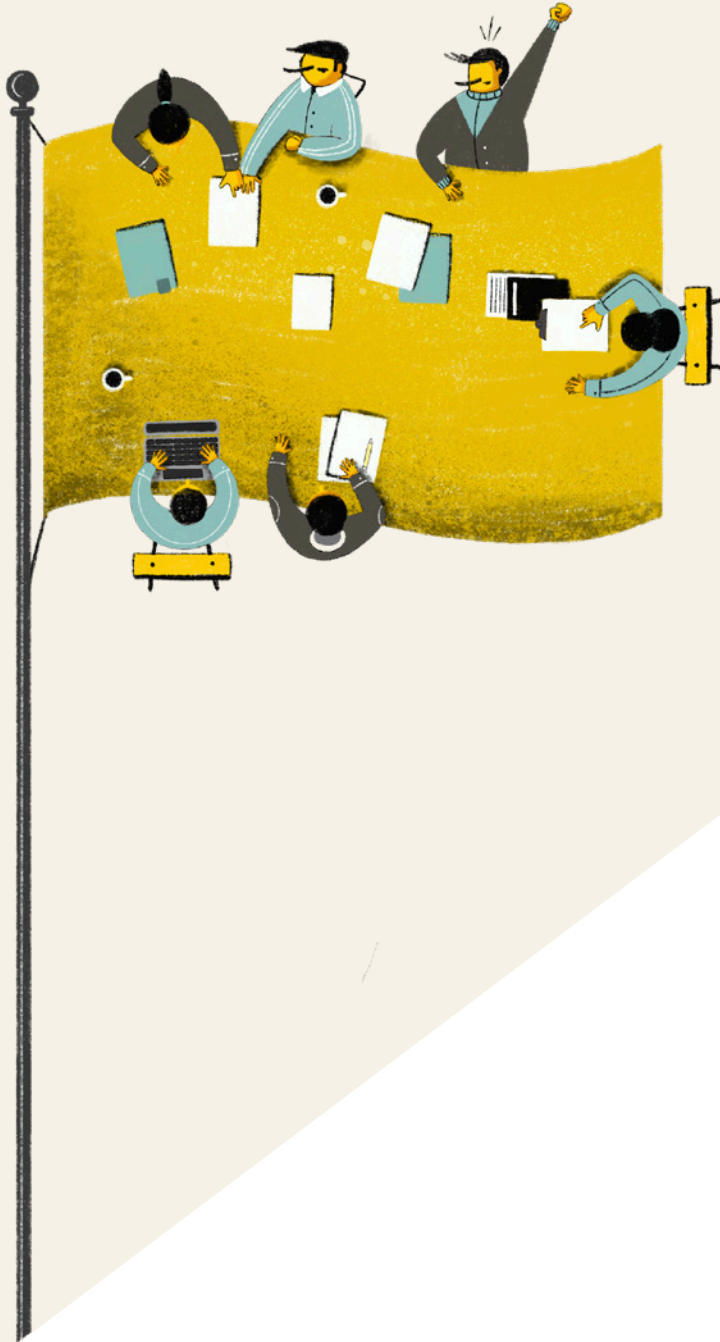


Miscellaneous



Restructuring of the electoral competition in the Autonomous Community of Valencia (2011–2019)

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ABSTRACT

Electoral competition in the Valencian Autonomous Community has long been articulated through the left–right and national identity divides. Although voter identities have generally remained stable over time, some shifts between 2011 and 2019 indeed seemed to be connected to the breakthrough of new political parties. The aim of this article was to show the electoral spaces occupied by new and mainstream political parties in the Valencian region through the last three regional electoral cycles. This, in turn, allowed us to trace the evolution of the main political areas dominated by each party, as well as to highlight spaces in which the electoral competition was more demanding. This Valencian case study shows the limitations of theories of party competition based on exclusive control of the electoral space by some political parties.

Keywords: electoral spaces, electoral competition, national identity, left–right divide, political parties, Valencian Autonomous Community

SUMMARY

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Biographical note

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INTRODUCTION

The structure of partisan competition is usually configured based on the different cleavages that channel political conflict in Western societies, from the political and partisan identities that derive from them, as well as from other more contingent elements such as government action, economic status, or political leadership (Harrop and Miller, 1987; Evans, 2004; Dalton, 2014). Competition also starts from a certain dependency on diffusion routes, given that the structure of the existing party systems strongly conditions access to financing from the state or media (Katz and Mair, 1995; Blyth and Katz, 2005; Katz and Mair, 2018).

Electoral competition theories, whether they operate on economic assumptions and focus on centripetal competition (Downs, 1957; Enelow and Hinich, 1984), or on thematic elements and centre on directional patterns (Rabinowitz and Macdonald, 1989), have tended to be traditionally thought about as one-dimensional models. However, the growing complexity of Western societies, with the emergence of new cleavages and conflicts, has made integration

of the multidimensionality of partisan competition necessary (Inglehart, 1977; Kitschelt, 1994; Dalton, 2014; Dalton and Welzel, 2013). This is even more true when considering competition in multilevel political systems in which the territorial dimension is highly relevant (Elias, Szocsik, and Zuber, 2015).

One way to illustrate the changes in the structure of partisan competition in multidimensional systems is based on the evolution of the positions occupied by party voters in the main electoral spaces. On the one hand, the relevance of the divisions is shown because the voters are not distributed exclusively along one dimension (e.g., left–right), but rather, they can be found in various electoral spaces configured by their interaction. On the other hand, changes in the positions occupied by voters should be considered the result of partisan strategies throughout the previous legislature. The most successful parties will see their dominance extend in the most populated electoral spaces or they will ‘conquer’ new areas of influence. The less successful ones will see their areas of domain reduced and may lose support in the most populated spaces.

In Spain, changes in the structure of partisan competition have been studied, above all, for the left–right dimension (Molas and Bartomeus, 2001; Bartomeus, 2003; Medina, 2015). In the Catalan and Valencian case, the structure of the competition has also been analysed based on the two main axes of conflict: the left–right and national identity (Molas and Bartomeus, 1998 and 1999; Martín Cubas, 2007). The results of these publications have confirmed, especially for the Catalan case, that despite the relative stability of the left–right positioning and national identity of voters, important transformations have taken place in the electoral spaces occupied by parties, seen in the form of the intense changes in the partisan offering and party positions from 2012 onwards (Bartomeus and Medina, 2011; Medina, 2014; Bartomeus, 2015).

