

Politics under Pressure: Legislative Voting Behaviour before and after the
Economic Crisis in Spain

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This paper is aimed to explain the dynamics of legislative behavior in Spain for the last decade. Our goal is to analyze to what extent the economic crisis has affected the chances of the governing party to find support to pass new legislation, whether conflict is more intense depending on the type of issues, or/and to what extent conflict between governing and opposition parties increases when opposition parties have an alternative legislative proposal. To do so we take as a dependent variable the level of consensus between governing and opposition parties –measured according to the final voting to each legislative proposal from 2001 to 2012—and as explanatory variables: policy preferences of parties –measured by whether parties have introduced an alternative legislative proposal—the type of issues, institutional factors –mainly type of laws—, and the impact of economic conditions in the public mood.

Most studies about legislative behavior focus on legislative voting, taking as explanatory variables legislators' and parties' policy positions (left-right) or/and government-opposition dynamics (Kenneth and Laver, 2007, Hix and Noury 2012). Political parties will vote against or in favor of legislative proposals depending of their preferences, or/and their institutional position in the governing-opposition game. Overall, government versus opposition dynamics is likely to dominate voting behavior in those institutional contexts where the governing party is able to control the legislative agenda (Cox and McCubbins 2005), or/and when opposition parties are able (and willing) to pre-commit to vote against government-sponsored bills (Dewan and Spirling 2011). Thus, in a majoritarian parliamentary democracy like the UK or Spain differences in voting behavior is explained mostly by this divide between governing against opposition parties, instead of individual MPs or parties along a left-right policy dimension (Laver, 2006; Spirling and McLean 2007, Hix and Noury 2012).

From here, the question is whether this divide between governing and opposition parties varies across time, and if so why. Existing analysis about Italy (Cazzola, 1972; Di Palma, 1977), the UK (Rose, 1980), the United States (Rose, 1984; Wilkerson, 2013) Germany (Rose, 1984; Saalfeld, 1990), or Spain (Capo, 1994; Mújica and Sánchez Cuenca, 2006,) try to explain the dynamics of voting behaviour taking as explanatory variables the type of government and more recently changing economic conditions (see de Giorgi and Moury 2014 and Palau, Muñoz and Chaqués 2015 for the case of Spain). These studies already demonstrate that consensus between governing and opposition parties' increases under minority governments, and when citizen's perceptions about economic conditions are positive. This is, parties seem to follow a rational strategy when voting in favour or against executive bills, giving more or less support to the governing party depending on their capacity to maximize electoral rewards. In this paper we demonstrate that this is mediated by the type of law under discussion. Changing economic conditions and the type of government have no significant impact on the voting of organic laws related to fundamental rights and/or the functioning of basic state institutions. By the contrary they significantly affect decree-laws, with the exception of those aimed to respond to unexpected or dramatic events, which have a much more consensual pattern. We also demonstrate that variations in voting behaviour towards more or less consensus are significantly linked to party preferences for all type of issues, and laws.

To test these hypotheses we developed a comprehensive database that includes information about the final voting for all organic laws and the validation votes for all decree-laws passed in the Spanish Parliament from 2001 to 2012. To focus on the Spanish case is interesting in itself as besides from Capo (1990), Mujica and Sanchez Cuenca (2006), and Palau, Muñoz and Chaqués Bonafont (2014) empirical analyses on

legislative voting is scarce. The analyses focus on organic law and decree-law basically because these are the only types of laws for which there is a final voting. For each case, we gathered information about the voting of each parliamentary group, identify whether a legislative alternative proposal exists (parliamentary bill) for the same issue in the same legislature, and classify all laws by issue following the comparative agendas project methodology. Note that in this paper we divided the analysis in two types of actors: government and opposition parties. Our goal for further research is to develop a more detailed analysis about the similarities and differences among opposition parties and between each of them and the governing party.

The paper is organized as follows. First we develop the theoretical framework and define the hypothesis driving the analysis. Second we describe the data and method for the analysis, next we describe major changes in voting behaviour from 2001, and finally we explain results of the regression model. In the conclusion we summarize major findings and some lines for further research.

Theoretical framework

Existing analyses of voting behaviour in parliaments consider political parties' tactical choices are based on two contrasting options: conflict or cooperation. Overall, these models depart from the assumption political parties are rational actors that can identify the strategies that maximize their electoral rewards at any given time. According to the *adversarial model*, opposition parties would behave tactically, emphasizing disagreements and confrontation in order to weaken the incumbent government and to gain office (Cazzola, 1974; Rose, 1984; Green-Pedersen, 2007; Jenkins, 2010; De Giorgi, 2011). Opposition legislators will oppose the government in most legislative votes, independently of their policy positions, and the type of issues at stake. Members

of the opposition may find themselves closer to the government than other opposition parties, and hence prefer the proposal of the government (the agenda-setter) to any other alternative. However, opposition parties would vote against a government proposal as a means to erode the party in government or/and simply manifest political disagreement (Dewan and Spirling 2011).

In contrast, the consensual model suggests that governing and opposition parties tend to agree and this is especially so regarding fundamental issues. From this perspective, political parties are not necessarily in constant disagreement with the government (Norton, 2008). The parliament is considered a venue for expressing partisan or ideological divisions but it is also an operational governing body oriented to solving problems (Scott and Wilkerson, 2012). This means that parliamentary representatives do not always view choices in purely partisan terms but choose to cooperate on important issues that must be solved even at the risk of suffering electoral consequences. On issues of national interest affecting the whole electorate, such as the functioning of key political institutions or foreign affairs consensus is expected to be high and a problem-solving perspective more likely (Rose, 1984; Scott and Wilkerson, 2012). By the contrary, consensus will be more difficult to hold on highly politicized issues for which parties represent different policy positions, and thus it is harder to justify any shift from the initial party position in the face of the electorate.

This consensus model seems to respond to the functioning of Spanish politics, at least for the first two decades after the end of dictatorship (Gunther and Montero 2009). From the end of Franco's regime, there is a consensus about what issues should be prioritized and which decisions were required in order to consolidate the process of democracy (del Aguila 1992). In fact, from 1979 to 1982 almost all the organic laws passed in the Spanish Parliament had the support of the majority of members from the

main opposition party (Mújica and Sánchez Cuenca 2006), which clearly illustrates the willingness of main political elites to agree on key issues of Spanish politics –building a new democratic nation— leaving aside deep political cleavages (mainly state-religion, centre-periphery, capital-labour relations) for which the Spanish public, and elite institutions, are strongly divided (Fernandez-Albertos and Manzano 2014).

