of 11.86. Therefore, an

increase in territorial voting constitutes the predominant pattern in this group and does not depend solely on extreme values.

Table 3. Mean Change in Territorial Voting by Regional Typology

Regional category	Cases	Valid N	Mean ΔCTV	Median ΔCTV
Centripetal regions	6	3	0,37	−0,01
Ambivalent regions	6	6	1,12	−2,19
Centrifugal regions	6	6	13,24	11,86

Source: Author's own elaboration.

The comparison between means and medians is particularly relevant for ambivalent regions, where the positive mean (1.12) does not represent the typical behaviour of the group, as indicated by its negative median (−2.19). In centrifugal regions, by contrast, the median of 11.86 confirms that the increase remains when the influence of extreme cases is reduced.

The comparison of cases reinforces this pattern. Centripetal regions display changes close to zero even in the face of substantial economic deterioration. For example, Castile-La Mancha records a reduction of 0.20 points with an RII of 0.91, while the Community of Madrid records −0.01. Lazio constitutes the main exception, with an increase of 1.31 points.

Ambivalent regions show considerable dispersion. Valencia increases by 18.37 points, while the Canary Islands and Sicily decrease by 4.51 and 10.65 points, respectively. Nevertheless, the Valencian case should be interpreted with caution: in 2007, the results of the Bloc Nacionalista Valencià (SNRP) are not included because it stood in coalition with Esquerra Unida del País Valencià, a state-wide party, making it impossible to disaggregate the results. Moreover, the subsequent growth is concentrated mainly in Coalició Compromís, whose advance appears to have rested more on a protest discourse and its position along the left–right axis than on a strictly autonomist demand (Guillén, 2023; Ninyoles-Marco, 2023). Therefore, the increase recorded in Valencia presents limitations in terms of comparability and reflects specific characteristics of the political supply that affect the calculation for ambivalent regions.

Centrifugal regions display a different pattern: all six cases experience an increase in territorial voting. The median of 11.86 confirms that this result does not depend solely on Veneto (31.70) and Corsica (13.02).

Overall, the results provide support for H1, H2 and H3 and consistent exploratory support for the general hypothesis. Centripetal regions show virtually no change, ambivalent regions display a negative central tendency, and centrifugal regions show a clearly positive increase. Therefore, distance from the centre appears to be more consistently associated with changes in territorial voting than economic impact considered in isolation. Nevertheless, this is a descriptive pattern rather than causal evidence.

4.2. Economic Crisis and Conditional Territorial Activation

H4 posits that the effect of the economic impact of the Great Recession on changes in territorial voting will be greater in regions further removed from the state political centre.

The data do not show a direct relationship between the intensity of economic deterioration and the growth of territorial voting. Some regions that were severely affected economically did not experience an expansion of voting for SNRPs: Castile-La Mancha, with an RII of 0.91, saw its vote decrease by 0.20 points, while the Canary Islands, with an RII of 0.85, recorded a decline of 4.51 points. Conversely, Corsica experienced a low economic impact (RII = 0.06) and an increase of 13.02 points. Scotland likewise combines a relatively low impact (0.18) with an increase of 10.70 points.

The $CDI \times RII$ interaction also shows no clear linear relationship with ΔCTV . Although interaction values tend to be higher in ambivalent and centrifugal regions, substantial differences exist between territories with similar structural positions. The economic crisis therefore appears to provide a potential context for territorial activation, but does not in itself generate a uniform electoral response.

Table 4. Comparison of Economic Impact and Change in Territorial Voting

Region	Typology	RRI	ΔCTV
Castile-La Mancha	Centripetal	0,91	-0,20
Canary Islands	Ambivalent	0,85	-4,51
Catalonia	Centrifugal	0,65	4,54
Scotland	Centrifugal	0,18	10,70
Corsica	Centrifugal	0,06	13,02

Source: Author's own elaboration.

The evidence therefore provides partial support for H4. The results suggest that economic impact does not operate autonomously on territorial voting, but they do not clearly demonstrate that its effect is greater the further a region is from the centre.

4.3. The Role of Electoral System Permissiveness

The permissiveness of the electoral system may facilitate the conversion of territorially concentrated support into institutional representation. This variable is therefore considered a contextual factor in relation to Δ CTV. The results show descriptive differences across levels of permissiveness: considering only cases with valid information, the mean Δ CTV is 7.87 points for ES = 0, 5.03 for ES = 0.5, and 3.37 for ES = 1.