The purpose of this current research article was to show that, despite the relative stability of the ideological identities of the Valencian people, the emergence of new parties has led to particularly important changes in the electoral spaces that they occupy and, in addition, has substantially increased the complexity of the competition between them. To this end, the following sections show, firstly, the main stages of evolution of the party system in the Autonomous Community of Valencia. Secondly, we show the distribution of the population in the different electoral spaces configured both from the left–right and national identity axes, between 2011 and 2019. The third section shows the weight of the different parties within these electoral spaces during the same period. In the fourth section, we consider the main areas of dominance and axes of competition between these parties. Finally, the text ends with some brief conclusions.

THE MAIN STAGES OF PARTY SYSTEM EVOLUTION IN THE AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY OF VALENCIA

Since the first autonomous elections were held in the Valencian Community in 1983, a dozen elections have already accumulated that have been slowly configuring a local party system with certain singularities with respect to the Spanish party system (Martín Cubas, 2007; Oñate, 2013). Based on the electoral evolution and competition and cooperation patterns of the parties

(figure 1), three major stages of party system evolution can be defined (Franch, 1998; Oñate, 2013; Roig, 2019).

The first extended from the 1983 to 1991 elections and was characterised by an almost undisputed predominance of the *Partit Socialista del País Valencià* (Socialist Party of the Valencian Country, or PSPV). Various socialist governments followed one another during this period and were always chaired by Joan Lerma. Support for the socialists during these years oscillated between 51.8% and 40% of voters. In 1987, the socialists remained only a few seats away from the majority and supported the *Grupo Parlamentario de Esquerra Unida del País Valencià* (Parliamentary Group of the United Left of the Valencian Country, or EUPV). The main opposition party was the *Alianza Popular* (People's Alliance, or AP) which was re-founded as the *Partido Popular* (People's Party, or PP), whose support ranged from 32.1% in 1983 to 23.6% of the vote.

The presence of some minor forces stands out from these years, such as the conservative Valencianism represented by *Unió Valenciana* (Valencian Union, or UV) and the *Centro Democrático y Social* (Democratic and Social Centre, or CDS). The fragmentation of the space of the right and the electoral strength of these smaller parties prevented the AP/PP from becoming an alternative government during this period. On the left, the socialists competed with the EUPV, which would eventually form a coalition with the progressive Valencianism of the *Unitat del Poble Valencià* (Valencia Town Unit, or UPV; Bernardo and López, 1991; Franch, 1998).

In 1995, the PP fell three seats short of an absolute majority by winning 43% of the vote, while the PSPV vote remained at 34%. These elections were also the first in which the sum of support for the right, comprising the *Partit Popular de la Comunitat Valenciana* (People's Party of the Valencian Community, or PPCV) and *Unió Valenciana* (Valencian Union, or UV), exceeded that of the set of left-wing alternatives embodied by the PSPV and EUPV, thereby breaking, for the first time, the traditional majority character of the left in the Valencian Community. After these elections, the PP formed a coalition government with the UV that would not be

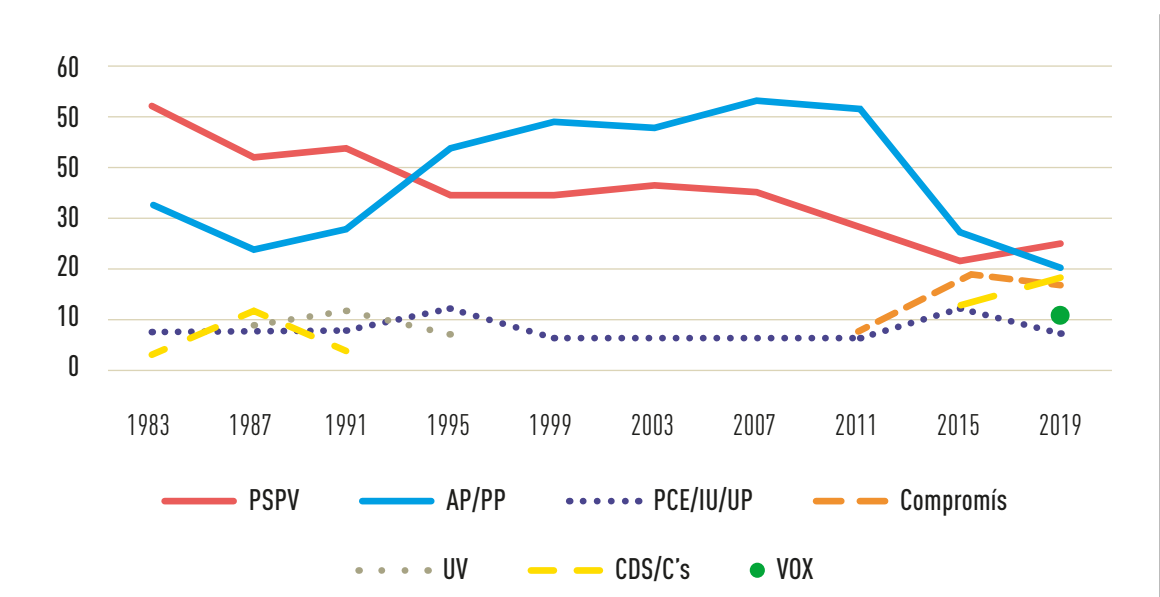
repeated in successive elections. The minority nature of the support for the PP and the need for coalition governments led these elections to become considered a transitory period preceding the second great electoral stage in the Autonomous Community of Valencia (Franch, 1998; Franch and Martín Cubas, 2000).

