

Podemos' and Ciudadanos' multi-level institutionalization challenges

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Abstract So far, the party institutionalization literature has not properly analysed the challenges posed by the multi-level nature of many Western democracies to new parties' institutionalization processes. The aim of this article is to introduce a theoretical framework combining both internal (e.g. party origins, party branch autonomy) and external factors (e.g. cross-level contamination, electoral threshold) to better understand this phenomenon. We hypothesize that through the formative stage and cross-level contamination the party institutionalization processes at the national and regional level will be aligned. They will also be stronger in those regions with better electoral performance and higher levels of branch autonomy. These expectations are then illustrated through the comparative analysis of the origins of the Podemos and Ciudadanos parties and their early evolution in Spain. The main results point out that national and regional institutionalization processes are evolving in the same direction, although not at the same pace. They also suggest that the electoral threshold and the autonomy of the regional branch might also be shaping the way both parties are developing in different regions.

Keywords New parties · Southern Europe · Spain · Podemos · Ciudadanos · Institutionalization

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Herausforderungen der mehrstufigen Institutionalisierung von Podemos und Ciudadanos

Zusammenfassung Bisher wurden in der Literatur zur Institutionalisierung von Parteien die Herausforderungen, die sich aus der Vielschichtigkeit vieler westlicher Demokratien für die Institutionalisierungsprozesse neuer Parteien ergeben, nicht angemessen analysiert. Das Ziel dieses Artikels ist die Einführung eines theoretischen Rahmens, der sowohl interne (z. B. Herkunft der Parteien, Autonomie der Parteizweige) als auch externe Faktoren (z. B. Kontamination über Ebenengrenzen hinweg, Sperrklausel) kombiniert, um dieses Phänomen besser zu verstehen. Wir nehmen an, dass durch die formative Phase und die Kontamination zwischen den Ebenen die Institutionalisierungsprozesse der Parteien auf nationaler und regionaler Ebene angeglichen werden. Ferner werden die Institutionalisierungsprozesse in Regionen mit höherer Wahlbeteiligung und größerer Autonomie der regionalen Parteivertretungen stärker sein. Diese Erwartungen werden dann durch die vergleichende Analyse der Ursprünge der Parteien Podemos und Ciudadanos und ihrer frühen Entwicklung in Spanien veranschaulicht. Die Hauptergebnisse zeigen, dass sich die nationalen und regionalen Institutionalisierungsprozesse in dieselbe Richtung entwickeln, wenn auch nicht in demselben Tempo. Die Ergebnisse suggerieren, dass die Sperrklausel und die Autonomie der regionalen Parteivertretung die Entwicklung beider Parteien in verschiedenen Regionen beeinflussen.

Schlüsselwörter Neue Parteien · Südeuropa · Spanien · Podemos · Ciudadanos · Institutionalisierung

1 Introduction

Since 2014, Ciudadanos and Podemos have been the two main *new kids in town* of the Spanish politics. Both have made their electoral breakthrough and crossed the relevance threshold at the national and regional levels, and both have recently started to cross the government threshold (as junior partners) at the regional level. In the next electoral cycle, they are expected to gain even more relevance at both the national and regional levels. That said, adapting to Spain's multi-level political system has been one of the most problematic aspects of their formative stage (Rodríguez Teruel and Barrio 2016; Rodríguez-Teruel et al. 2016), and it is already influencing their early institutionalization processes. Podemos and Ciudadanos are not the only parties facing these kinds of challenges in European democracies. Irrespective of their ideologies, the same holds true for other fast-growing new parties, such as the Five Stars Movement or the Lega in Italy, and the Alternative für Deutschland in Germany. Surprisingly, though, the literature on party origins and institutionalization has paid little attention to the challenges posed by the multi-level nature of many Western democracies to either mainstream or new parties (Duverger 1954; Huntington 1968; Panebianco 1988; Randall and Svåsand 2002; Harmel et al. 2018; Bolleyer 2013).

The central aim of this article is to provide a theoretical framework to better understand the influence and challenges posed by the combined effects of internal

(e.g. party origins, party branch autonomy) and external factors (e.g. cross-level contamination, electoral threshold) to the national and regional institutionalization processes. In order to illustrate the relevance of this framework in multi-level settings, and to provide some preliminary evidence, the paper focus on a comparative case study of Ciudadanos and Podemos in Spain. Hence, after presenting the theory and briefly addressing some methodological issues, the paper points out how the nature of the political system has shaped both parties' genetic models and territorial adaptation. Then, following Randall and Svåsand's (2002) dimensions, a proper in-depth comparison of both parties' main institutionalization features is conducted. Finally, the discussion and conclusions section suggest that both parties' institutionalization processes are alike, although much stronger at the national than the regional level. They also give some hints as to how the electoral threshold and the autonomy of the regional branch might be influencing both parties' evolution at the regional level.