Table 5. Mean Change in Territorial Voting by Electoral System Permissiveness

ES	Valid N	Mean Δ CTV
0	2	7,87
0,5	11	5,03
1	3	8,01

Source: Author's own elaboration.

This pattern does not correspond to the expectation that greater permissiveness necessarily promotes greater growth in territorial voting. Moreover, the categories contain unequal numbers of observations and combine regions occupying different positions along the centre–periphery axis. These differences should therefore be interpreted with caution. In sum, permissiveness may act as an institutional opportunity condition, but it does not in itself constitute a sufficient explanation for the growth of SNRP voting.

4.4. Exploratory Analysis of the Associations between Distance, Economic Impact and Territorial Voting

As a complementary analysis, exploratory Spearman correlations are calculated between the main variables of the study to assess whether the patterns observed through means, medians and case comparisons remain when the variables are considered jointly. This coefficient is used because of the small number of cases, the presence of possible outliers, and the partially ordinal nature of some variables. The results should be interpreted as exploratory evidence rather than as tests of causality.

The most relevant relationship for the general hypothesis is that between CDI and Δ CTV. The correlation is positive and moderate ($\rho = 0.41$; $N = 15$), indicating that regions further removed from the centre tend to record greater changes in territorial voting. Although it does not reach conventional statistical significance, its direction is consistent with the

general hypothesis and with the pattern observed across centripetal, ambivalent and centrifugal regions.

By contrast, the relationship between RII and Δ CTV is weak and negative ($\rho = -0.28$; $N = 15$). Greater economic impact does not systematically correspond to greater changes in territorial voting. The correlation between CDI and RII is also weak ($\rho = -0.17$; $N = 18$), indicating that the two variables do not exhibit a meaningful association. Therefore, the greater variation in territorial voting observed in regions further removed from the state political centre does not appear to be simply explained by a systematically greater economic impact.

Table 6. Exploratory Spearman Correlations between the Main Variables

Relation	Spearman's ρ	N	Interpretation
CDI- Δ CTV	0,41	15	Moderate positive association
RII- Δ CTV	-0,28	15	Weak negative association
CDI-RII	-0,17	18	Weak negative association

Note: The correlations are interpreted as exploratory evidence and do not imply causality. The CDI- Δ IV correlation is not included in the main table because independence voting is present in only a subset of cases and, therefore, its analysis has substantially more limited coverage.

Source: Author's own elaboration.

Overall, the correlations provide exploratory support for the general hypothesis, as distance from the centre exhibits a stronger association with Δ CTV than economic impact. However, these results do not allow H4 to be confirmed, given that the hypothesis posits a conditional effect of economic impact depending on distance from the centre, rather than an independent association between the two variables. The absence of an interaction model prevents this expectation from being formally tested.

4.5. The Territorial Logic Beyond the State: Transnational Evidence

H5 posits that regions occupying similar positions along the centre-periphery axis should display relatively similar electoral patterns even when they belong to different states. A comparison of the six regions classified as centrifugal provides a first approximation to this expectation.

All six cases record increases in territorial voting: Flanders (13.65), Scotland (10.70), Corsica (13.02), the Basque Country (5.83), Catalonia (4.54), and Veneto (31.70). However, a specific measurement limitation should be noted in this case. In the pre-Great Recession election considered in the analysis for Flanders (2004), Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie (PNRSE) contested the election in coalition with the state-wide Christen-Democratisch party, making it impossible to disaggregate the support obtained by the two parties. The change observed in Flanders should therefore be interpreted with caution due to difficulties in comparing the electoral supply across the two periods.

Table 7. Change in Territorial Voting in Centrifugal Regions According to Their Position Along the Centre–Periphery Axis

State	Region	CDI	Δ CTV
United Kingdom	Scotland	0,70	10,70
Belgium	Flanders	0,80	13,65
France	Corsica	0,87	13,02
Spain	Basque Country	0,83	5,83
Spain	Catalonia	0,83	4,54
Italy	Veneto	0,70	31,70

Source: Author’s own elaboration.

The overall pattern is consistent with greater dynamism in territorial voting in regions further removed from the centre, although the magnitude of the changes varies considerably. Veneto records the largest increase, while Catalonia and the Basque Country show more moderate rises. This suggests that a peripheral position creates favourable conditions for territorial mobilisation, but does not by itself determine its intensity.

Overall, the results provide partial support for H5. All six cases classified as centrifugal record increases in territorial voting and belong to five different states, suggesting that the centre–periphery position retains explanatory power beyond state borders. Nevertheless, the magnitude of the changes varies considerably across territories, and this pattern interacts with the political and institutional characteristics specific to each case.