This second stage of party system evolution in the Autonomous Community of Valencia began in the regional elections of 1999 and lasted until 2011. This period was characterised by absolute majorities led by various presidents (E. Zaplana, F. Camps, J. L. Olivas, and A. Fabra). Support for the PP during these years was between 50.7% of the vote in 2011 and 47.9% in 2003. The PSPV became the first opposition party, with support ranging between 36.5% in 2003 and 28.3% in 2011. During this period, a significant amount of the right-wing vote concentrated in the PP, which led to the disappearance of minor parties such as the CDS or UV. The EUPV continued as a minor force to the left of the socialists until progressive Valencianism, represented by the *Coalició Compromís* (the *Compromise Coalition*, or simply *Compromís*), entered the *Corts*

Valencianes [the main legislative body of the *Generalitat Valenciana*—different self-governing institutions that politically organise the autonomous community of Valencia—and therefore, of the Valencian Community] after 2011 (Oñate, 2013; Roig, 2019).

The third stage began in 2015, with erosion of support for the PP and PSPV and the rise of new parties such as *Podem* (We can), *Ciudadanos* (Citizens, or Cs), *Vox* (Latin for ‘voice’), and the Valencian supporters of *Compromís*. After the stages of dominance of the PPCV and PSPV, fragmentation dominated the party system of the Autonomous Community of Valencia, leading to the emergence of a moderately pluralistic party system. During these years, the PP and PSPV continued to be the main parties in terms of votes, but the growth of the minority parties decanted their parliamentary majorities to the left. Hence, coalition governments led by the Socialist politician, Ximo Puig, were formed in 2015 and 2019 with the presence and/or support of other forces such as *Compromís* and *Podem*. In 2019, fragmentation and polarisation of the system increased even more with the entry of *Vox* (Abellán and Pardo, 2018; Roig, 2019).

Figure 1 Evolution of the electoral support of the main political parties (1983–2019).



SOURCE: own elaboration based on Argos data (www.argos.gva.es)

CHANGES IN THE ELECTORAL SPACES OF THE AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY OF VALENCIA (2011–2019)

When analysing the vote totals for each of the periods studied, we observed that the dual identity and ideology of the centre clearly dominated the Valencian electorate distribution in the year 2011. The centre ideology achieved a total value of 37.8% while the dual identity reached a total of 63.7% (table 1, top part), representing 942,004 and 1,587,877 votes, respectively (table 1, lower part). These values, with their variations, showed a general coherence with the trajectory examined in other studies regarding previous elections (Martín Cubas, 2007) in which the dual identity and ideology of the centre predominated with 56.3% and 44.1% of the vote, respectively.

We can also observe how, in 2015, Valencian society again situated itself mostly in the same positions with,

on this occasion, values of 60.4% and 41%, respectively (table 2, top part) or, in other words, 1,020,739 and 1,502,891 votes, respectively (table 2, lower part). By 2019, the electorate of the Valencian Autonomous Community was more concentrated in the dual space of the identity axis, while it was significantly dispersed along the ideological one. Thus, the values revealed that 65% of the electorate (1,752,425 votes) had a dual identity affinity, and this group was distributed as 34.5% in favour of the centre and 32.9% to the left in terms of ideological variables, which was equivalent to 930,110 and 886,992 votes, respectively.

In terms of the distribution of the Valencian electorate along the identity sentiment axes and ideological self-positioning in the year 2011 (table 1), we saw the dual centre become the dominant group, with 24.1% of the vote, comprising a total of 599,921

Table 1 Electoral spaces in the Autonomous Community of Valencia 2011 regional elections.

ACV, 11	F.L	L.	C.	R.	F.R.	DK/NR	Total
Spa.	0.4	5.0	6.4	1.7	0.4	1.8	15.8
Spa. > Val.	0.4	2.5	4.3	2.6	0.4	1.4	11.6
Dual	2.5	17.5	24.1	9.3	2.2	8.2	63.7
Val. > Spa.	0.9	1.7	2.9	1.3	0.3	0.4	7.6
Val.	0.2	0.5	0.2	0.1			1.3
Total	4.4	27.3	37.8	15.1	3.3	12.2	100

ACV, 11	F.L	L.	C.	R.	F.R.	DK/NR	Total
Spa.	10,211	125,090	158,277	43,399	10,211	45,951	393,140
Spa. > Val.	10,211	61,269	107,220	63,821	10,211	35,740	288,473
Dual	61,269	436,538	599,921	232,310	53,610	204,229	1,587,877
Val. > Spa.	22,976	43,399	71,480	33,187		9,966	181,008
Val.	5,106	12,764	5,106	2,553		–	25,529
Total	109,773	679,060	942,004	375,270	74,033	295,886	2,476,026

SOURCE: CENTRE FOR SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH (CIS) 2892
 Abbreviations: ACV, Autonomous Community of Valencia; F.L, far left; L., left; C., centre; R., right; F.R., far right; DK/NR, don't know/no response.

votes, followed by the dual left, which achieved 17.5% or 436,538 votes, and, more distantly, by the dual right, which held 9.3%, with 232,310 votes. In the background, a concentration of values of interest could be discerned in the coordinates of the centre, both in terms of Spanish values and with inclinations towards ‘Spanishness,’ which accumulated 6.4% and 4.3% of the vote, respectively, or 158,277 and 107,220 votes. Thus, we find the centre of gravity essentially comprising the left, centre, and dual right, among which the former two aforementioned options clearly dominated. The main domain spaces located also revealed certain similarities with the concentration around the centre and left that had been perceived in the year 2007 (Martín Cubas, 2007).

In 2015, the dual centre remained the predominant box in the system, with 24.7% of the vote, the

equivalent to a total of 615,600 votes, followed again by the dual left, with 18% of the vote, which translated into 447,231 votes (table 2). On this occasion, the dual right moved away from the positions of greatest influence, with its figures dropping to 6.2% or 155,215 votes, while both the centre and Spanish left grew to 9.7% (242,031 votes) and 8.2% (205,200 votes), respectively. Thus, we see that the data reflected in the preceding table reveals a centre of gravity comprising the area delimiting the centre and the dual left. Indeed, its influence could connect with a second bloc made up of the centre and the Spanish left. Hence, the localised dominant spaces coincided, in essence, with those distinguished in the 2011 elections, despite the fact that changes observed were also in line with a displacement of domains favourable to the left and to Spanishness.

Table 2 Electoral spaces in the Autonomous Community of Valencia 2015 regional elections.