2 New parties' institutionalization in multi-level settings

The literature on the origins of mainstream and new political parties has convincingly highlighted how this phenomenon shapes their future development and, more particularly, the institutionalization process (e.g. Duverger 1954; Panebianco 1988; Bolleyer 2013). However, this field has mostly focused on the national level and not properly tackled the influence that other factors, such as the multi-layered nature of political systems, might also have on their future evolution. For example, in his seminal work, Panebianco (1988) relied on Eilassen and Svåsand's distinction between the organizational formation by penetration or diffusion (Eliassen and Svåsand 1975) to address the territorial dimension of his genetic models. However, this concept only captures a fraction of what actually happens between a party's national level and its regional and local branches. To accurately apprehend it, it is worth considering Thorlakson's dimensions of how political parties adapt to multi-level systems (Thorlakson 2009): The first dimension refers to the formal or informal linkages between a party's central office and its regional branches. Vertical integration is found when there are strong linkages between both levels—its opposite are bifurcated parties sharing the same name but barely having any linkage between them; The second dimension captures the formal or informal influence the regional branches might have on the central decision-making system; The third one deals with the amount of autonomy that the regional branches have. Adding these dimensions to Panebianco's genetic model might help clarify what is happening during the institutionalization processes not only at the national level, but also at the regional. In this respect, it is easy to infer from the literature that, at the regional level, highly integrated political parties that are tightly controlled from the central office will probably have very different trajectories than bifurcated parties with very high branch autonomy. That is why we suggest that a proper assessment of multi-level institutionalization processes should account at least for the levels of vertical integration at the party origins, and the degree of autonomy of the regional branches (see independent variables 1 and 3 in Fig. 1).

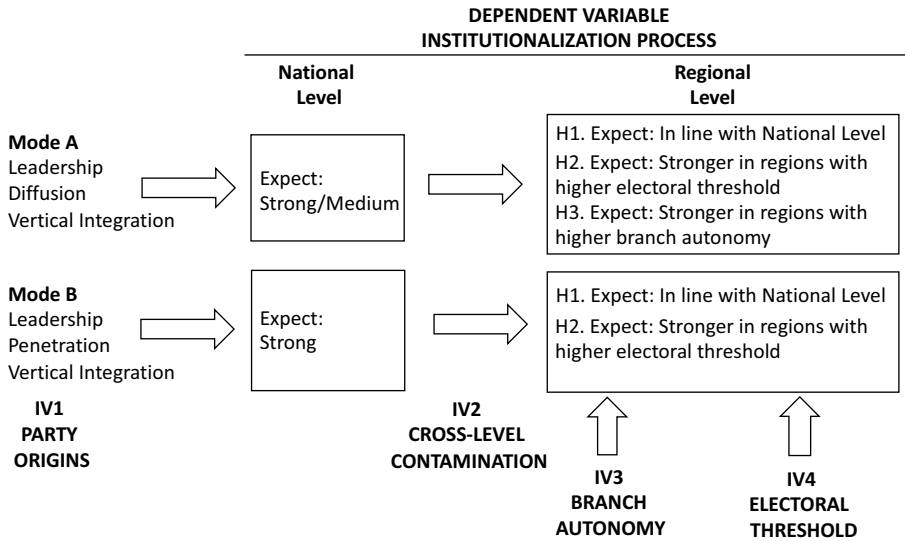


Fig. 1 Main factors shaping the institutionalization processes at the regional level. Source: Authors' own

The relevance of the territorial dimension and, more broadly, the impact of the multi-level nature of many Western democracies has been the main focus of the literature on territorial party politics. This research strand has mostly focused on how mainstream and centralized parties have adapted their organizational structures and competition strategies to newly decentralized settings (Deschouwer 2006; Biezen and Hopkin 2006; Detterbeck 2012; Thorlakson 2009; Swenden and Maddens 2009). One of its typical findings is the existence of multiple divergences, tensions and conflicts between the national and regional level empirically (e.g. Stefuriuc 2009; Fabre 2010; Alonso et al. 2013). Political parties' electoral fortunes are generally considered by this literature to be one of the most relevant factors in explaining territorial divergences in parties' behaviour and organization. Accounting for electoral variation at the regional level, or between the centre and the periphery, is generally considered a good way to capture more complex phenomena linked to the existence of different cleavages, identities or other institutional and contextual factors. Nevertheless, the electoral relevance brings policy influence and, eventually, government positions. One of the easiest and most convenient ways to bring in both the electoral results and the parties position at each regional party system is through Sartori's and Pedersens' widely used electoral thresholds (e.g. representation, influence, government) (Sartori 1976; Pedersen 1982). Bringing this factor to our theoretical framework (see independent variable 4 in Fig. 1) might help distinguishing different paces or roads of institutionalization (see, in this sense, McMenamin and Gwiazda 2011) based on whether each party has (or not) representation or influence at the centre or the periphery. This, of course, might also lead to differences between regions. In this respect, it is worth noticing that the institutionalization process might logically advance faster in one (or several) particular region where

a party might be particularly strong. Eventually, the institutionalization processes might even advance not at different paces, but in opposite directions.

On the other hand, the literature on party politics might also provide evidence against centre-periphery variances based on cross-level or vertical contamination (Guinjoan 2017; Ferrara et al. 2005). Translating this literature to multi-level party institutionalization processes might suggest that the genetic and organizational features of a political party at the national level should also influence the organization and performance of the party at the regional level (see independent variable 2 in Fig. 1). Or, by the same token, that it might be able to compensate for a weak organization in a particular territory by emphasizing its national stance. Finally, cross-level contamination might imply that problems or conflicts at the regional level might eventually translate to the national one.

Figure 1 provides an overview of the main expectations that might be inferred from the already-explored influence of the four previously stated factors: the party origins, the cross-level contamination effects, the different degrees of regional branches' autonomy and the electoral thresholds. The first main expectation of this article is that through cross-level contamination effects, the institutionalization process that starts after a national level breakthrough will heavily influence the way a party's regional branches are organized, its internal culture and, even its party identification. That is why we hypothesize that, in parties with strong leadership and high levels of vertical integration, the institutionalization process at the regional level will be in line with the national one (Hypothesis 1). The second and third expectations are somewhat complementary to the first one, and bring in the influence of the regional branches' autonomy and their electoral-institutional performance. This is why we suggest that the institutionalization processes will be stronger in those regions with better electoral-institutional performance (Hypothesis 2) and higher levels of branch autonomy (Hypothesis 3). In this respect, differences on branch autonomy are linked to different party origins (independent variable 1 in Fig. 1).