4.6. From Territorial Mobilisation to Independence: A Complementary Analysis

An increase in territorial voting does not necessarily imply a radicalisation of preferences towards independence. The comparison between Δ CTV and Δ IV shows that these two dimensions may evolve differently. Catalonia provides the clearest example: it records an

increase of 4.54 points in territorial voting and an increase of 33.55 points in independence voting. However, the latter change should be interpreted with caution, as it may be partially overstated by difficulties in comparing the periods under analysis. In the last election before the Great Recession (2006), the results of *Convergència i Unió* (CiU) are included, whose position cannot be characterised as unequivocally pro-independence at that time. Subsequently, some of its constituent elements came together within a new platform that contested the 2015 election with a clearly pro-independence position. Since the shift in CiU's position towards independence occurred primarily during the 2010s (Casas et al., 2024: p. 3229), the variation in ΔIV may partially reflect a change in the position of the party supply rather than solely a radicalisation of voters' preferences.

Scotland, Corsica and the Basque Country also record increases in both dimensions, although with varying intensity. Valencia, by contrast, displays a different pattern: territorial voting increases by 18.37 points, while support for independence decreases by 0.49 points. This divergence confirms that greater territorial mobilisation does not necessarily imply a transformation of the conflict in sovereigntist terms.

Table 8. Change in Territorial and Independence Voting in Regions with an Increase in Territorial Voting

Region	ΔCTV	ΔIV
Brittany	7,87	0,62
Scotland	10,70	10,70
Flanders	13,65	-18,28
Corsica	13,02	7,54
Basque Country	5,83	6,60
Catalonia	4,54	33,55
Veneto	31,70	5,22
Valencia	18,37	-0,49

Source: Author's own elaboration.

Overall, the results suggest that the expansion of PNRSE voting may coincide with an increase in support for independence, but that this transformation depends on the presence of political actors and frameworks specifically oriented towards sovereignty or state secession.

4.7. Summary of Findings

In summary, the results provide consistent exploratory support for the relevance of the CDI, particularly in light of the differences observed between centripetal, ambivalent and centrifugal regions and the positive correlation between CDI and Δ CTV. The evidence concerning the relationship between economic impact and distance from the centre, as well as the transnational dimension, is more limited. The Great Recession therefore appears to have functioned less as an autonomous cause of the territorialisation of voting than as a factor activating previously institutionalised centre–periphery divisions. The crisis may thus have expanded opportunities for mobilisation, but the intensity and direction of this mobilisation depended to a considerable extent on the territorial, political and institutional conditions already present in each region prior to the recession.

Table 9. Assessment of the Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Result	Evidence
HG. Distance from the centre explains variation in territorial voting	Consistent exploratory support	The mean and median Δ CTV increase across centripetal, ambivalent and centrifugal regions; CDI– Δ CTV presents $\rho = 0.41$
H1. Centripetal regions	Supported	They display virtually no central variation (median = -0.01)
H2. Ambivalent regions	Supported	They display substantial heterogeneity and a negative median (-2.19), despite a positive mean (1.12)
H3. Centrifugal regions	Supported	They display the highest mean (13.24) and a clearly positive median (11.86)
H4. The economic effect is greater in more distant regions	Insufficient support	RII– Δ CTV presents a weak and negative association ($\rho = -0.28$). The absence of an interaction model prevents a formal assessment of whether the effect of RII on Δ CTV depends on CDI
H5. Transnational effect of CDI	Partial support	All six centrifugal cases record increases in Δ CTV, although there are substantial differences between cases and Flanders presents specific electoral comparability issues

Source: Author's own elaboration.

5. DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS

The results show that the Great Recession did not produce a uniform territorialisation of electoral behaviour; rather, its effects were primarily conditioned by the regions' prior position along the centre–periphery axis. The evidence from the three typologies shows that centripetal regions display virtually no variation in territorial voting (median = -0.01), ambivalent regions display substantial heterogeneity (median = -2.19), and centrifugal regions record a clearly positive increase (median = 11.86). This pattern, together with the positive correlation between CDI and Δ CTV ($\rho = 0.41$), provides exploratory support for the general hypothesis.