ACV, 15	F.L.	L.	C.	R.	F.R.	DK/NR	Total
Spa.	0.8	8.2	9.7	2.0	0.1	1.2	22.1
Spa. > Val.	0.6	2.5	3.9	1.3	0.1	1.4	9.8
Dual	3.7	18.0	24.7	6.2	0.8	6.9	60.4
Val. > Spa.	1.3	2.0	1.9	0.2	0.2	0.3	5.9
Val.	0.3	0.4	0.7		0.1	0.2	1.8
Total	6.8	31.2	41.0	9.7	1.4	9.9	100

ACV, 15	F.L.	L.	C.	R.	F.R.	DK/NR	Total
Spa.	21,046	205,200	242,031	49,985	2,631	28,938	549,831
Spa. > Val.	15,785	63,138	97,339	31,569	2,631	34,842	245,304
Dual	92,077	447,231	615,600	155,215	21,046	171,721	1,502,891
Val. > Spa.	31,569	49,985	47,354	5,262		7,466	141,635
Val.	7,892	10,523	18,415	-		5,682	42,513
Total	168,369	776,077	1,020,739	242,031	26,308	248,649	2,482,174

In 2019, the figures gave the greatest weight to the centre and dual left, while we also saw a relaxation of the preference for identity affinities closer to the country. This was despite the relatively low-intensity validity this continued to maintain, with values of 6.6% (178,530 votes) and 6.5% (175,551 votes) for the Spanish left and centre, respectively (table 3). These figures indicate that the centre of gravity of

the period studied was located in the block that included the centre and dual left. The domain spaces identified here were also similar to those glimpsed through studying the 2015 elections, given that they continued to be linked to the centre and dual left. In the same way, we also saw other differences, such as the loss of the pre-eminence of the Spanish left and Spanish centre.

Table 3 Electoral spaces in the Autonomous Community of Valencia 2019 regional elections.

ACV, 19	F.L.	L.	C.	R.	F.R.	DK/NR	Total
Esp.	1.0	6.6	6.5	2.5	0.6	4.3	21.6
Esp. > Val.	0.6	2.1	2.1	0.6	0.1	1.3	6.6
Dual	5.1	21.6	23.9	6.4	3.1	4.9	65.0
Val. > Esp.	0.3	2.3	1.8	0.3		0.2	5.0
Val.	0.8	0.3	0.2	0.2		0.2	1.8
Total	7.9	32.9	34.5	10.0	3.8	11.0	100

ACV, 19	F.L.	L.	C.	R.	F.R.	DK/NR	Total
Esp.	27,719	178,630	175,551	67,756	15,399	117,034	582,089
Esp. > Val.	15,339	55,437	55,437	15,339	3,080	33,878	178,630
Dual	138,593	582,089	643,685	172,471	83,156	132,433	1,752,425
Val. > Esp.	9,240	61,597	49,277	9,240		6,160	135,513
Val.	21,559	9,240	6,160	6,160		6,160	49,277
Total	212,509	886,992	930,110	271,025	101,635	295,664	2,697,934

SOURCE: CIS 3253

Considering how the distribution of the Valencian electorate evolved from 2011 to 2019, some noteworthy changes were observed. In this sense, the total figures for the axis that measured the feeling of identity revealed an increase of 5.8% for the feeling of being Spanish, along with a 5% drop among voters in relation to their Spanishness. These percentages translated into votes by 572,749 and 109,845 people, respectively (table 4). In terms of ideology, it is also

worth noting the increase in the preponderance of the left, which at the end of the period analysed had accumulated an additional 5.6% of electoral support, with 110,915 votes, while support for the right had fallen by 5.1%, with them losing 104,245 votes (table 4).

The study of this progression in the intersection of the two studied variables left the spaces that bring together

dual right-wing voters in decline, with them losing 3.1% (159,839 votes) in their support, with centre and right-wing voters being more inclined towards Spanishness, seen as falls of 2.2% (51,783 votes) and 2% (48,422 votes), respectively (table 4). On the contrary, the dual left was the great beneficiary in the new distribution, winning 4.1% support more in 2019 compared to 2011, which was equivalent to 145,551 votes (table 4). This value was followed by

2.6% of the voters who favoured the dual far left, equivalent to a total of 77,324 votes (table 4). In conclusion, the movements we studied revealed the existence of a block that had benefited throughout the period, which was concentrated in the area outlined by the union between the dual left and far left, with another area of the losing parties located in the zone of dual leftist voters with inclinations towards both Spanishness and Valencianism.

Table 4 Variations in the electoral spaces between 2011 and 2019

	F.L.	L.	C.	R.	F.R.	DK/NR	Total
Spa.	0.6	1.6	0.1	0.8	0.2	2.5	5.8
Spa. > Val.	0.2	-0.4	-2.2	-2.0	-0.3	-0.1	-5.0
Dual	2.6	4.1	-0.2	-3.1	0.9	-3.3	1.3
Val. > Spa.	-0.6	0.6	-1.1	-1.0	-0.3	-0.2	-2.6
Val.	0.6	-0.2	0.0	0.1		0.2	-0.5
Total	3.5	5.6	-3.3	-5.1	0.5	-1.2	-

SOURCE: CIS 2892 and 3253

TRANSFORMATION OF THE PARTY ELECTORAL SPACES (2011–2019)

The different political parties concentrate most of their electoral support in specific areas called ‘electoral territories’ (Molas and Bartomeus, 2001). Hereinafter, we will describe the presence and number of voters for each of the most relevant parties in the Valencian electoral competition in the 2011–2019 period in terms of the two reference axes examined in this present study.

Regarding the figures available for the vote in favour of the PP in 2011, there was a general dominance of this force in the dual centre and right, which achieved 10.1% and 8.7% of the vote, respectively (table 5). Similarly, a substantial mass of the PP party’s gravitational core of

support came from the centre and right—both pro-Spanish and Spanish-leaning voters. In addition, the 1.3% of the electorate voting for the dual far right was also incorporated into the domain of the PP.