In order to preliminarily assess the relevance of this theoretical framework, the rest of the article will be devoted to analysing the modes of party formation and multi-level institutionalization processes of two Spanish parties, Podemos and Ciudadanos. The next section discusses this case selection strategy and provides basic information on the operationalization and methods used. After briefly analysing both parties' origins and first territorial adaptation strategies, section four provides evidence of their early institutionalization process at both the national and regional levels. Finally, the last section is devoted to discussing the results and their main theoretical and comparative implications.

3 Case selection and methodology

Territorial party politics literature has extensively focused on Spain as a typical case to analyse the impact of devolution processes (e.g. Biezen and Hopkin 2006; Swenden and Maddens 2009; Detterbeck 2012). Although Spain's democracy and multi-level structure is more recent and asymmetric than other Western Democratic

countries, this has been understood as a minor issue for most comparative studies (e.g. Field 2007). In his seminal book on multi-level party politics in Europe, Detterbeck compared Spain with Austria, Belgium, Germany and the United Kingdom because all these countries share similar levels of asymmetry in multi-level party competition and close degrees of vertical party integration and sub-state party autonomy (Detterbeck 2012, chap. 4). As these are the very same features that justify Spain's case selection in this study, it might then be suggested that its results could somehow be extended to the other four countries. That said, the article is not centred on Spain as a country, but on two of its new parties: the radical left Podemos and the centre right Ciudadanos. To what extent might they also be considered typical case studies with similar institutionalization challenges to other new parties in other Western countries? For the purposes of this article, the answer to that question is not related to their ideology. The relevant dimensions to take in to account are their origins as highly vertically integrated parties that differ in their territorial expansion strategies (diffusion or penetration), but which share the need to compete in multi-level electoral arenas. Hence, their institutionalization challenges should be similar to those of other parties with similar party origins and multi-level competition requirements.

The dependent variable of this article is the party institutionalization process. In this respect, the article relies on the well-known distinction between its structural and attitudinal dimensions. Randall and Svåsand's seminal work proposed four main dimensions or syndromes of party institutionalization that still remain very influential (Randall and Svåsand 2002; Harmel et al. 2018): *Reification*, *Value infusion*, *Routinization* or *Systemness* and *Autonomy*. *Reification* refers to an attitudinal dimension generally linked to the general public's view of the party as an established political actor. That means knowing the party or, better yet, taking it for granted. This is generally measured through survey data. *Value infusion* refers to internal aspects of the attitudinal dimension and has been one of the main factors considered by the seminal literature (Huntington 1968; Panebianco 1988). It mainly indicates the moment in which the organization is no longer considered an instrument, and becomes an objective by itself (Levitsky 1998). Through value infusion, members and supporters become identified with the party. An important distinction has to be made here between the leader and the party because a strong leadership might hinder the institutionalization process. Ideally this should be measured through party members' survey data, but this is difficult to gather and more qualitative assessments might be considered. *Routinization* is an internal structural dimension linked with the repetition of certain behaviours and routines. Routinization makes the party's behaviour predictable (Levitsky 1998). In a similar vein, Randall and Svåsand (2002) have opted for *Systemness*, thus emphasizing the density and regularity of a party's organizational structure. This might be measured through the analysis of the party statutes and information gathered from interviews, secondary sources or press reports. Finally, the literature has also highlighted the *Autonomy* of the party *vis-à-vis* its social and political context (Panebianco 1988). In this sense, while some authors have emphasized the differences between the party's behaviour and methods from those of other close social groups, others have pointed out the relevance of their de-

Table 1 Main features of Ciudadanos' and Podemos' modes of party formation

	Ciudadanos	Podemos
External sponsor	No	No
Charismatic leadership	Yes (not from the start)	Yes
Territorial growth	Penetration	Diffusion
Vertical integration	Strong	Medium ^a
Regional branches' autonomy and influence	Very weak	Medium ^a

^aChanges over time

Source: Authors' own based on Panebianco's (1988) and Thorlakson's (2009) classifications

Table 2 Classification of Podemos and Ciudadanos' regional branches according to their electoral threshold and branch autonomy

	Ciudadanos	Podemos
<i>Electoral threshold</i>		
No representation	Basque Country, Canary Islands, Castile-Mancha, Galicia, Navarre	None
Representation	Aragon, Asturias, Balearic Islands, Cantabria, Extremadura, Valencia	Andalusia, Basque Country, Castile-Leon, Catalonia, Galicia, Madrid, Murcia, Rioja
Influence/Government	Andalusia, Catalonia, Castile-Leon, Madrid, Murcia, Rioja	Aragon, Asturias, Balearic Islands, Canary Islands, Cantabria, Castile-Mancha, Extremadura, Navarre, Valencia
<i>Branch autonomy</i>		
Nested in wider alliances	None	Catalonia, Galicia, Valencia, Madrid'19
Lead by minority or territorial faction	None	Andalusia, Asturias, Basque Country Madrid, Navarre, Aragon'18, Canarias
Lead by the majority faction	All regions	The rest
No autonomy	None	Cantabria

Data: Authors' own based on press reports and Tables 5 and 6 in the appendix

cisional autonomy. Again, this dimension requires access to interviews or secondary reports from the press or the academy.