However, recent analyses emphasize how the consensus and mutual respect, symbols of the successful transition to democracy, have given way to increasing confrontation, and the reactivation of old political cleavages (Chaqués-Bonafont, Palau and Baumgartner 2014, Sánchez Cuenca (ed) special issue 2013). Increasing confrontation is illustrated by changes in the political agenda –especially the politicization of highly controversial issues like moral issues, the role of the Catholic church in education, or the secessionist vindications of some territories—, but also in the way of doing politics (political style). The Spanish government increasingly governs by decree-law, neglecting the role of the Parliament, and parliamentary groups react by increasing the negative voting to most governmental initiatives (Palau, Muñoz and Chaqués-Bonafont 2014). Most part of the political debate is canalized by the media, emphasizing the politics of scandals, conflicts and political disputes, that in many occasions are not backed by a coherent discourse or set of ideas about what should be done (Palau and Davesa 2014, Baumgartner and Chaqués 2015, Vallespin 2012, Gunther and Montero, 2009, Maravall 2013).

This trend towards an adversarial model of politics has been reinforced by the economic crisis. In a context of severe economic crisis, opposition's incentives to mobilize popular discontent using a strategy based on conflict increase (Lewis-Beck, 1988). However, the argument of this paper is that voting behaviour in favor or against

organic laws and decree laws are not only explained by economic conditions, but also preferences and types of issues in the explanatory model .

Party preferences

Legislative voting in a parliamentary democracy such as Spain or the UK ('Westminster model' of legislative politics Lijphart, 1999) is characterized by the "de facto" monopoly on agenda control of the executive (Döring 2001) and strong party unity. Parties are a highly cohesive force, in which individual MPs have few incentives to break from the line of party leadership. To follow party leaders directly increases the possibilities of promotion to ministerial office (in the case of MPs of the governing party), the chances to hold a position in a key parliamentary committee, to keep a top position in the electoral lists and, overall, to increase the chances for the party's reelection (Hix and Noury 2012). Accordingly, both governing and opposition MPs vote cohesively for most legislative proposals even when the policy offered does not respond to individual MPs policy preferences.

In this institutional setting, legislative voting follows an strict government-opposition divide, where MPs of the governing party give support to governmental legislative initiatives and opposition MPs of each party vote cohesively against, in favour or abstain depending on their policy preferences, on institutional factors –type of government—and changing economic and political conditions. To measure policy preferences in this paper we take into account the legislative proposals introduced about a specific issue along the same legislature. First we identify the governmental legislative proposal for organic laws and the decree-laws, and from here we identify for each one whether opposition parties have introduced one or more legislative bills about the same issue along the legislature. In that way we take into account the intensity of the preferences towards specific issues by opposition parties. We depart from the idea that if

parties introduce an alternative bill regarding the issue that is being regulated they have strong and clear preferences on it so that an adversarial behaviour is more likely to occur. According to the above we expect:

H1: Consensus is lower for those initiatives where opposition parties have introduced a bill about the same issue along the legislature

Type of issues

Consensus may differ among types of issues. In previous analysis, we distinguished between Europeanized and not-Europeanized initiatives arriving to the conclusion that consensus is not significantly higher for those with European content (Palau, Muñoz and Chaqués Bonafont 2014). Even though consensus on EU related issues has been declining over time, especially since the outbreak of the economic crisis, coefficients are not statistically significant. These results are not surprising taking into account that in Spain there are no euro-sceptic political parties. Actually, no political party has questioned Spanish membership of the EU and public opinion has historically been more supportive and enthusiastic regarding Europeanization than in other countries (Szmolka, 1999; Sánchez, 1999; Díez Medrano, 2003 and 2007; Closa 1995).

In contrast to Europeanization, political decentralization is one of the most controversial and conflictual issues in Spanish politics today. From the transition to democracy to the present, an intense and highly controversial debate has raged about the territorial distribution of power, and this debate has consistently been at the core of differences among Spaniards both within and beyond the parliamentary arena. Spanish citizens and political elites have opposing ways of thinking about the limits of political decentralization. Further, the debate has become increasingly intense over time. At the end of the first decade of the new millennium, about half of the catalan citizens gave

support to secessionist vindications, while the central government was increasingly talking about recentralization¹ (Chaqués Bonafont, Palau and Baumgartner 2015)

Changing public attitudes and increasing social mobilization illustrate the end of the so-called politics of consensus that traditionally dominated the debate about the relations between Madrid and the regions. Several trends document this general pattern. Parliamentary bills related to political decentralization are much more likely to fail as time goes on; political elites systematically use the Constitutional Court as a political venue to solve major disputes about this issue, delegating their responsibilities and promoting the judicialization of a “question d’Etat”. Political parties intensify a confrontation strategy, using more and more state-regions relations as one of their preferred weapons to attack each other in search for political rewards. This is, the question of regional autonomy has moved from one featuring accommodation to one of highly symbolic and politicized position-taking with extreme positions become more common in recent years. Accordingly we expect:

H 2: Consensus is lower regarding laws related to political decentralization.

Finally, there are some issues for which one may expect a larger agreement among political forces. One example would be valence issues for which most citizens share a common preference, like a new legislative proposal to fight against child sexual abuse, or violence against women. Also there are bills directly related to respond to focusing events oriented to give an urgent solution to an unexpected situation like earthquakes, or a persistent drought. Actually an important share of bills (mostly decree-laws in Sapin) is aimed to deal with the impact of dramatic catastrophes in economic activities and citizen’s live conditions, even though they are increasingly used as ordinary policy making instruments (Chaqués-Bonafont, Palau and Baumgartner 2015). For these cases it might be hard to justify negative voting in front of the

electorate, and thus agreements between governing and opposition parties are more likely. Hence

H3: Consensus is larger for those laws related to dramatic focusing events.

Institutional factors and types of laws

Most analysis about parliamentary behaviour emphasizes the importance of institutional factors, mainly the type of government. Overall existing research demonstrates governments have fewer incentives to seek agreement with opposition parties when they hold a majority of seats. By the contrary, consensus becomes more likely with minority governments, mainly because the incumbent needs the support of other parties to pass the budget and introduce legislation. Previous analysis already demonstrate this dynamic pattern for legislative voting for the case of Spain (Mujica and Sánchez Cuenca 2006, Palau, Muñoz and Chaqués Bonafont 2014). Our goal in this paper is to introduce an additional institutional factor defined as type of law. The underlying assumption is that depending on the institutional features of each type of law we might expect different patterns of consensus or conflict.

In this paper we compare two types of laws, organic laws and decree-laws, basically because these are the only laws for which there is a final voting (formally called validation votes in the case of decree-laws). Organic laws require the agreement of the absolute majority of members in the Chamber to be passed and they are also subjected to limitations in terms of issue content. Organic laws can be used only for the regulation of fundamental rights, the general electoral system, the approval of regional statutes (*Estatutos de Autonomía*), basic institutions like the Constitutional Court or the Ombudsman (*Defensor del Pueblo*) and the states of alert, emergency or siege. Since the Constitutional reform introduced in 2011, an organic law regulates also the

maximum structural deficit that the state and regional authorities may have in relation to their gross domestic product.