A general weakening of the core of the organisation was perceived in the 2015 elections: its supporters were still located in areas similar to those from 2011, but they enjoyed lesser degrees of support. Thus, we see, for example, how for the most prominent spaces of the PP block, located in the centre and dual right, the percentages were 4.4% and 3.9%, respectively. Similarly, the party vote declined among far right and Spanish identity voters given that the PP lost its vigour among voters with Spanish leanings.

A downward trend in support for the party was confirmed in the 2019 elections, whose domain areas obtained lower turnout percentages than in 2015, except for the dual centre (4.5%) and Spanish right (2.3%). In this line, some of its spaces came to evaporate, such as in the case of those corresponding to voters with centrist and right-wing Spanish leanings. This movement fostered a division of the party’s core support into two blocks that were essentially differentiated by identity sentiments: on the one hand, dual voters of the centre, right, and also eventually the far right, and on the other hand, the centrist and right Spanish vote.

Analysis of the progression of support for the PSPV in the different electoral spaces (table 6) showed that in 2011, it had a particularly strong area of influence on both the dual left (9.3%) and, to a lesser extent, the Spanish left (2.4%) with inclinations towards this same identity (1.6%). To these

values we should also add the dual centre, which, with 2% of the vote, was also included in the area of socialist control.

In 2015, the PSPV maintained its areas of dominance defined around spaces that were essentially similar to its domains from the previous regional elections. However, there was a perceivable decrease in the attractiveness of their gravitational centre. Thus, the figures that corresponded to the dual left region plummeted to 4.1% because votes for the Spanish left also fell to 0.5%. Despite this, it retained its strength in the dual centre (2%) and even slightly grew on the Spanish left (2.7%).

In the last elections, the results showed a rebound in the numbers in the main categories of the PSPV’s centre of gravity. Along these lines, the party accumulated the highest percentages of the period under study in the dual left and centre, at 13.2% and 3%, respectively.

Table 5 Evolution of the electoral spaces of the Partido Popular (PP) in the 2011, 2015, and 2019 regional elections.

PP'11	F.L.	L.	C.	R.	F.R.	DK/NR	PP'15	F.L.	L.	C.	R.	F.R.	DK/NR
Spa.		0.3	2.3	1.5		0.2	Spa.			2.0	1.0	0.3	0.5
Spa. > Val.			1.8	2.4		0.3	Spa. > Val.			0.5	1.1	0.1	
Dual		0.6	10.1	8.7	2	2.0	Dual			4.4	3.9	1.3	0.4
Val. > Spa.	0.2	0.2	1.6	0.7			Val. > Spa.			0.3			
Val.	0.1			0.1			Val.						

PP'19	F.L.	L.	C.	R.	F.R.	DK/NR
Spa.			0.7	2.3	0.3	0.5
Spa. > Val.			0.1	0.1	0.1	
Dual			4.5	3.1	1.3	0.6
Val. > Spa.			0.3	0.1		
Val.						

5% or more

2% a 4,9%

1% a 1,9%

0,5% a 0,9%

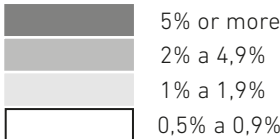
SOURCE: CIS 2892, 3088, and 3253. Percentages of overall sample.

Table 6 Evolution of the electoral spaces of the Partit Socialista del País Valencià (PSPV) in the 2011, 2015, and 2019 regional elections.

PSPV'11	F.L.	L.	C.	R.	F.R.	DK/NR
Spa.	0.1	2.4	0.5	0.1		
Spa. > Val.	0.4	1.6	0.5	0.1		0.1
Dual	0.7	9.3	2.0		0.4	0.4
Val. > Spa.	0.1	0.9		0.1		
Val.	0.1		0.1			0.1

PSPV'15	F.L.	L.	C.	R.	F.R.	DK/NR
Spa.	0.4	2.7	1.0	0.2		0.1
Spa. > Val.		0.5	0.2			0.2
Dual	0.6	4.1	2.0	0.1		0.5
Val. > Spa.	0.2	0	0.5			
Val.	0.1		0.2			

PSPV'19	F.L.	L.	C.	R.	F.R.	DK/NR
Spa.		4.0	0.6			0.3
Spa. > Val.		1.1	0.5			0.5
Dual	2.1	13.2	3.0	0.1		0.8
Val. > Spa.	0.2		0.6			
Val.	0.1		0.2			



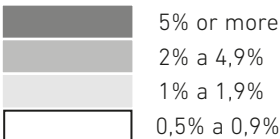
SOURCE: CIS 2892, 3088, and 3253. Percentages of the overall sample.

Table 7 Evolution of the electoral spaces of the Unión Progreso y Democracia (UPyD) and Ciudadanos (Cs) parties in the 2011, 2015, and 2019 regional elections.

UPyD'11	F.L.	L.	C.	R.	F.R.
Spa.		0.2			
Spa. > Val.		0.2	0.4		
Dual		0.4	0.4	0.1	
Val. > Spa.					
Val.					

Cs'15	F.L.	L.	C.	R.	F.R.
Spa.		0.2	1.7		
Spa. > Val.	0.3	0.1	0.5	0.1	
Dual		1.2	3.6	0.7	
Val. > Spa.					
Val.					

Cs'19	F.L.	L.	C.	R.	F.R.
Spa.		4.5	0.6		
Spa. > Val.		0.2	2.1	0.1	
Dual		0.6	5.8	1.4	
Val. > Spa.					
Val.					



SOURCE: CIS 2892, 3088, and 3253. Percentages of the overall sample.

Thus, reinforcement of the zone of socialist control could be seen in the Spanish left (4%) given that it managed to retake ground from the centre (3%) and dual far left (2.1%).

Regarding the *Unión, Progreso y Democracia* (UPyD) party, it could clearly be seen that the extraordinarily little support it enjoyed in the 2011 elections came mainly from the centre and dual left. In 2015, the UPyD lost all its representation both in the national elections and in the Valencian regional elections, in a fall that some experts have attributed, to a large extent, to the transfer of their electoral support to the Cs party. After failing again in the 2016 elections, UPyD entered into a dynamic that ended with them not running in 2019, while also deciding to ask for the vote for the candidacy of the Cs. Thus, as a potentially competing force in the spaces that the UPyD occupied at the time, the study of the 2015 and 2019 elections in this section of this current work concentrates on the data from the Cs.