As pointed out in the previous section (see Fig. 1), this article relies on four independent variables. The party origin is a multi-dimensional concept derived from Panebianco (1988) and obtained through a qualitative assessment of secondary literature (see Table 1). The cross-level contamination effects are difficult to measure since both parties hardly have contested elections and will rely on a qualitative evaluation. The regional branches' autonomy is obtained through the analysis of the party statutes and press reports. Finally, the electoral thresholds are based on Sartori and Pedersen's classifications and measured by the electoral performance and each party's support of regional governments (see Table 2).

Ultimately, it is also worth noting that the analysis relies on the comparison of Podemos' and Ciudadanos' institutionalization processes at both the national and

Table 3 Podemos and Ciudadanos regional branches activity since 2015

	Regional assemblies and party leader changes	
	Ciudadanos	Podemos
Electoral threshold		
No representation	No assemblies Party leader change 2 exceptions ($N=5$)	–
Representation	No assemblies No party leader change 2 exceptions ($N=6$)	Regional assemblies 1 or more party leader replacements 3 exceptions ($N=8$)
Influence/Government	No assemblies No party leader change 2 exceptions ($N=6$)	Regional assemblies 1 party leader replacement 3 exceptions ($N=9$)
Branch autonomy		
Nested in wider alliances	–	Regional assemblies 1 or more party leader replacements ($N=3$)
Lead by minority or territorial faction	–	Regional assemblies 1 party leader replacement 2 exception ($N=6$)
Lead by the majority faction	No assemblies No or limited (1 replacement) party leader change	Regional assemblies No party leader change 3 exceptions ($N=7$)
No autonomy	–	1 or more party leader replacements ($N=1$)

Data: Authors' own based on parties' reports and the press. N =number of regions

Table 4 Podemos and Ciudadanos regional branches activity since 2015

	Conflicts and disciplinary actions	
	Ciudadanos	Podemos
Electoral threshold		
No representation	Conflicts and disciplinary actions 1 Exception ($N=5$)	–
Representation	No conflicts 2 Exceptions ($N=6$)	Conflicts and disciplinary actions 3 exceptions ($N=8$)
Influence/Government	No conflicts, minor disciplinary actions 1 Exception ($N=6$)	No conflicts (2 exceptions), minor disciplinary actions (3 exceptions) ($N=9$)
Branch autonomy		
Nested in wider alliances	–	Conflicts and disciplinary actions 1 exception ($N=3$)
Lead by minority or territorial faction	–	Conflicts and disciplinary actions 3 exceptions ($N=6$)
Lead by the majority faction	No conflicts (5 exceptions), but occasional disciplinary action (8 exceptions) ($N=17$)	No conflicts, minor disciplinary actions ($N=7$)
No autonomy	–	Conflicts and disciplinary actions ($N=1$)

Data: Authors' own based on parties' reports and the press. N = number of regions. Conflicts means party splits, parliamentary group splits, interim committees, etc. It does not include contested primaries, the formation of factions or policy disagreements in the press

the regional level. This means that we are using two units of analysis at the national level and 34 (2 parties \times 17 regions) at the regional one. That is why data from the regional level is grouped (see Tables 3 and 4) and some patterns identified. The results are not presented in order to definitively test our main expectations, but to provide first evidence of issues that future research should properly test. In this respect, the article should be understood as a theory-developing case study more than a hypothesis-testing one.

4 Podemos' and Ciudadanos' origins and multi-level adaptation challenges

The origins of Podemos and Ciudadanos have been extensively described by the literature (Rodríguez Teruel and Barrio 2016; Rodríguez-Teruel et al. 2016; Torreblanca 2015; Fernández-Albertos 2015; della Porta et al. 2017; Barrio 2017). Table 1 summarizes some of the main features linked to their modes of party formation. Both parties emerged as national state-wide players around 2014–15 out of the dissatisfaction with the two mainstream parties, the Partido Popular (Popular Party, PP) and the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party, PSOE) and the inability of the minor ones to capitalize on the growing unrest. Ciudadanos had previously made its first breakthrough in 2006 at the regional level (Catalonia), where it gradually gained strength before expanding to all of Spain. In their early days, both parties had loose ties with minor external sponsors. By 2006, Ciudadanos' party elite had personal connections with an emerging social movement demanding bilingualism in Catalonia, but there were not any formal organizational links, which means it can hardly qualify as an external promoter. In its very first stage, Podemos was built by two main groups: some radical left intellectuals and colleagues, such as Pablo Iglesias, and a small Trotskyist group called Izquierda Anticapitalista (Anticapitalist Left, IA). Although none of the two groups had formal or organizational links with the *Indignados* movement, Podemos was quite successful in attracting their most experienced activists. Both parties also have in common charismatic leadership. Ciudadanos' party leader, Albert Rivera, was challenged or openly questioned in his early days in Catalonia, but, since the 2010s, his leadership has been uncontested and has been instrumental in building a strongly cohesive organization. Pablo Iglesias' language and political style are well-connected with the *Indignados* movement and with lots of (generally young) left-wing dissatisfied voters. Iglesias took advantage of his involvement in the national TV to build Podemos around his strong leadership.