In contrast, decree-laws are provisional regulatory acts passed by the executive in case of extraordinary and urgent need, when exceptional circumstances make following ordinary legislative procedure impossible. They are also subjected to issue content restrictions as they can only deal with issues not related to the regulation of basic institutions, the Regions, or fundamental rights or freedoms regulated in Title I of the Constitution. They are provisional because have to be submitted for debate and voting by the entire Chamber of Deputies within thirty days of their promulgation. The Chamber has to adopt a specific decision on their ratification or revocation in the same period, having the possibility to process them as executive bills. In contrast to organic laws, decree-laws may be passed with the simple majority of votes.

Opposition parties would tend to maintain and even strengthen their original position or policy preferences...for those issues regulated by organic law. For these issues related to fundamental rights and freedoms parties have a defined policy position, and any shift from this initial position will be hard to explain and justify in front of the electorate. The PP would not change its voting regarding issues like abortion simply because institutional or economic conditions have changed. By the contrary, one may expect voting behaviour regarding some policy decisions taken by decree-law, like those cutting health benefits or introducing labor market reforms may be affected by changing public mood in a context of economic crisis. For these issues, parties may adopt a more adversarial position, changing initial policy positions as a means to erode to party in government. Hence we expect:

H4a: consensus is not significantly affected by variations in the public mood in the case of organic laws.

H4b: Consensus is not significantly affected by the type of government in the case of organic laws.

Data and Methodology

To test these hypotheses we created a comprehensive database of all the organic laws (101) and decree-laws (164) passed from 2011 to 2012 (see table 1 for basic description). For each organic law and decree-law, we coded all the information about legislative voting, including not only the total number of votes, but also the specific votes casted by each parliamentary group, distinguishing whether they vote in favour, against, abstentions and absences. Data about the total number of votes are available at the Spanish Congress webpage, while information concerning the voting behaviour of each parliamentary group is available only on request and for the period 2001 to 2012ⁱⁱ, which is why this analysis was circumscribed to this period. For each laws we also distinguish whether the author of the proposal was the executive or a parliamentary group. The author is the executive in 89% of the cases for executive bills and 100% for decree-laws)

This database draws on those previously created by the Spanish Policy Agendas Project (www.ub.edu/spanishpolicyagendas), which provides information about the specific issue addressed by each legislative measure (see Appendix A). Following the comparative agendas methodology we classified legislative activities according to 19 topic and 247 subtopics (see Chaqués Bonafont, Palau and Baumgartner, 2015 for detailed information). Also, we created a dummy variable to identify whether an organic law or decree-law deals with a dramatic focusing event. Overall 49 laws (20%) respond to this definition of dramatic focusing event. Finally, legislation is considered as dealing with political decentralization if it is totally or partially linked to regional matters. This includes reforms of the Estatutos de Autonomia (regional constitutions),

and regional fiscal reforms, or transfers of issue jurisdiction to the regional governments. Overall, laws with regional content include 42 laws (about 16% of the total).

To measure consensus (dependent variable) we use an index developed by Capo (1994). This index of consensus is based on the following formula: $vf/(n * v/N)$ where vf corresponds to the total number of positive votes cast for a law, n is the number of deputies in the governing party, v is the total number of votes, including positive and negative votes as well as abstentions, and N is the size of the assembly (350). The index can be interpreted as follows: if the index has a value of 1, the incumbent party does not obtain support from any other parliamentary group; whereas, if the index has a value larger than 1, the incumbent obtains support from other groups: the more support it receives, the higher the value. Also, we run the same equations using as a dependent variable the percentage of negative votes arriving to similar results.

To analyse the impact of minority-majority governments, we take a dummy variable: 1 if the executive is governing under majority and 0 otherwise. We also run the same equation using the difference in the number of seats between the incumbent and the main opposition party is taken into account arriving to similar results. For the analysis of the impact of changing economic conditions we developed an annual and aggregated measure of mood following the methodology developed by Stimsonⁱⁱⁱ (1991). To develop the mood we used the following survey questions of the CIS (*Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas*) for the period 1982-2011: 1) Referring to the economic situation. How do you qualify it: very good, good, normal, bad, very bad; 2) Referring to the political situation. How do you qualify it: very good, good, normal, bad, very bad; 3) Overall, how do you qualify management by the government: very good, good, normal, bad, very bad (available since 1992). And the following of the

Eurobarometer databases: 4) Taking everything into consideration, would you say that (your country) has on balance benefited or not from being a member of the European Community (Common Market)? (available since 1986); 5) Generally speaking, do you think that (your country's) membership of the European Community (Common Market) is a good thing, a bad thing, neither good nor bad (available since 1999).

Finally, we created a dummy variable to identify whether opposition parties introduced an alternative legislative bill about the very same issue regulated by organic laws or decree-law. If any parliamentary group introduced an alternative bill, like for example an alternative bill to regulate the labour market or to reorganize the pension system, we coded that as 1. If there is not an alternative legislative bill then we coded 0. The alternative bill has to be introduced in the same legislature. Here we did not distinguish among those bills for which there are several legislative proposals.

Public mood, economic conditions and legislative agenda

Existing research already demonstrate changing economic conditions have a significant impact on legislative voting behavior (see de Giorgi and Moury 2015 and Palau, Muñoz and Chaqués Bonafont 2015 for the case of Spain). Overall, government-opposition dynamics in Spain are significantly linked to the government's popularity and the risk of electoral defeat. The more the percentage of citizen's that consider the governing party is performing bad or very bad its tasks, the more the incentives of opposition parties to deny support for any of the legislative proposals of the executive.

Citizen's perceptions about governmental performance are strongly related to the evolution of economic conditions (Barreiro, 2011; Ortega and Peñalosa, 2012). As figure 1 illustrates, variations in the public mood are inversely related to changing economic conditions (here measured by unemployment rates) for the whole democratic period). Public mood is especially high in the early 2000, when Spain is growing faster

than most advanced democracies, with unemployment rates for the first time close to 10%. In 2007, Rodríguez Zapatero enthusiastically argued Spain was one of the wealthiest nations in the world, with the capacity to surpass Germany and Italy in terms of GDP per capita. Actually in 2007 Spain was a country with governmental surplus (7.1% of the GDP), unemployment rates below 9%, and an economy growing faster than most other EU countries, at more than 3.5%. Interestingly, Rodríguez Zapatero devoted less than 4% of his first speech in 2004 to talk about macroeconomics, and only 10% in his first speech of 2008 despite the fact that, at the end of his first mandate, it was evident Spain was getting into the deepest economic recession of the democratic period.