The results support the view of the economic crisis as a conditional activation factor. Economic deterioration, in itself, does not appear sufficient to explain the growth of territorial voting. Regions experiencing a high economic impact, such as Castilla-La Mancha and the Canary Islands, did not record increases, whereas territories experiencing less severe deterioration, such as Corsica and Scotland, registered substantial increases. The electoral translation of the crisis therefore appears to depend on the prior existence of distinct identities, organisational structures, and political frames capable of territorialising discontent.

The heterogeneity of ambivalent regions is particularly relevant. Valencia and Brittany show that intermediate positions can generate divergent responses, suggesting that the CDI does not operate deterministically. Likewise, the transnational comparison provides partial support for H5: all six centrifugal regions increased their territorial vote, although the magnitude of these changes varied and there are specific electoral comparability issues in the case of Flanders. Finally, the divergence between Δ CTV and Δ IV demonstrates that greater territorial mobilisation does not necessarily imply a radicalisation towards independence. The Valencian case is particularly illustrative, while Catalonia shows how both dimensions can increase simultaneously.

These results should be interpreted in light of several limitations. First, the small number of cases ($N = 18$) prevents generalisable statistical inference and limits the ability to estimate causal relationships. The correlations should therefore be understood exclusively as exploratory evidence.

Second, the construction of the CDI involves operationalisation and weighting decisions that may affect the classification of regions. Some dimensions, particularly political problematisation, necessarily involve an element of analytical judgement. In addition, the

IPP sub-index does not entirely eliminate concerns about circularity. Although the sub-index is constructed from conditions preceding the period used to calculate changes in voting, this temporal separation does not completely eliminate the risk of conceptual overlap between the explanatory variable and the outcome.

Third, there are issues of electoral comparability arising from changes in coalitions and in the party supply, particularly in Valencia, Flanders, and Catalonia. These changes may affect the measurement of variation in territorial voting and make comparisons between the pre-crisis and post-crisis periods more difficult. Finally, the comparison of only two electoral moments does not allow the effects of the crisis itself to be fully distinguished from pre-existing territorial trends.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This study has examined the extent to which the Great Recession contributed to changes in territorial voting across 18 European regions, with particular attention to their distance from the political centre of their respective states. The results suggest that the political translation of the crisis was primarily conditioned by pre-existing and, above all, institutionalised centre–periphery structures. This conclusion is consistent with the literature identifying this dimension as a fundamental axis of electoral competition (Keating, 1988; Massetti and Schakel, 2015; 2016), as well as with studies highlighting the role of territorial identities and institutional conditions in nationalist mobilisation (Brancati, 2008; Crameri, 2014; Serrano, 2013).

The evidence reveals a consistent pattern: centripetal regions display virtually no variation in territorial voting, ambivalent regions show substantial heterogeneity, and centrifugal regions record the largest increases. This pattern is further reinforced by the positive association between CDI and Δ CTV ($\rho = 0.41$). Although the small number of cases prevents causal relationships from being established, the results suggest that territorial position constitutes a relevant, though non-deterministic, condition for mobilisation.

By contrast, the economic impact of the recession exhibits a weak relationship with changes in territorial voting. This challenges a strictly economic interpretation of electoral behaviour and suggests that economic deterioration is not, in itself, sufficient to explain changes in territorial preferences, but rather that its effects depend on pre-existing political and identity-based conflicts. This interpretation is consistent with the literature

on economic voting, which emphasises the conditional nature of its effects (Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier, 2000; Duch and Stevenson, 2008), as well as with studies of the Great Recession and secessionism that find no systematic relationship between economic deterioration and increased support for independence (Cuadras-Morató and Rodon, 2019; Bel et al., 2019).

Furthermore, the comparison between ΔCTV and ΔIV shows that an increase in support for PNRSE does not necessarily imply a radicalisation of demands for independence. The case of Flanders, with the relevant caveats, is particularly illustrative, as it combines a 13.65-point increase in territorial voting with a -18.28 -point change in independence voting. The results are consistent with comparative literature suggesting that the transformation of demands for self-government into sovereigntist positions depends on political, institutional, and identity-related factors specific to each territory (Bourne, 2014; Cramer, 2014; Quiroga and Molina, 2020; Royles, 2024).

Overall, the results support the conclusion that the Great Recession primarily acted as a context for the activation of pre-existing centre–periphery divisions. The crisis may have expanded opportunities for mobilisation, but its intensity and direction depended on the historical, institutional, and political characteristics of each region. The study therefore contributes to an interpretation of crises as processes capable of reactivating and reinforcing pre-existing territorial cleavages, rather than generating new political divisions. The limitations concerning the number of cases, the measurement of some variables, and the comparison of only two electoral moments suggest the need for future research to adopt broader temporal and territorial perspectives.