Besides their ideology, the main genetic difference between Podemos and Ciudadanos has to do with their territorial expansion strategy. For years, Ciudadanos unsuccessfully tried to grow in the other Spanish districts through a territorial penetration process tightly controlled by the party board. The party's luck changed at the end of 2013, when many members started to join through a carefully vetted system that was put in place in order to avoid future problems. In order to grow at a faster pace, Ciudadanos made some agreements with several local or regional parties. Most of these parties were dissolved and their party members became Ciu-

dadanos' regional elites. Podemos opted for the opposite strategy. To speed up its growth, Podemos actually copied one of the key Indignados' features: the so-called Círculos (Circles). The Circles were first conceived of as local branches of Podemos, but these loose groups of activists were not required to be Podemos members or even Spanish citizens to be involved. Hence, the party board had no control over them. In a few months, more than 400 Podemos Circles appeared throughout Spain (and abroad). In addition, Podemos also devised a very open membership policy where anyone with a mobile phone could join the party, and they conceded to this blurred membership a great deal of participatory rights through its Information and Communications Technology (ICT) platforms and social media (see below). As a result, the party membership grew in only a few months to 350,000 registered members, becoming the second largest Spanish party, even before its EU electoral breakthrough.

Their territorial strategies also led to some differences in their vertical integration mechanisms and regional autonomy. At the 2015 regional and local elections, Ciudadanos successfully presented candidates in all 17 Spanish regions and the main cities. During that process, the party board retained tight control over candidate selection through a very demanding vetting process that slowed growth, but guaranteed cohesion and vertical integration. In addition, shortly after the regional and local elections, a central party agency was set up in order to carefully supervise each agreement proposed by the local and regional party branches. Between the 2015 regional elections and the 2017 national assembly, Ciudadanos started to build its regional branches, privileging once again the tight central office control over the regional branches' autonomy and democracy. Hence, most of the regional party boards were appointed by the national executive, not elected. In the 2017 national assembly, some regional party leaders (e.g. Andalusia, Asturias and Valencia) were co-opted and started to gain influence in the central office decision-making process.

Podemos also began to build its own regional organization before contesting the 2015 regional elections. Party primaries were called in each region in order to select the party leaders and the regional executives. The party leadership and, shortly afterwards, the candidate selection processes opened up the competition between Iglesias' supporters and the IA group, which had by then both transformed into loose factions. Iglesias endorsed a majority of the winning regional leaders and candidates, but some regions ended up being controlled either by the minority IA group, or by territorial factions. After the elections, the national leadership tried to control each bargaining process, which fostered some regional branches' demands for more autonomy (e.g. Andalusia or Valencia). Since then, Iglesias' charismatic leadership and the highly hierarchical structure set up in Podemos' first assembly (2014) granted the party high levels of vertical integration, but has also sparked conflicts and tensions between the centre and the periphery. On the other hand, Podemos' first assembly decided not to run for the 2015 local elections. Instead, Podemos endorsed several radical left candidates emerging in big cities such as Madrid or Barcelona. Most of them won the local elections and their leaders became mayors. However, some of these candidates then tried to build on their success and started the formation of their own new regional parties. This was particularly the case in Catalonia and Galicia. In the way to the 2015–16 general elections,

Podemos secured electoral alliances (so-called confluences) with these new parties. Eventually, new electoral agreements were also reached with other regional parties in Valencia and the Balearic Islands. After the general elections, Podemos' role in the transformation of the confluences into new regional parties has been one of the main sources of internal conflict. This has been the case in Catalonia and Galicia and, since early 2019, this also seems to be happening in Madrid.

Ciudadanos' and Podemos' results at the national level (Tables 5 and 6 in the appendix) have granted them institutional support and daily media attention. That is indeed a great help to reinforce both parties' institutionalization processes. Ciudadanos supported the PP national government between 2016 and 2018, which gave it privileged influence over many policies. The party also electorally benefited, at the expense of the PP, from its active role in the Catalan conflict, at least till the emergence of VOX as a new far right-wing contender. Podemos' tight competition with the PSOE between 2015 and 2018, and their closer cooperation since the PSOE's 2018 vote of no confidence, also highlight Podemos' relevance in the party system.

At the regional level, Table 2 provides a double classification of both parties' regional agencies according to their electoral threshold and the level of autonomy granted, in practice, to each branch. Both classifications allow identification of key divergences between regional branches that, in the following section, will be used to suggest distinct institutionalization patterns or challenges. At first sight, the main difference between both parties is clearly related to Ciudadanos' later weak branch autonomy. Podemos is clearly unevenly divided on this respect, having a small group of regional branches enjoying higher degrees of autonomy due to their involvement in wider regional parties, with others that might have more autonomy in practice because they are led by minority or territorial factions, in addition to having a wider group that is strongly integrated in the party. Cantabria clearly constitutes a deviant case here for the branch's never-ending conflicts. Looking at their electoral fortunes, the first thing to note is that Ciudadanos was not able to achieve representation in five out of 17 regions, which indeed might hinder the institutionalization in these areas. In addition, both Podemos and Ciudadanos have some regional branches that achieved representation in several regional parliaments and others that have gained influence and even government positions, such as Podemos in Castille la Mancha in mid-July 2017 or Ciudadanos in Andalusia in 2019.

5 Assessing Podemos' and Ciudadanos' multi-level institutionalization processes

This section will examine how Ciudadanos' and Podemos' regional divergences in terms of branch autonomy and electoral threshold might have also led to different challenges and degrees of institutionalization. To this purpose, the four main dimensions identified in the literature (e.g. reification, value infusion, routinization and autonomy) are assessed at the national and regional level.