Based on approaches similar to those of the UPyD, the Cs burst into the 2015 elections, strongly dominating key spaces of its ousted predecessor such as the one that fundamentally comprises the dual centre (3.6%). Along with this, the force of the Cs also managed to extend the centre of gravity enjoyed by UPyD to the left (1.2%) and to the dual right (0.7%). In 2019, the Cs consecrated their positive electoral proclivity within the Valencian political arena. The party improved its results, increasing its share in the dual centre to 5.8%. Likewise, it became a widely preferred option among the Spanish left (4.5%), improved its numbers among the electoral mass of the centre with Spanish leanings (2.1%), and strengthened its position among the dual right (1.4%).

In turn, in the 2011 elections, the *Coalició Compromís* had little support among Valencian society, which was mainly divided between the centre (0.9%) and dual left (1.4%). In addition, *Compromís* attracted voters from the far left with Valencianist

leanings (0.5%) and, interestingly, both from the Spanish (0.7%) and Valencianist (0.4%) left. In 2015, the party increased its electoral significance and its dominance as a bloc began to become clearer. It dominated the area that integrated the left (6%) and dual centre (2.7%) and extended the area between the dual far left and that of voters with Valencian leanings (0.8%). *Compromís* also managed to seduce some sectors of the Spanish centre, from which it received 0.5% of the vote.

In the last electoral period we studied, we were able to discern a return of the *Coalició Compromís* towards lower percentage vote values. However, they continued to be generally circumscribed to the spaces comprising the gravitational centre making up the centre, left, and dual far left. As novelties of interest, we should mention the addition of the Valencian far left area into the key competitive bloc of *Compromís*, as well as the loss of some support it previously had from the Spanish left and centre and from the far left with Valencian leanings.

The journey of the EUPV in this study began with substantial figures, with the main centre of electoral attraction being around the left (1.6%) and dual far left (0.8%). However, in 2015, the party lost all its representation in *Les Corts Valencianes* when faced with the powerful emergence of *Podem Comunitat Valenciana*, which managed to form a parliamentary group with 13 parliament members. Thus, considering that the latter competed for remarkably similar electoral spaces to those of the EUPV, we will now examine *Podem*, the organisation represented by the colour purple, in our analysis of the aforementioned electoral period (table 9). In view of the Valencian regional election results from 2019, this shift continued, given that both parties formed a coalition under the name *Unides Podem-EUPV* (United We Can-EUPV).

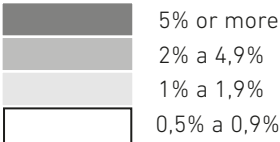
That said, we saw that, in 2015, *Podem* became strong in the electoral spaces that had previously corresponded to the EUPV, winning 2.9% of the dual

Table 8 Evolution of the electoral spaces of the *Coalició Compromís (Comp.)* in the Valencian regional elections.

Comp'11	F.L.	L.	C.	R.	F.R.	DK/NR
Spa.		0.7				
Spa. > Val.		0.1	0.2			
Dual	0.3	1.4	0.9		0.1	0.3
Val. > Spa.	0.5		0.1	0.2		
Val.		0.4				0.3

Comp'15	F.L.	L.	C.	R.	F.R.	DK/NR
Spa.	0.1	0.6	0.5			
Spa. > Val.	0.2	0.4	0.1			
Dual	1.2	6.0	2.7	0.1		0.8
Val. > Spa.	0.8	1	0.4			0.1
Val.	0.2					0.1

Comp'19	F.L.	L.	C.	R.	F.R.	DK/NR
Spa.	0.1	0.3	0.1			0.1
Spa. > Val.	0.1	0.1	0.1			
Dual	1.9	2.2	2.3	0.2		0.1
Val. > Spa.	0.1	1	0.2			
Val.	0.7					



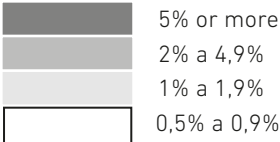
SOURCE: CIS 2892, 3088, and 3253. Percentages of the overall sample.

Table 9 Evolution of the electoral spaces of the *Esquerra Unida del País Valencià (EUPV)*, *Podem*, and *Unidas Podemos (UP)* parties in the Valencian regional elections.

EUPV'11	F.L.	L.	C.	R.	F.R.
Spa.	0.2	0.3	0.3		
Spa. > Val.			0.1		
Dual	0.8	1.6	0.4		0.1
Val. > Spa.					
Val.		0.1			

Podem'15	F.L.	L.	C.	R.	F.R.	DK/NR
Spa.	0.2	1.2	0.4			
Spa. > Val.	0.1	0.5	0.2			
Dual	0.5	2.9	1.2	0.1		0.2
Val. > Spa.	0.2	0	0.1			
Val.	0.1	0.1				

UP'19	F.L.	L.	C.	R.	F.R.
Spa.	0.7	0.7	0.2		
Spa. > Val.	0.3	0.2	0.1		
Dual	0.7	1.7	0.3		
Val. > Spa.	0.1		0.1		
Val.	0.1	0.2			



SOURCE: CIS 2892, 3088, and 3253. Percentages of the overall sample.

left and 0.5% of both the Spanish and Valencian far left vote. Along with this, the party also managed to broaden the confines of its centre of gravity towards the dual centre (1.2%) and Spanish left (1.2%). In 2019, Unides Podem-EUPV relocated its zone of control back to the space occupied by the electorate of the left (1.7%) and dual far left (0.7%), thereby losing its support from the dual centre. Even so, it still came out stronger in the field of the far Spanish left, winning 0.7% of the vote from this category.

In 2019, Vox obtained 10 deputies in the Autonomous Community of Valencia elections, thereby consecrating an unprecedented conquest in this region. These results were fed by sections of the electorate concentrated in the centre (1%) and on the dual right (0.7%). Along with the above, it is also worth mentioning the success of Vox in these elections among voters from the Spanish centre, where they won 0.5% of support in this space.

Table 10 The Vox electoral spaces in the Valencian regional elections.

VOX'19	E.I.	I.	C.	D.	E.D.	NS/NC
Esp.			0.5	0.2		0.2
Esp. > Val.			0.1	0.2		0.1
Dual			1.0	0.7		0.1
Val. > Esp.						
Val.						