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APPENDIX 1. CONSTRUCTION OF THE RECESSION IMPACT INDEX

Region	GDP	GDPpc	Empl.	Unemp.	RRI (Z)
Île-de-France	0,21	0,26	0,15	0,08	0,17
Centre-Val de Loire	0,35	0,27	0,27	0,18	0,27
Community of Madrid	0,25	0,45	0,55	0,55	0,45
Castile-La Mancha	0,78	0,97	0,93	0,95	0,91
Lazio	0,73	0,61	0,19	0,23	0,44
Umbria	0,67	0,81	0,29	0,24	0,50
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	0,79	0,57	0,14	0,17	0,42
Wales	0,43	0,11	0,18	0,10	0,21
Brittany	0,32	0,31	0,12	0,11	0,21
Canary Islands	0,50	0,91	1,00	1,00	0,85
Valencia	0,86	1,00	0,87	0,84	0,89
Sicily	1,00	0,50	0,64	0,37	0,63
Scotland	0,23	0,12	0,25	0,10	0,18
Flanders	0,15	0,20	0,05	0,00	0,10
Corsica	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,23	0,06
Basque Country	0,48	0,61	0,42	0,41	0,48
Catalonia	0,56	0,66	0,71	0,68	0,65
Veneto	0,58	0,45	0,19	0,14	0,34

Sources: Eurostat. (2026). Gross domestic product (GDP) and gross value added (GVA) in volume by NUTS 2 region; Eurostat. (2026). Gross domestic product (GDP) at current market prices by NUTS 2 region; Eurostat. (2026). Employment rates by NUTS 2 region; Eurostat. (2026). Unemployment rates by educational attainment level and NUTS 2 region; Office for National Statistics. (2026). Gross value added (balanced) per head of population at current basic prices, pounds.

APPENDIX 2. ELECTORAL SOURCES

Region	Source
IDF	Ministère de l'Intérieur. (2004). <i>Résultat des élections régionales 2004 – Île-de-France</i> . Archives des élections en France Ministère de l'Intérieur. (2015). <i>Résultats des élections régionales 2015 – Île-de-France</i> . Archives des élections en France
CVL	Ministère de l'Intérieur. (2004). <i>Résultats des élections régionales 2004 – Centre</i> . Ministère de l'Intérieur Ministère de l'Intérieur. (2015). <i>Résultats des élections régionales 2015 – Centre-Val de Loire</i> . Archives des élections en France
COM	Junta Electoral Provincial de Madrid. (2007). <i>Elecciones a la Asamblea de Madrid 2007</i> . Boletín Oficial de la Comunidad de Madrid, (141), 69–70 Junta Electoral Provincial de Madrid. (2015). <i>Elecciones a la Asamblea de Madrid 2015</i> . Boletín Oficial de la Comunidad de Madrid, (136), 224–226
CLM	Junta de Comunidades de Castilla-La Mancha. (2007). <i>Elecciones autonómicas 2007: Resultados de las elecciones a las Cortes de Castilla-La Mancha</i> . Datos Abiertos Castilla-La Mancha Junta de Comunidades de Castilla-La Mancha. (2015). <i>Elecciones autonómicas: Resultados de las elecciones a las Cortes de Castilla-La Mancha</i> . Datos Abiertos Castilla-La Mancha
LAZ	Ministero dell'Interno. (2005). <i>Elezioni regionali nel Lazio del 2005</i> . Archivio Storico delle Elezioni Ministero dell'Interno. (2013). <i>Elezioni regionali nel Lazio del 2013</i> . Archivio Storico delle Elezioni
UMB	Ministero dell'Interno. (2005). <i>Elezioni regionali in Umbria del 2005</i> . Archivio Storico delle Elezioni Ministero dell'Interno. (2015). <i>Elezioni regionali in Umbria del 2015</i> . Archivio Storico delle Elezioni. Archivio Storico delle Elezioni
FVG	Regione Autonoma Friuli-Venezia Giulia. (2008). <i>Elezioni regionali 2008 – Friuli-Venezia Giulia</i> . Elezioni Storico Regione Autonoma Friuli-Venezia Giulia. (2013). <i>Elezioni regionali 2013 – Friuli-Venezia Giulia</i> . Elezioni Storico
WAL	Electoral Commission. (2007). <i>The National Assembly for Wales elections 2007: The official report on the National Assembly for Wales elections 3 May 2007</i> . Electoral Commission Electoral Commission. (2016). <i>Results and turnout at the 2016 National Assembly for Wales election</i> . Electoral Commission
BRI	Ministère de l'Intérieur. (2004). <i>Résultats des élections régionales 2004 – Bretagne</i> . Archives des élections en France Ministère de l'Intérieur. (2015). <i>Résultats des élections régionales 2015 – Bretagne</i> . Archives des élections en France