Figure 1 about here

The collapse of the Spanish economy led to a dramatic decline in the public mood, after more than a decade of sustainable growth (see Jordana 2014, Royo 2013). By 2008 public expenditures in Spain had been redirected to pay interest debt payments (which increased more than 100%, from 17 in 2007 to 35 billion Euros in 2013) to transfers of capital to cover unemployment benefits which increased by more than 38% in the last five years^{iv} as the unemployment rate rose to more than 25% in 2013. For the last years, the government of Rodríguez Zapatero (2008-2011) and Mariano Rajoy (2011-) focuses increasingly on economic and labor issues, following the mandate of EU authorities and leaving in a second stage any other issue in the policy agenda.

In a context of deep economic recession, attention to issues like rights, education, environment, and research and development significantly declines. These issues are simply pushed off the political agendas when economic conditions are bad, as governments of both political sides focus increasingly only on the economy. Economic crises force governments not only to pay attention to the crisis, but also, because

attention cannot simultaneously be given in all directions, to reduce whatever focus they might like to have on other issues, such as rights or the environment. This applies to all types of agendas, and political arenas, either the parliamentary, governmental or/and the media, with the exception of decree laws and organic laws (Figure 2). Political attention is increasingly concentrated in a few set of issues, most of them related to economic conditions, and this is so when MPs ask oral questions in the Parliamentarian arena, when introducing executive and/or parliamentary bills, or when the Presidente del Gobierno gives the annual speech (see Chaqués-Bonafont, Palau and Baumgartner 2014 for a detailed description).

Figure 2 about here

However, as figure 2 demonstrates, fragmentation of the issue agenda follows a steady pattern for the case of organic laws, and a pattern of increasing fragmentation for the case of decree-laws. To measure agenda fragmentation we calculated Shannon index scores. This index measures the distribution of attention across issue categories providing an indicator of the relative concentration or dispersion of data (Baumgartner et al. 2000, Talbert and Potoski 2002, Wolfe 2008, Bevan 2008, Boydston, Bevan and Trey 2014). It ranges from 0 to the natural log of 19 (3). A score of 0 indicates that attention is concentrated in a single topic; by the contrary, a score of 3 indicates that attention is perfectly distributed across issues. The higher the entropy, the less concentrated the agenda^v. In the case of organic laws, steady fragmentation is clearly explained by formal rules –organic laws only deal with specific issues related to rights, freedoms and basic state institutions—, while in the case of decree-laws, increasing fragmentation has to do with the willingness of both Rodriguez Zapatero and especially Rajoy to use this legislative instrument to take decisions about a broader set of issues.

As figure 3 illustrates, the number of decree laws increases from 2004, and this increase is not linked to dramatic focusing events, but other issues that have nothing to do with an urgent need, from policy decisions about the functioning of the health public system to the regulation of public television. Figure 4 provides detailed information about the distribution of attention across issue for the case of organic laws and decree-laws. In the first case, as one may expect attention is very much linked to crime and Justice –which includes all organic laws related to general reforms of the penal or civil codes—, governmental issues –related to the functioning of basis state institutions like the Constitutional Court—, the economy –like a regional fiscal reform—, and Rights –from immigration rights to a new regulation of abortion—. In the case of transportation –seguridad vial— or health –sports doping— there only a single organic law (see also appendix B for detailed information). In contrast, most decree-laws deal with focusing dramatic events –like an environmental catastrophe like the prestige, or the impact of an intense drought for agriculture—, economic issues –mainly labour market, commerce and banking, foreign trade, and macroeconomic issues in general—, and increasingly other issues that have nothing to do with an urgent need.

Figure 3 and 4 about here

Voting legislative behaviour

As figure 5 illustrates voting behaviour varies across time. On the one hand, the number of absences have decreased dramatically from more than 20% of MPs during the second legislature of Aznar (2000-2004), to less than 10% during the second legislature of Rodríguez Zapatero (2008-2011). On the other hand, the percentatge of abstains votes has increased from less than 3% to more than 12% for the same period, reaching 20% in 2011. This is very much related to the voting of decree-laws, while in the case of organic laws, obtain votes follow a steady pattern across time.

Figure 5 about here

Finally, the average number of votes in favor and against these laws tend to follow a more random pattern. From here we test to what extent the capacity of governmental actors to find support to some of its legislative proposals (decree-laws and organic laws) is linked to changing government's popularity, party preferences and type of issues. To answer this question we run three OLS regressions where the dependent variables are the consensus index: (1) taking together all laws (organic and decree-laws), (2) only organic laws; (3) only decree-laws. The independent variables are: (1) type of government –measured by a dummy variable, 1 if majority (from 2001 to 2004 and 2012, always under governments of the Partido Popular) and 0 otherwise (2004-2011, always under governments of the PSOE)—, (2) legislative alternative –measured by a dummy variable, 1 if there is an alternative parliamentary bill, and 0 otherwise—; (3) Focusing events –measured by a dummy variable, 1 in the case the decree-law is aimed to respond to a dramatic catastrophe like an earthquake, a drought, etc—, (4) Mood (monthly level) as defined in the methodological section, and (5) political decentralization –also measured by a dummy variable 1 in case the law refers to regional issues and 0 otherwise. Note that we use the same equation taking the percentage of negative votes as a dependent variable, arriving to similar results.

Table 1 summarizes results. Overall, we confirm the hypotheses stated in the first section with the exception of the one related to political decentralization. Contrary to hypothesis 2, consensus is not lower regarding laws related to political decentralization, and this is the case for both organic laws and decree-laws. One plausible explanation is that most organic laws are about reforms of the Estatus the autonomia, which despite the conflict generated by the Basque and catalan cases, are passed most of the time with the agreement of most MPs. However, we need to go

further in this analysis about the importance of political decentralization as a conflictual issue in Spanish politics.

Table 1 about here

Second, as expected, consensus is lower in those initiatives where opposition parties have introduced a bill to regulate the same issue along the legislature. Actually this is the only factor explaining legislative voting in the case of organic laws and. Consensus significantly decreases by .227 when there is a legislative alternative regarding an organic laws, and by .162 for the case of decree laws. We arrive to similar results when taking as dependent variable the percentage of negative voting. Overall negative voting increases by 15,5 for the case of organic laws, and by 5,5 per cent for the case of decree-laws when parties have an alternative legislative proposal.

Third, as stated in hypotheses 3, consensus is significantly larger for those laws related to dramatic focusing events. Note that according to formal rules this only applies to decree-laws. Overall, consensus increases by .341 when voting decree-laws about focusing dramatic events, while negative voting decreases by 11 per cent when dealing with these issues (significant at 0.02 and .001 respectively). Fourth, as expected consensus is not significantly affected by changing public mood and the type of government in the case of organic laws. The underlying assumption is that parties would have less incentives to change their voting about issues related to rights, freedoms or the functioning of basic institutions according to changing institutional or economic conditions. Results give support to this idea. Coefficients are not statistically significant for the case of organic laws, while the contrary occurs for the case of decree-laws. In that case, consensus declines under majority governments and when citizen's perceptions about government performance are bad or very bad. Interestingly, when we run the same equation having negative voting as a dependent variable results are only

significant for the case of the type of government, but not the mood. This is negative voting of decree-laws increases by 13 when the governing party has the majority of seats in Parliament. However, negative voting do not significantly increase as the mood decreases. We need to go further this idea, but one plausible explanation may be related with the increasing number of abstention regarding decree-laws voting.