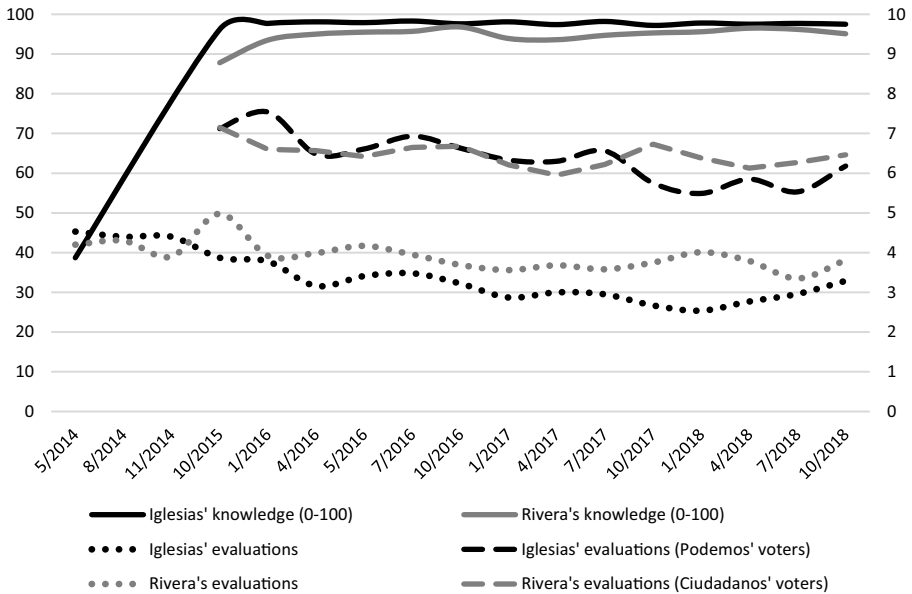


Fig. 2 Iglesias' (Podemos) and Rivera's (Ciudadanos) knowledge and evaluations in Spain. Sources: For 2014: Sigma Dos. Since 2015: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (Spanish Government)

5.1 Reification

Ciudadanos and Podemos were hardly known by the Spanish electorate before the 2014 EU elections. Their successful campaigns and their electoral breakthrough at the EU elections indeed provided them with an extraordinary opportunity to better introduce themselves and their party leaders to the Spanish electorate. Fernández-Albertos has shown the striking increase of Google searches for both parties during the 2014 campaign and the following weeks (Fernández-Albertos 2015, pp. 82–83). The same trend may be seen on social media. Before the EU elections, Podemos had around 200,000 followers on its national Facebook account and 80,000 on Twitter, which by late 2014 had evolved to around 800,000 on Facebook and around 400,000 on Twitter (M. Alonso 2015, pp. 102–4). These figures evolved by early 2019 to around 1.35 million followers of Podemos on Twitter and 1.2 million on Facebook. By early 2019, Ciudadanos had around 0.5 million followers on Twitter and 0.33 million on Facebook.¹

Figure 2 illustrates how quickly Podemos' and Ciudadanos' party leaders became acquainted with the Spanish electorate. Pablo Iglesias (Podemos) gained fame due to his presence on several political talk-shows on national TV stations some months prior the EU elections. By the time of the EU elections, Iglesias was already known by 40% of the electorate and only a few months later, this figure had skyrocketed to up 90% of the electorate. Albert Rivera (Ciudadanos) was not the UE's top candidate,

¹ To our knowledge there has not been any compilation of the Facebook and Twitter figures of both parties in each region.

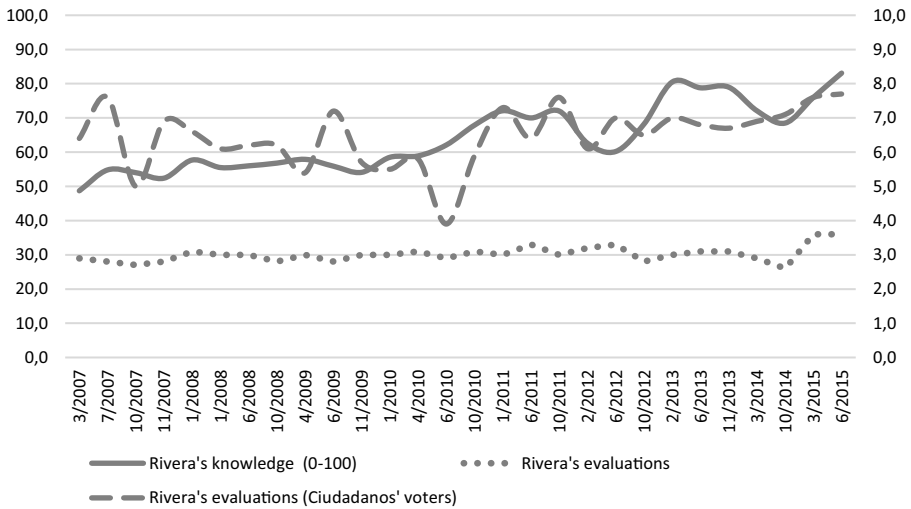


Fig. 3 Rivera's (Ciudadanos) knowledge and evaluations in Catalonia. Sources: Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió (Generalitat de Catalunya)

but he surely benefited from that campaign and the media attention received shortly afterwards. By early 2015, Rivera was also known by around 90% of the electorate. Both party leaders' evaluation by the electorate have remained quite steady. On a 0–10 scale, Rivera's appeal has moved around 4, while Iglesias' has slightly decreased by one point during 2017. Their voters rate them quite better than the overall electorate, although Iglesias' voters were more critical of his performance during 2017 (probably because of the Catalan crisis).