5% or more
2% a 4,9%
1% a 1,9%
0,5% a 0,9%

SOURCE: CIS 3253. Percentages of the overall sample.

COMPETITION BETWEEN PARTIES FOR ELECTORAL SPACES

In the previous section, we separately analysed the areas of electoral penetration of each of the parties. In this section, we show the main areas of predominance of each party, as well as the eventual overlaps and competition spaces between them. This will give us a good indication of the complex evolution of the axes of electoral competition in the Autonomous Community of Valencia. The right side of tables 11, 12, and 13 shows the party or parties that predominated in each political space. As in the tables from the previous section, the colour intensity is linked to the strength of the support these parties had. The numbers on the lower right-hand side of the boxes indicate how many parties

obtained more than 0.5% of the census vote and therefore, were able to penetrate this electoral space. The figures to the left of tables 11, 12, and 13 show the approximate main axes of competition between the parties in the Valencian region.

In the 2011 elections (table 11), the PP showed its notable predominance in the spaces of the centre and right, ranging from the most Spanish positions to that of moderate Valencianism. It is also noteworthy that in its main domain areas, the PP had practically no relevant competitors. In turn, the PP had competitors in the dual centre, one of the main voter pools in the Valencian region, but this competition did not threaten their predominance in this space. For its part, the predominance of the PSPV extended throughout the left from positions

of Spanishness to moderate Valencianism, although its most dominant position was on the dual left. The socialists did not have any notable competition in this space either, with the exception of the dual left, which also constituted one of the main fishing grounds for votes in the Autonomous Community of Valencia. On the far left, the EUPV competed with the PSPV to capture dual voters, while Compromís controlled moderate Valencianist voters. In both cases, these electoral spaces were not very densely populated (see table 1).

The two main areas of electoral competition in 2011 were the spaces of the dual centre and left, where, despite the respective predominance of the PP and PSPV, various parties still managed to penetrate (table 11). In the dual centre, the PP competed with the PSPV and Compromís. On the dual left, the PSPV competed with all the other parties (including the PP!). In addition to these electoral spaces, the competition between the Spanish left and centre in these elections also stood out. On

the Spanish left, the dominance of the PSPV was notable, but Compromís also seemed to find an important hunting ground for votes on the left. In the centre, the dominance of the PP had to face socialist competition. The last relevant electoral competition space (although at a notable distance from the previous ones) was the one marking the fight between the EUPV and the PSPV for control of voters from the dual far left.

The results in 2011 were aligned, to a large extent, with the competitive tendencies present in the Valencian electoral arena during the 1995–2007 period. In this sense, the competitive relevance of the centre remained—bearing in mind that up to four forces had competed for this space in the 2007 elections—while it was still dominated by the PP. In addition, the predominance of some locatable spaces between the left and far left ideologies continued, and the PSPV had a certain amount of dominance in this area despite fighting with other forces such as the EUPV and the Valencian Nationalist Bloc (Martín Cubas, 2007).

Table 11 The main areas of predominance and competition in the 2011 Valencian regional elections.

2011	Far Left	Left	Centre	Right	Far Right
Spa.	–	PSPV 2	PP 2	PP 1	–
Spa. > Val.	–	PSPV 1	PP 2	PP 1	–
Dual	PSPV/ EUPV 2	PSPV 4	PP 3	PP 1	PP 1
Val. > Spa.	Comp. 1	PSPV 1	PP 1	PP 1	–
Val.	–	–	–	–	–

2011	F.L	L	C.	R.	F.R
Spa.					
Spa. > Val.					
Dual					
Val. > Spa.					
Val.					

In 2015, the partisan competition map changed substantially (table 12). The space of electoral predominance of the PP shrank substantially in these elections, although it continued to be the main beneficiary of the support coming from the Spanish centre and the space from the Spanish right to the dual right. The PP had hardly any competition in its area of dominance, but its strength of support had decreased compared to 2015. The most important loss for the PP occurred in the control of the dual centre, the main source of votes in the Autonomous Community of Valencia, which had passed into the hands of Cs. In these elections, the space predominated by the Cs was in the dual centre, although it also extended to the Spanish centre and left. In these spaces, it mainly competed with the PP and PSPV and so the strength of its support was more limited.

For its part, the PSPV lost a good part of its control over left-wing spaces in 2015. On the Spanish left, its dominance was disputed by other parties such as the Cs, Podem, and Compromís. The only undisputed space it controlled in these elections was that of

the moderate Valencian centre, but the weight of this space was small. The PSPV's main loss in these elections was that of the dual left, the second main source of votes in the Autonomous Community of Valencia, which passed into the hands of Compromís. The advance of Valencianists in these elections was very notable since they came to control practically the entire space of the dual and moderate Valencianist left. However, control of the dual left by Compromís did not prevent the other two left-wing parties and, eventually, also the Cs, from penetrating the space.

As also occurred in previous elections, the most crowded electoral areas in the 2015 elections were also the most populated (table 12). Thus, the five political forces with representation, from the PP to Podem, all managed to penetrate the dual centre (with greater or lesser force). In addition, everyone except the PP also managed to penetrate the dual left. In addition, the Spanishness of the left and centre were spaces of strong competition between parties. Thus, all the parties except the PP managed to infiltrate the space of left wing Spanishness. Furthermore, all the

Table 12 The main areas of predominance and competition in the 2015 elections.

2015	Far Left	Left	Centre	Right	Far Right
Spa.	–	PSPV/ Cs 4	PP 4	PP 1	–
Spa. > Val.	–	PSPV/ Podem/ Comp. 3	PP/Cs 2	PP 1	–
Dual	Comp. 3	Comp. 4	Cs 5	PP 2	PP 1
Val. > Spa.	Comp. 1	Comp. 1	PSPV 1	–	–
Val.	–	–	–	–	–

2015	F.L	L	C.	R.	F.R
Spa.					
Spa. > Val.					PP
Dual			Cs		
Val. > Spa.	Compromís		PSPV		
Val.					

parties except Podem managed to access the space of central Spanishness. As already mentioned in the previous section, it is interesting that Compromís also managed to retain a certain level of penetration in these positions. Finally, we should also mention the space from the dual far left to the moderate Spanish left in which the competition centred on the three left-wing parties (Podem, PSPV, and Compromís).