CAN	Junta Electoral de Canarias. (2007). <i>Resultados electorales del escrutinio general de las elecciones al Parlamento de Canarias de 2007</i> . Boletín Oficial de Canarias Junta Electoral de Canarias. (2015). <i>Resultados electorales de las elecciones al Parlamento de Canarias de 2015</i> . Boletín Oficial de Canarias
VAL	Generalitat Valenciana. (2007). <i>Eleccions a les Corts Valencianes 2007</i> Generalitat Valenciana. (2015). <i>Eleccions a les Corts Valencianes 2015</i>
SIC	Ministero dell’Interno. (2008). Elezioni regionali in Sicilia del 2008. Archivio Storico delle Elezioni. Archivio Storico delle Elezioni Ministero dell’Interno. (2017). Elezioni regionali in Sicilia del 2017. Archivio Storico delle Elezioni. Archivio Storico delle Elezioni
SCO	Electoral Commission. (2007). <i>Scottish Parliament election 2007</i> . Electoral Commission. Electoral Commission. (2016). <i>Scottish Parliament election 2016</i> . Electoral Commission
FLA	Federal Public Service Interior. (2004). <i>Résultats officiels des élections régionales de 2004 – Parlement flamand</i> . Élections Belgique Federal Public Service Interior. (2014). <i>Elections du 25 mai 2014 – Tableaux des résultats</i> . Élections Belgique
COR	Ministère de l’Intérieur. (2004). <i>Résultats des élections régionales 2004 – Corse</i> . Les archives des élections en France Ministère de l’Intérieur. (2015). <i>Résultats des élections territoriales 2015 – Corse</i> . Les archives des élections en France
BC	Gobierno Vasco. Departamento de Interior. (2005). <i>Resultados de las elecciones al Parlamento Vasco 2005</i> . Gobierno Vasco Gobierno Vasco. Departamento de Seguridad. (2016). <i>Resultados de las elecciones al Parlamento Vasco 2016</i> . Gobierno Vasco
CAT	Generalitat de Catalunya. (2006). <i>Resultats de les eleccions al Parlament de Catalunya 2006</i> . Generalitat de Catalunya Generalitat de Catalunya. (2015). <i>Resultats de les eleccions al Parlament de Catalunya 2015</i> . Generalitat de Catalunya
VEN	Ministero dell’Interno. (2005). <i>Elezioni regionali 2005 – Veneto</i> . Archivio storico delle elezioni Ministero dell’Interno. (2015). <i>Elezioni regionali 2015 – Veneto</i> . Archivio storico delle elezioni

Note: IDF = Île-de-France; CVL = Centre-Val de Loire; COM = Community of Madrid; CLM = Castile-La Mancha; LAZ = Lazio; UMB = Umbria; FVG = Friuli-Venezia Giulia; WAL = Wales; BRI = Brittany; CAN = Canary Islands; VAL = Valencia; SIC = Sicily; SCO = Scotland; FLA = Flanders; COR = Corsica; BC = Basque Country; CAT = Catalonia; VEN = Veneto, *Source:* Author’s own elaboration.

APPENDIX 3. CHANGE IN TERRITORIAL VOTING

Region	Pre-crisis Election	Political Parties	Pre-crisis Vote Share	Post-crisis Election	Political Parties	Post-crisis Vote Share	Δ CTV
IDF	2004	-	-	2015	-	-	-
CVL	2004	-	-	2015	-	-	-
COM	2007	MEC	0,07	2015	PCAS-TC	0,06	-0,01
CLM	2007	TC, UdCa	0,34	2015	PCAS-UdCa	0,14	-0,20
LAZ	2005	-	-	2013	GS; LC	1,31	1,31
UMB	2005	-	-	2015 ¹	-	-	-
FVG	2008	LN, SSK	14,17	2013	LN ² , SSK, U'AR	11,70	-2,47
WAL	2007	PC	22,4	2016	PC	20,5	-1,90
BRI	2004	-	-	2015	MBP-UDB, PB, WAR-SAV	7,87	7,87
CAN	2007	AHI, AMAGA, ANC, CC-PNC, CTF, PGC, CCN, PIL, MUPC, NCa, UP	36,79	2015	AHI, ANC, CC-PNC, MUPC, NCa, UGC, UF, UL, UT,	32,28	-4,51
VAL	2007 ³	ERPv, UxV	0,60	2015 ⁴	AVANT, CC, Junts, Poble, UxV	18,97	18,37
SIC	2008	MpA, SFL	18,39	2017	MpA, SL	7,74	-10,65
SCO	2007	SNP	31.0	2016	SNP	41.7	10,7
FLA	2004 ⁵	VB	24,2	2014	N-VA, VB	37,80	13,60
COR	2004	AMN, CF, UN	14,91	2015	FaC, CF, CL	27,93	13,02