Although the reification process seems to move on the same (growing) direction at the national and regional levels, the differences might prove quite striking. A good example might be Rivera's knowledge trend in Catalonia prior to his leap into Spanish politics. In clear contrast with his meteoric growth in Spain, Rivera's awareness took years to grow in Catalonia: from around 50% in 2007 to around 80% of the electorate in 2015 (Fig. 3). Furthermore, Rivera's evaluations by Ciudadanos voters were quite contingent on the party's political evolution: During its formative years (2007–2010), Rivera's evaluations declined quite quickly from 6 to 4 points. That was mainly due to several internal conflicts and splits. After the 2010 Catalan elections, Rivera's leadership remained unquestioned and his voters' evaluations doubled from four up to eight points in 2015 (Fig. 3). In contrast, Rivera's evaluations by all the electorate remained steadily around three points.

So far, there is very scattered evidence of Ciudadanos' and Podemos' regional party leaders' knowledge at the regional level.² Despite the fragmentary evidence, some very general remarks might be pointed out: 1) Regional party leaders are far

² This has mostly to do with the fact that just a few regions (Catalonia, Euskadi, Andalusia) have agencies like the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas regularly surveying their populations and disclosing their results.

less known than national ones. 2) Knowledge of regional party leaders' is mostly growing but, in most cases, at a slower pace than that of their national colleagues. In this regard, their trends appear mostly to be shaped by the electoral threshold secured by each party in each region. Leaders from regions where their party has reached influence or government positions are generally better known and evaluated by their voters than the rest. In addition, knowledge also is connected to the length of their tenures and their seniority. Newly elected party leaders are generally less known than the ones that have not been replaced, unless they have national seniority.

5.2 Value infusion

Both Podemos and Ciudadanos have tried to set up their own value-systems. Podemos has presented itself as the political expression and the true voice of the *Indignados* movement, both fighting against corruption and anti-austerity policies while empowering ordinary citizens through ITC and highly democratic and post-bureaucratic procedures. Ciudadanos has also defined itself as the standard bearer of the fight against corruption through a modernizing electoral platform emphasizing liberal values, meritocracy and technocratic solutions. Ciudadanos has not connected to a particular social movement, but to a broad segment of youth entrepreneurs and middle classes. Both parties have been able to distinguish themselves from the other state-wide mainstream parties, such as the social-democratic PSOE and the conservative PP. As was mentioned above, this is a bit more challenging for Podemos because it shares ideological features with other national and regional left-wing parties, such as IU or the regional confluences.

At the national level, there is limited attitudinal evidence of Podemos' and Ciudadanos' value-infusion processes. Figure 4a shows the party identification trends of Spain's four main parties between 2011 and 2018. The figure gives some hints of the realignment process that is shaping Spanish politics. On the one hand, there is a decline of the mainstream PP and PSOE between 2011 and 2014. On the other one, there is Podemos' and Ciudadanos' growth around 2014–15. Interestingly, the patterns followed by both parties differ substantially: Ciudadanos seems to have followed a growing and stable trend, while Podemos presents deep fluctuations and seems to have been in a state of steady decrease since early 2015. Podemos' party identification decline indeed poses a threat for its future evolution: If fewer people feel attached to the party, it might lead to an identity crisis, which may, eventually, lead to internal conflicts or party splits.

At the regional level, value infusion is a rather more challenging issue for both parties because there might be, connected to the national appeal of the party (namely, cross-level contamination), the existence of different cleavage structures and the presence of other allies. Data is still difficult to find for all regions, but some evidence from Podemos might be able to illustrate our point. Podemos' 2015–16 results were quite homogeneous and achieved representation in all regions, regardless of their regional competitors (see Table 6 in the appendix). However, in several regions, such as Catalonia, Valencia or Galicia (and eventually in the Balearic Islands and Navarre), Podemos' results and party identification was, and still is, mediated by the existence of confluences or alliances with other regional left parties. In this