The competition map in the 2019 elections (table 13) reflects the increase in fragmentation as well as the new composition of the electoral territories of the parties. On the right, the PP showed a notable predominance in the spaces of the Spanish and dual right. The domain of the PP in these territories was almost exclusive, with the exception of the dual right in which Cs and Vox also managed to break through electorally speaking. Furthermore, the PP competed with other parties for space in the centre, especially for the dual and Spanish centres. As in 2015, the dual centre and moderate Spanishness were still in the hands of the Cs, although many parties managed to reach into these spaces, which limited the Cs' capacity for growth.

Additionally, the Cs managed to maintain their shared dominance in the spaces of the Spanish left and centre, although they shared the left with the PSPV and the right with the socialists, PP, and Vox. In 2019, the PSPV regained its dominance in the spaces of the dual left and of Spanishness, although a notable number of competitors ranging from Compromís to the Cs also penetrated these areas. Moreover, the Socialists extended their reach to the dual far left and dual and Spanish centres. The only electoral stronghold controlled by Podem was the space of the far Spanish left. However, its area of electoral penetration also extended to the area of the dual left, which represented its main electoral base. Finally, Compromís continued to dominate the space of the moderate Valencian left, in the absence of any competitors. Moreover, the Valencianists extended their area of electoral permeation to the far left and dual left. Unlike in previous elections, Compromís no longer had a significant presence among the Spanish left in 2019. For its part, Vox did not obtain control in any electoral area. It competed with other parties for the dominance of the

Table 13 The main areas of predominance and competition in the 2019 elections.

2019	Far Left	Left	Centre	Right	Far Right
Spa.	UP 1	PSPV/ Cs 3	PP/ PSPV/ Cs/VOX 4	PP 1	—
Spa. > Val.	—	PSPV 1	Cs 2	—	—
Dual	Comp./ PSPV 3	PSPV 4	Cs 5	PP 3	PP 1
Val. > Spa.	—	Comp. 1	PSPV 1	—	—
Val.	Comp. 1	—	—	—	—

2019	F.L	L	C.	R.	F.R
Spa.					
Spa. > Val.					
Dual					
Val. > Spa.					
Val.					

centre, but its main source of votes was in the dual centre and right.

As was also the case in 2015, increased fragmentation meant that there was no clear separation of the territories controlled by the different parties. Nonetheless, the main areas of competition continued to be in the most populated electoral positions and reproduced, in broad strokes, the competition lines of past electoral calls. Firstly, in the dual right and centre, in which all the right-wing parties and, eventually, the socialists competed. Secondly, in the far left and dual left, in which the left-wing parties and, eventually, Ciudadanos competed. Moreover, the competition was very notable in spaces of the Spanish centre and left, which followed the same pattern as the dual centre spaces.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this article was to show that, despite the relative stability of the ideological identities of Valencians, the changes in partisan competition produced by the successful appearance of new parties has led to very notable changes in the electoral spaces occupied by each one of them and has complicated past electoral competition strategies.

The 2011–2019 period was characterised by a slight shift to the left and an increase in positions linked to Spanishness. The main result of the combination of both processes was the loss of voters who identified with the more moderate Spanish right and centre or with the dual right. On the other hand, the electorate identified with the left and dual far left, as well as with the more Spanish left and centre. Changes in the political identity of the electorate certainly helped to facilitate the emergence of new parties. Overall, it is highly likely that the discourses and strategies of the parties, as well as that of other actors (for example, social movements and the media) also contributed to redefining the political identity of some voters, which surely gave the process a remarkable level of endogeneity.

In this sense, this current work showed the existence of intense partisan competition for control of some key electoral spaces during the period of interest. Given the number of voters, the most prominent spaces were the dual centre and left. However, the difficulty in maintaining predominance in these spaces was very notable, hence the alternation between parties including the PSPV, PP, Cs, and Compromís. To a large extent, this was due to the fact that practically all the Valencian parties were able to penetrate, with greater or lesser force, one or even both of these spaces, as was the case for the PSPV, Cs, and Compromís.

The struggle for control was also notable (especially after 2015) in other spaces such as the far left and dual right. Unlike the dual centre and left, in these areas the competition was limited to the different contenders of each ideological block: on the left, the PSPV, Compromís, and Podem made their mark while on the right, the PP, Cs, and in 2019, Vox were important contenders. The third group of spaces in which the electoral competition in the Autonomous Community of Valencia was resolved was in the Spanish left and centre. These spaces were especially crowded: no party managed to maintain dominance in them between elections and, at one time or another, they all achieved a presence in one or both of these two areas.

The efforts of the parties to maintain their presence and relevance in some of these spaces did not exclude the possibility of identifying areas of certain electoral predominance (eventually, even with a certain level of exclusivity) that were more or less stable throughout this period. The PP is a good example of this: although its area of dominance in the centre was eroded, it still retained its predominance in a large part of the dualist and Spanish right. At the other end of the political spectrum, Compromís was able to maintain its dominance in the space of the Valencianist left, while Podem did something similar in the Spanish far left. In the case of PSPV and the Cs, their areas of predominance tended to be more geographically concentrated on the left and dual

centre (with the difficulties already mentioned in the previous paragraph).

Finally, the complex rivalry between the Valencian parties can serve to highlight some of the insufficiencies of the academic literature dedicated to electoral competition. To date, the main theories tend to assume the existence of electoral ‘reserves’ controlled by each party, with competition tending to take place at the boundaries of these catchment areas. In this sense, the partisan struggle has traditionally been understood as the effort to select voters located

on the margins of each control area. However, the Valencian case seems to suggest that electoral competition can also take place without (or with limited) exclusive boundaries for each party and with large areas for which dominance is precarious and in constant alternation. Undoubtedly, this must translate into discursive strategies and capturing votes, but also into making cooperation between parties that compete for large segments of voters more difficult. Nonetheless, all these aspects undoubtedly exceed the purpose of this current text and should therefore form the basis of future research.

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