BC	2005	Aralar, EHAE, PNV ⁶	53,04	2016	EHB, PNV	58,87	5,83
CAT	2006	CiU, Decideix.cat, ERC, RC	45,77	2015	CUP, JxSí, UDC	50,31	4,54
VEN	2005	LN ⁷ , LVR, PNE	21,29	2015 ⁸	INV, IV, Lista Zaia ⁸ , Lista Tosi ⁹ , LN, PVA, UNE	52,99	31,70

Note: IDF = Île-de-France; CVL = Centre-Val de Loire; COM = Community of Madrid; CLM = Castile-La Mancha; LAZ = Lazio; UMB = Umbria; FVG = Friuli-Venezia Giulia; WAL = Wales; BRI = Brittany; CAN = Canary Islands; VAL = Valencia; SIC = Sicily; SCO = Scotland; FLA = Flanders; COR = Corsica; BC = Basque Country; CAT = Catalonia; VEN = Veneto.

¹Not included is Lega Nord, as it does not advocate specific proposals for regional autonomy; ²Lega Nord is included, as it advocates specific proposals for regional autonomy; ³The results of Coalició pel País Valencia, which included Bloc Nacionalista Valencià (PNRSE), are not added, as it was led by Esquerra Unida del País Valencià (not PNRSE) and it is not possible to disaggregate the votes by party; ⁴The results of the Acord Valencià coalition, which included ERPV and Esquerra Valenciana (PNRSE), are not added, as it was led by Esquerra Unida del País Valencià (not PNRSE) and it is not possible to disaggregate the votes by party; ⁵The results of the coalition formed by Christen-Democratisch en Vlaams (not PNRSE) and N-VA (PNRSE) are not added, as it is not possible to disaggregate the votes by party; ⁶It contested the election in coalition with Eusko Alkartasuna (PNRSE); ⁷Lega Nord is included, as it advocates specific proposals for regional autonomy; ⁸Lista Zaia is included, as it advocates proposals for regional autonomy; ⁹Lista Tosi is included, as it advocates proposals for regional autonomy.

Source: Author's own elaboration.

APPENDIX 4. CHANGE IN INDEPENDENCE VOTING

Region	Pre-crisis Election	Political Parties	Pre-crisis Vote Share	Post-crisis Election	Political Parties	Post-crisis Vote Share	ΔIV
IDF	2004	-	-	2015	-	-	-
CVL	2004	-	-	2015	-	-	-
COM	2007			2015			
CLM	2007			2015			
LAZ	2005	-	-	2013			
UMB	2005	-	-	2015 ¹	-	-	-
FVG	2008	-	-	2013 ²			
WAL	2007	PC	22,4	2016	PC	20,5	-1,90
BRI	2004	-	-	2015	WAR-SAV	0,62	0,62
CAN	2007	MUPC, UP	0,22	2015	MUPC	0,19	-0,03
VAL	2007	ERPv	0,49	2017	-	-	-0,49
SIC	2008	-	-	2017	SL	0,65	0,65
SCO	2007	SNP	31,0	2016	SNP	41,7	10,7
FLA	2004	VB	24,2	2014	VB	3,67	-18,28
COR	2004	AMN, CF	2,77	2015	CL, CF	10,31	7,54
BC	2005	Aralar, EHAE	14,66	2016	EHB	21,26	6,60
CAT	2006	Decideix.cat, ERC, RC	14,25	2015	CUP, JxSí	47,80	33,55
VEN	2005	-	-	2015	INV, IV	5,22	5,22

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Source: Author's own elaboration.