Conclusions

In this paper we argue the capacity of the spanish executive to find support for their legislative proposals (here organic laws and decree-laws) is affected not only by changing economic conditions and the type of government but especially, the type of issues and the intensity of party preferences towards these issues. Results illustrate that in the case of organic laws a more or less adversarial model of politics is not linked to changing public mood, or whether the executive has the majority of seats, but to the intensity of policy preferences. Consensus significantly declines for those cases were opposition parties introduced an alternative legislative bill in the same legislature. By the contrary, in the case of decree-laws a more or less consensual behaviour is linked to party preferences, and also changing public mood, the type of government and the features of policy issues. Consensus is especially high for those decree-laws dealing with focusing events. By the contrary consensus declines as the public mood becomes more negative and when government has a majority of seats in Parliament. However, this is a first attempts to link voting legislative behaviour to policy dynamics across political venues and time.

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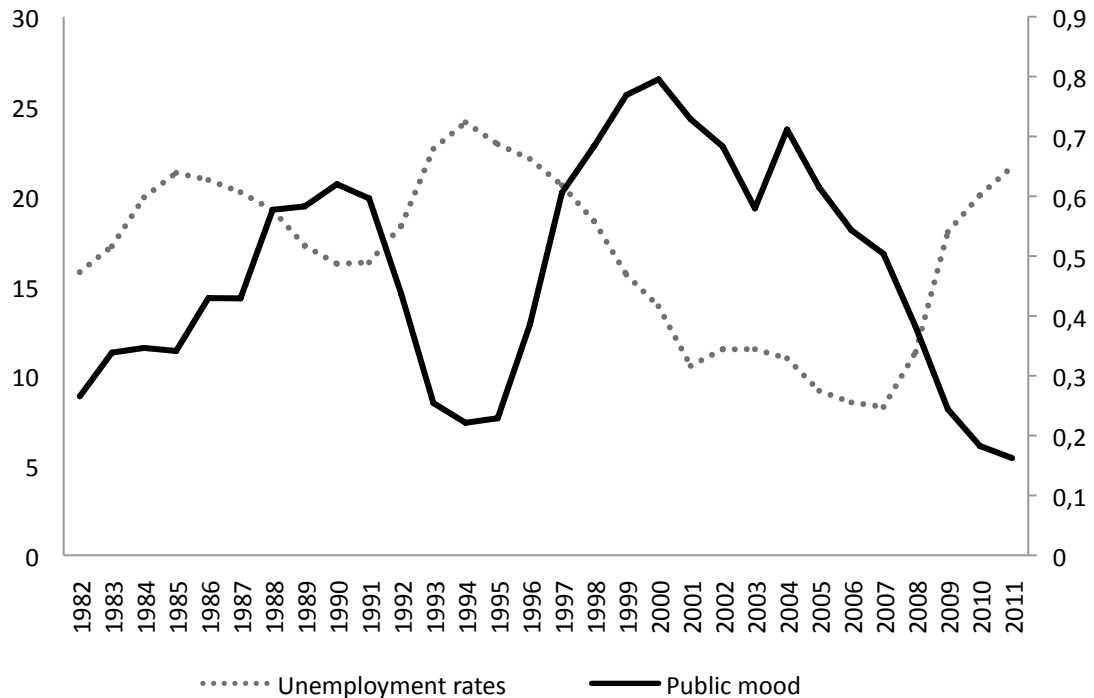
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Figures and Tables

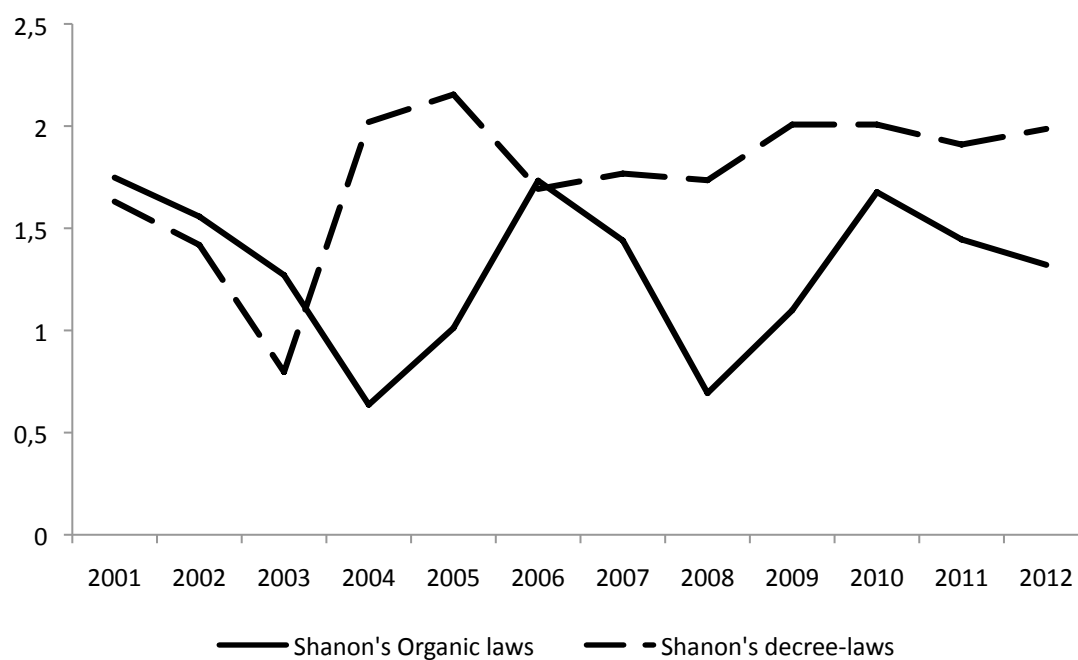
Figure 1. Public Mood and economic conditions



Source: Unemployment rates: IMF (www.imf.org). Mood: *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas* (www.cis.es) and Eurobarometer (www.ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm).

Note: Mood: it combines public opinion polls on the state of the economy, the state of the political situation, how the government is managing public affairs, and evaluations of EU membership. Unemployment rate: actual rate. Data are yearly.

Figure 2. Fragmentation of the agenda across issues



Source: Spanish Policy Agendas Databases (www.ub.edu/spanishpolicyagendas)

Note: For each type of law the figure shows Shannon's entropy index, a measure of spread of attention. Higher values indicate greater spread of attention; lower values, attention concentrated on a small number of topics.

Figure 3. Number of organic laws and decree laws (2001-2012)

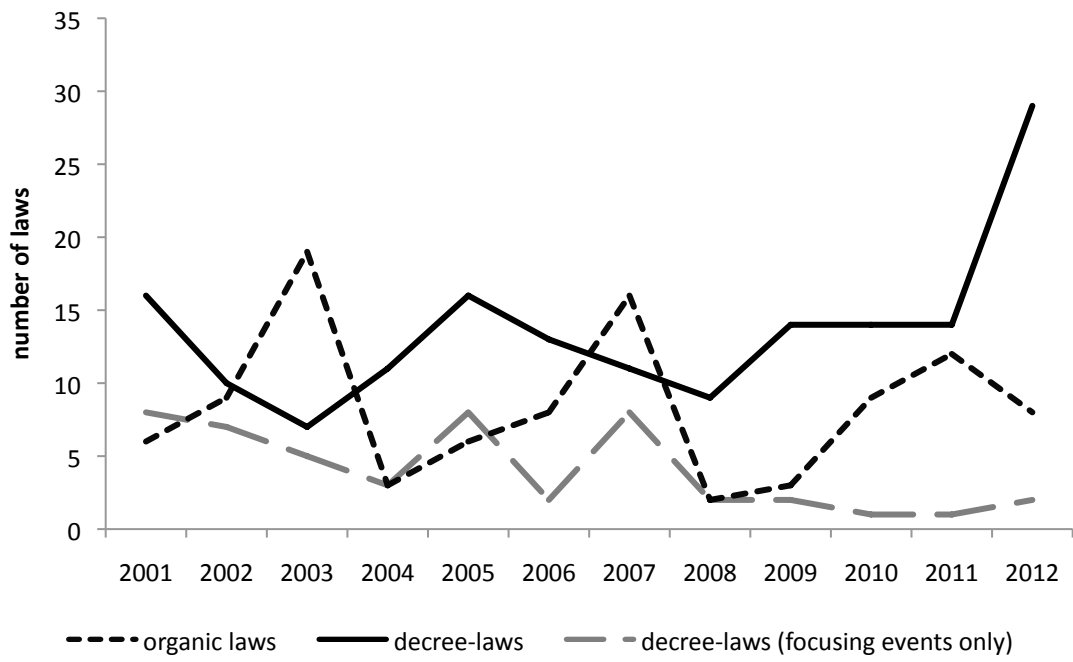
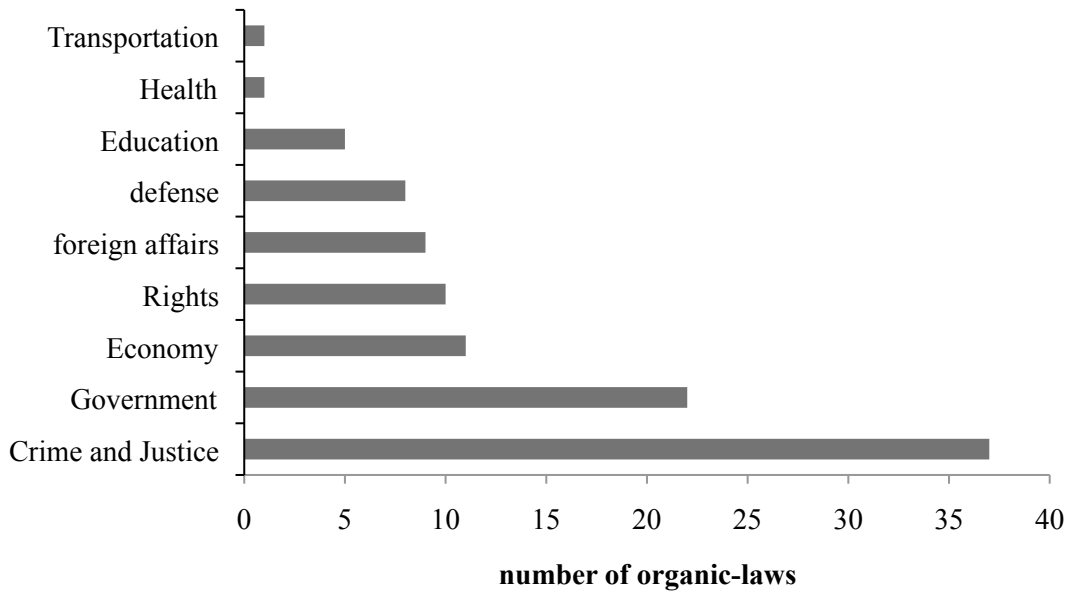