APPENDIX 5. POLITICAL PARTIES

Region	Acronyms	Name	Independentist
BRI	MBP-UDB	Mouvement Bretagne et Progrès-Union démocratique bretonne	No
	PB	Parti breton	No
CAN	AHI	Agrupación Herreña Independiente	No
	AMAGA	Alternativa Nacionalista Canaria	No
	ANC	Alternativa Nacionalista Canaria	No
	CC	Coalición Canaria	No
	CCN	Centro Canario Nacionalista	No
	CTF	Compromiso por Tenerife	No
	MUPC	Movimiento por la Unidad del Pueblo Canario	Yes
	NCa	Nueva Canarias	No
	PGC	Partido de Gran Canaria	No
	PIL	Partido de Independientes de Lanzarote	No
	PNC	Partido Nacionalista Canario	No
	UGC	Unidos por Gran Canaria	No
	UP	Unidad del Pueblo	Yes
	UF	Unidos-Fuerteventura	No
	UL	Unidos-Lanzarote	No
	UT	Unidos-Tenerife	No
	WAR-SAV	War-Sav – Gauche indépendantiste bretonne	Yes
CAT	CiU	Convergència i Unió	No
	CUP	Candidatura d'Unitat Popular	Yes
	Decideix.cat	Catalunya Decideix	Yes

	ERC	Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya	Yes
	JxSí	Junts pel Sí	Yes
	RC	Partit Republicà Català	Yes
	UDC	Unió Democràtica de Catalunya	No
CLM	PCAS	Partido Castellano	No
	TC	Tierra Comunera	No
	UdCa	Unidad Castellana	No
COR	AMN	A manca naziunale	Yes
	CL	Corsica Libera	Yes
	CF	Core in Fronte	Yes
	FaC	Femu a Corsica	No
	UN	Unione Naziunale	No
SCO	SNP	Scottish National Party	Yes
FLA	N-VA	Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie	No
	VB	Vlaams Blok	Yes
WAL	PC	Plaid Cymru	Yes
FVG	LN	Lega Nord	No
	SSK	Slovenska Skupnost	No
	U'AR	Un'Altra Regione	No
LAZ	GS	Grande Sur	No
	LC	Lega Centro	No
COM	MEC	Madrid es Castilla	No
	PCAS	Partido Castellano	No
	TC	Tierra Comunera	No
BC	Aralar	Aralar	Yes

	EHB	Euskal Herria Bildu	Yes
	EHAE	Euskal Herrialdeetako Alderdi Komunista, EHAK	Yes
	LN	Libertate Nafarra	No
	PNV	Partido Nacionalista Vasco	No
SIC	DA	Democratici Autonomisti	No
	MpA	Movimento per l'Autonomia	No
	SFL	Sicilia Forte e Libera	No
	SL	Siciliani Liberi	Yes
VAL	AVANT	AVANT	No
	CC	Coalició Compromís	No
	ERPv	Esquerra Republicana del País Valencià	Yes
	Junts	Junts	No
	UxV	Units per València	No
	Poble	Poble	No
VEN	INV	Indipendenza Noi Veneto ¹	Yes
	IV	Indipendenza Veneta	Yes
	LN	Lega Nord	No
	LVR	Liga Veneta Repubblica	No
	Lista Tosi	Lista Tosi per il Veneto	No
	Lista Zaia	Lista Zaia Presidente	No
	PNE	Progetto NordEst	No
	PVA	Progetto Veneto Autonomo	No
	UNE	Unione Nord-Est	No
	VSC	Veneto Stato Confederale	No

Note: IDF = Île-de-France; CVL = Centre-Val de Loire; COM = Community of Madrid; CLM = Castile-La Mancha; LAZ = Lazio; UMB = Umbria; FVG = Friuli-Venezia Giulia; WAL = Wales; BRI = Brittany; CAN = Canary Islands; VAL = Valencia; SIC = Sicily; SCO = Scotland; FLA = Flanders; COR = Corsica; BC = Basque Country; CAT = Catalonia; VEN = Veneto

¹Includes LVR, PNE, and other minor Venetianist parties.

Source: Author's own elaboration.

APPENDIX 6. CODING OF ELECTORAL SYSTEM PERMISSIVENESS

Region	Value
Île-de-France	0,00
Centre-Val de Loire	0,00
Community of Madrid	0,50
Castile-La Mancha	0,50
Lazio	0,50
Umbria	0,50
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	0,50
Wales	0,50
Brittany	0,00
Canary Islands	0,50
Valencia	0,50
Sicily	0,50
Scotland	0,50
Flanders	1,00
Corsica	0,50
Basque Country	1,00
Catalonia	1,00
Veneto	0,50

Source: Author's own elaboration.