Figure 4. Number of laws by type of issue

a. Organic laws



b. decree-laws

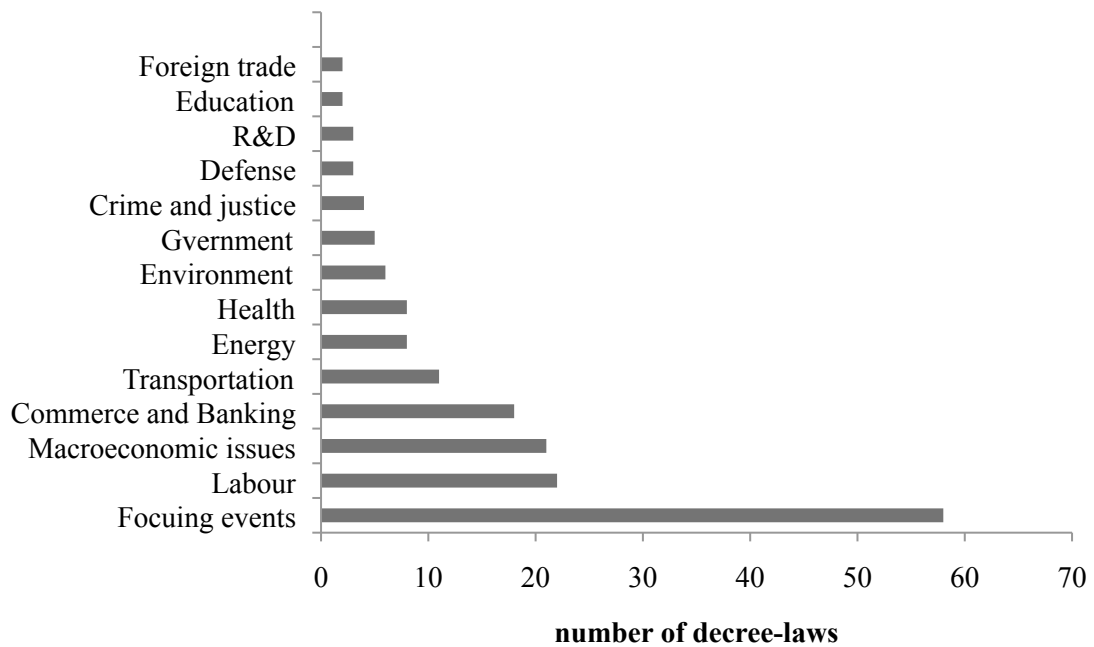


Figure 5. Voting behaviour, organic laws and decree-laws 2001-2014

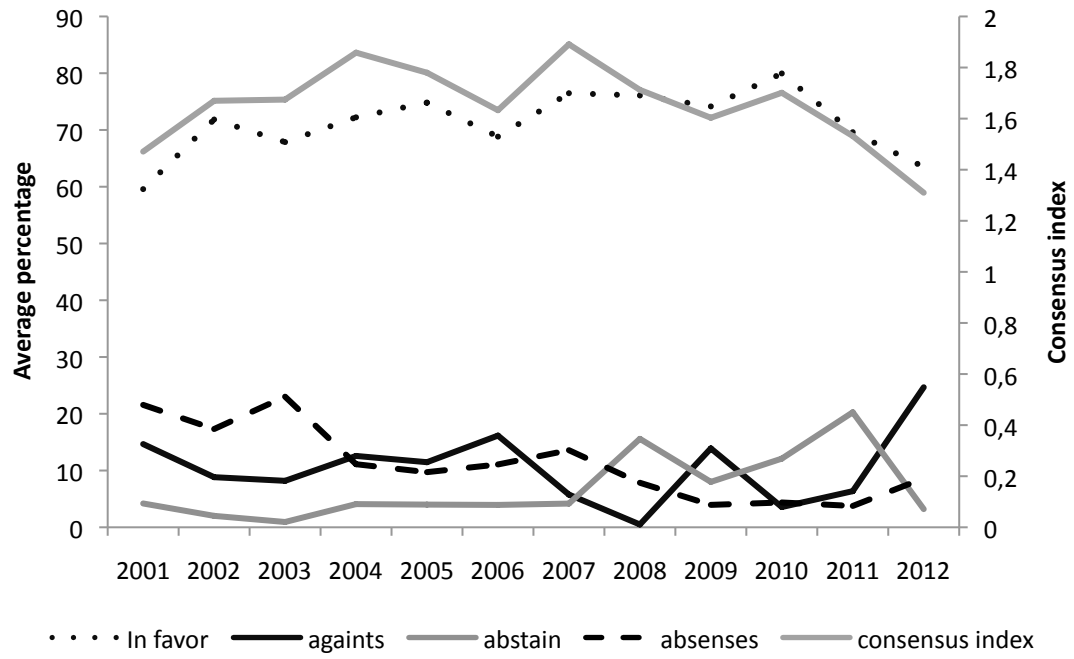
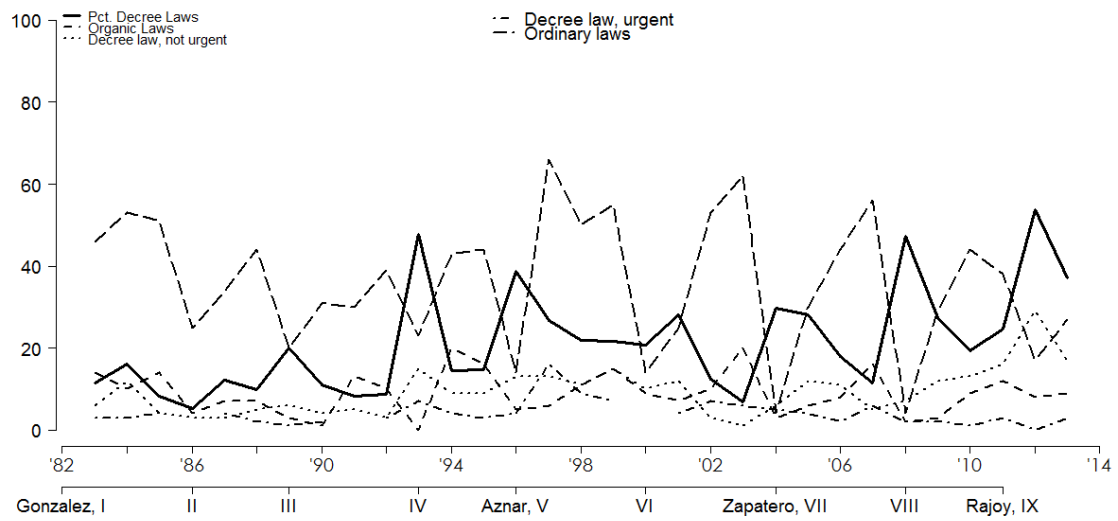


Table 1. Explaining voting behavior (OLS regression, data for the period 2001-2012)

Capo index	Independent variables		negative voting		independent variables		Adj R Square
	B	Sig.	Adj R Square	%	B	Sig.	
All laws N: 265	Cons	1,855,000	,228	Cons	7,087,019	,142	
	Type of government	-,191,000		Type of government	8,555,000		
	Legislative alternative	-,216,000		Legislative alternative	8,682,001		
	Focusing events	,244,000		Focusing events	-7,721,011		
	Mood	-,005,001		Mood	,058,399		
	Decentralization	,075,520		Decentralization	-7,363,151		
Organic laws N: 101	Cons	1,883,000	,161	Cons	5,640,318	,168	
	Type of government	-,132,157		Type of government	,175,968		
	Legislative alternative	-,277,010		Legislative alternative	15,530,002		
	Mood	-,003,288		Mood	,146,277		
	Decentralization	,121,460		Decentralization	-4,310,574		
	Decree laws N: 164	Cons	1,770,000	,324	Cons	10,260,005	,214
Type of government		-,249,000		Type of government	12,992,000		
Legislative alternative		-,162,031		Legislative alternative	5,564,084		
Focusing events		,341,000		Focusing events	-11,005,001		
Mood		-,004,020		Mood	-,020,803		
Decentralization		-,015,924		Decentralization	-8,240,237		

Appendix

Figure A. Evolution of different types of laws



Source: Spanish Policy Agendas Databases (www.ub.edu/spanishpolicyagendas)

Note: Series show the number of each type of law, with the dark solid line showing decree laws as a percent of all laws.

Table A. List of Major Topic Codes in the Spanish Agendas Project.

Topic	Description
1	Economy
2	Rights
3	Health
4	Agriculture
5	Labor
6	Education
7	Environment
8	Energy
10	Transport
12	Justice
13	Social
14	Housing
15	Business
16	Defense
17	Science
18	Foreign Trade
19	International
20	Government
21	Public Lands
23	Culture
27	Weather
29	Sports
30	Death Notices

Note: for a detailed description of each code www.ub.edu/spanishpolicyagendas. Codes 23 to 30 are only for the media coding.

Table B. Consensus index by subtopic. All organic laws and decree-laws 2001-2012

Issue	Consensus Index	Laws
341. Tabacco	2,13	1
1499. Other Housing	2,13	1
705. Air pollution, Global Warming and Noise Pollution	2,13	1
2004. Civil Service	2,13	1
1208. Domestic Violence	2,13	2
1619. Direct participation in war	2,13	1
325. Human resources, education and training	2,13	1
709. Species and Forest Protection	2,09	3
300. General Health	2,08	1
335. Pharmaceutical expenditure, government consumption and drug prices	2,07	1
1203. Illegal Drug Production, Trafficking, and Control	2,07	1
507. Unemployment and disease compensation	2,04	2
1502. Securities and Commodities Regulation	2,04	1
1304. Assistance to the Disabled and Handicapped	2,03	1
1260. Terrorism and counter-terrorism	2,00	4
1706. Telecommunication and telephone services	1,99	1
2099. Other Government Operations	1,99	1
1910. European Union (all institutional issues)	1,96	8
206. Voting rights , political participation and representation	1,95	3
710. Pollution and Conservation of the Coast	1,95	5
1603. Military Intelligence, CIA, Espionage	1,91	2
402. Subsidies and agricultural regulation	1,91	5
1201. Police and crime fighting authorities	1,91	5
2070. Government-CCAA relations	1,91	8
1299. Other Crime	1,90	2
1901. Foreign aid	1,89	1
1507. Bankruptcy	1,89	1
2012.Regulation of political activities, elections and election campaigns	1,89	8
1524. Tourism	1,88	1
1925. Human Rights	1,88	1
1599 other banking and commerce issues	1,88	2
1207. Child Abuse and Child Pornography	1,85	1
1608. Human Resources and Military Personnel	1,84	6
2104. Water and sea resources: development, public works and harbours	1,83	7
1523. Domestic Disaster Relief (natural disasters and accidents)	1,83	26
1501. Banking System and Financial Institution Regulation	1,77	5
1804. Overseas private investment and Spanish investments abroad	1,76	3
230. Immigration and refugees	1,74	4
1204. Judiciary System	1,73	11
2001. Intergovernmental relations and local government	1,68	6
1205. Prisons	1,67	4
403. Food inspection and Safety	1,65	3

2015. Claims against the government	1,63	2
107. Taxes, tax policy and tax reform	1,57	15
505. Employment policy and collective negotiation	1,57	2
1003. Airports, Air Traffic Control and Safety	1,57	4
1006. Automobile Industry: Traffic and Regulation	1,55	3
1210. Criminal and Civil Code	1,52	5
601. Higher Education	1,52	3
503. Pensions and early retirement. Other Employee Benefits	1,49	3
100. General Economics	1,41	9
500. General Labour	1,40	3
1504. Mortgages, credit cards and other services of the credit market	1,34	3
600. General Education	1,32	4
202. Gender discrimination and rights.	1,32	1
1500. General Commerce	1,31	3
1211. Crime Prevention	1,27	1
1209. Weapons Control, Private Security Forces and Civil Protection	1,24	1
207. Freedom of expression, assembly and demonstration. Pornography.	1,23	1
1200. General Crime	1,23	2
1002. Highway and Roads Construction, Maintenance, and Safety	1,22	1
1206. Youth Crime and antisocial behaviour	1,22	1
2002. Public Administration Efficacy	1,22	1
1411. Housing Market and Real Estate Speculation	1,22	1
1699. Other Defence	1,22	1
105. Budgets and spending budget law	1,21	10
529. Labour and Immigration	1,20	1
1005. Railroad Transportation and Safety	1,19	2
1600. General Defence	1,19	1
1521. Small and medium enterprises issues	1,18	2
502. Employment Training and Workforce Development	1,18	8
2000. Constitutional Court and judiciary system	1,17	1
1007. Maritime Issues and Naval Industry	1,17	2
504. Labour Unions	1,16	1
800. General Energy	1,16	5
1520. Antitrust regulation	1,14	1
1707. Media	1,14	2
604. Professional training	1,13	1
301. General reforms of the National Health System (NHS)	1,12	2
208. Right to life	1,11	1
700. General Environment	1,09	1
802. Electricity and Hydroelectricity	1,07	3
302. General questions about the coverage of the NHS	1,06	1
1212. Tax Fraud	1,05	2
510. Social Security. General issues	1,02	1
506. Youth and employment	1,02	1
1610. Military Procurement and Weapons System Acquisitions	1,01	1
501. Working conditions, work accidents and compensation schemes	1,00	1

ⁱFrom 2006 to 2012 it goes from 14 to 31% . In 2014, 28,2% of respondents identify themselves as always been secessionist, 20,9% they became secessionist for the last years.

ⁱⁱ Information about the total number of votes cast (positive, negative, absences and abstentions) is provided for all the decree-laws and organic laws. However, information about the voting behaviour of each parliamentary group is missing in the case of 15 decree-laws and 8 organic laws.

ⁱⁱⁱ The mood as originally designed is a measure of the public's preferences for more or less government across multiple policy domains. Stimson developed a complex algorithm for combining as much data as available from public opinion sources in order to develop an index reflecting information contained in multiple sources. His Wcalc algorithm and software is available publicly and we made use of it to create indices of Spanish public opinion towards the economic and political situation as well as evaluation of national government and EU membership. Wcalc allows one to combine results from multiple opinion sources, provided that each source was measured using the same question wordings and methodologies over time. It assesses the degree to which different question series, which can be from different survey organizations, follow similar trends over time. If they do follow similar trends, then the results may be combined into a single index, making use of more data and therefore being more accurate than any single series could be. From here we calculated an “agreement ratio,” which is simply the proportion of respondents giving a positive answer divided by those giving either a positive or a negative response. (That is, neutral and don’t know responses are excluded from the analysis.) With these ratios calculated for each survey administration, the Wcalc program generates results similar to a principal components analysis. The algorithm assesses the variation over time within series by rendering them as ratios of the same question repeated over time. When more than one question series is used for a policy specific mood, it assesses covariation between series by observing the covariation of those ratios over time. Series that do not correspond are not included in the index (though in our case all of the series mentioned above do load highly on the index and are maintained). The dyad ratios algorithm assesses first whether each component question series loads highly with the other question series. If, for example, a given survey organization or question wording generates responses consistently lower, by say 5 points than another series, but both series show similar trends over time, then the algorithm will show that they correspond to a similar index, because of their shared variation over time. The method has been used in many cases including studying public opinion toward the death penalty, where Baumgartner and colleagues (2008) combined multiple different questions on the topic to generate a highly robust index, by Brouard and others (2014) looking at French opinion toward nuclear power, and by Stimson, Tiberj, and others (2012, 2013) concerning French public mood in general.

^{iv} All data is available at the IGAE (Intervención General de la Administración del Estado, Gobierno de España) and also the OCDE economic indicators.

^v Shannon’s H Entropy= $-\sum p(x_i) \cdot \log_2 p(x_i)$ where x_i represents a dimension, $p(x_i)$ is the proportion of total attention the dimension receives $\log_2 p(x_i)$ is the log of the proportion of attention the dimension receives, using the total number of possible dimensions as the base of the log (Boydston et al 2014).