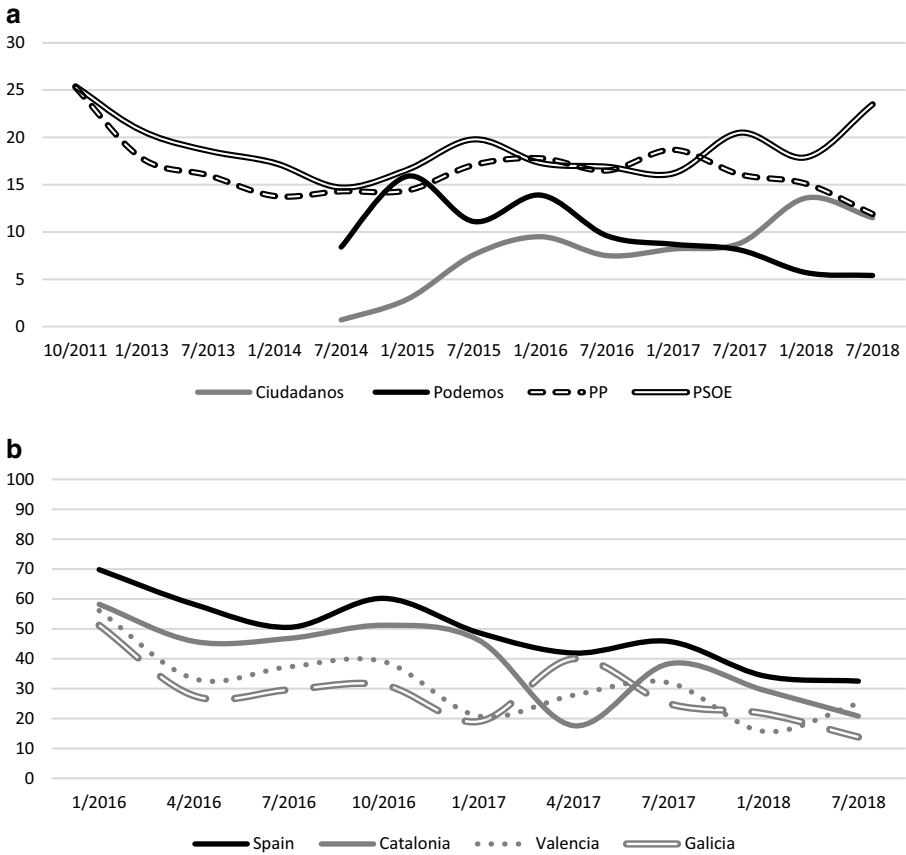


Fig. 4 **a** Party identification (electorate). Source: Data from the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (Spanish Government). Note: The question asks: Which is your closest party? **b** Party identification (Podemos' voters in regions with alliances). Source: Data from the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (Spanish Government). Note: Catalonia: En Comú Podem; Valencia: Compromís + Podemos; Galicia: En Marea

respect, Fig. 4b presents Podemos' party identification in Spain and in three regions (Catalonia, Valencia and Galicia) where confluences or electoral alliances were made. The first thing to be noted is the high variability of the party identification shares in a short time-span (2016–18). This might also be taken as a sign of Podemos' low levels of value infusion in each region. Second, it is worth pointing out that Podemos' party identification in Spain is always higher than in the three specific regions. This shows that Podemos' voters in these regions seem to develop alternative party identifications (e.g. to the confluences or allied parties), which is eroding loyalty to the party.

Finally, it is worth wondering about the extent to which Rivera's and Iglesias' leadership might hinder the value-infusion process of their party members and activists. The literature has indeed pointed out the relevance of this leadership–structure dilemma as one of the main key aspects of the institutionalization process (e.g.

Bolleyer 2013; Panebianco 1988). So far, it is unclear whether both parties would be able to survive without their present party leaders: On the one hand, the strong powers and discretion given by the 2017 assemblies to both of parties, along with the vertical and hierarchic features of their party organization seem to play against the value-infusion process; On the other one, Ciudadanos has some emerging regional leaders, such as Arrimadas (Catalonia) that might eventually be able to take the leadership. There are also some emerging leaders in Podemos (e.g. Montero, Errejón), but it is very unlikely that any of them would be granted the same amount of power enjoyed nowadays by Iglesias. In addition, Podemos' blurred membership and democratic procedures have so far granted that the regional branches led by minority or territorial factions might be developing complementary forms of loyalty to the party.

5.3 Routinization

Ciudadanos and Podemos have built their party structures following the typical direct membership mass party model (e.g. Duverger 1954). Both have set up several national party agencies to select their party leadership, and the main party platforms (Assemblies), organize the day to day life of the party (Party board), and regularly hold the party leadership (Party Council) accountable. They have also created and organized regional, local, sectorial and digital party branches intended to promote their party members' participation. Moreover, they have also raised a central office in charge of all the bureaucratic tasks, such as the internal and external communication, etc. Both parties have also managed to organize more than one national assembly, although this is more arguable in the case of Ciudadanos, due to its recent mutation from regional to state-wide party.

One of the main differences between both parties has to do with the activity of their regional branches (Table 3). In 2006, Ciudadanos' first party statutes declared their aim of becoming a state-wide party and they formally organized its party structure accordingly. However, until the early 2010s, its Catalan and Spanish structures actually overlapped. By 2013, when the party devised a new expansion strategy through Spain, a reform of the party statutes provided new grounds to build its regional structure. Since then, the party board has been granted absolute powers to control the newly forming regional branches by appointing all the members of the regional boards. This system was ratified in the 2017 national assembly and, shortly afterwards, the national party board once again re-appointed all the regional executives. Such tight and top-down control has limited the party branches' activities, which are mostly focused on their parliamentary groups and on campaigning. So far, no regional assemblies have been called (Table 3). In addition, replacements of regional party leaders have mainly been limited to these regions where the party did not get representation (Table 3). Regional conflicts and disciplinary actions have also been scarce and also centred on regions with poor electoral showing (Table 4). Finally, it is worth highlighting that there have been relevant examples of party splits, such as the Valencian case, where the most prominent figures left the party, but these constitute rare exceptions.

Podemos has built a party structure that combines both a bottom-up system of decision making, mixed with the autonomy of regional branches and a high level of powers attributed to the national party leadership (Rodríguez-Teruel et al. 2016). In all regions, local and regional branches have held several assemblies in order to select their party boards and candidates (Table 3). Eventually, members were also consulted on several internal referenda. Podemos has also granted all regional branches the capacity to draft their own regulations, which might slightly differ from the national level rules. This has been the case, for example, with all the regulations for the party primaries. In this respect, the routinization process seems to be far more advanced in Podemos than in Ciudadanos. There are some differences in Podemos' party branches' activity, depending on their electoral fortunes and the levels of branch autonomy (Tables 3 and 4). In regions where Podemos has reached the influence or government threshold, the first regional party leaders have been able to secure their positions. On the other hand, replacements and internal conflicts have been more frequent in regions where the party has only recently got representation (Tables 3 and 4). The link between branch autonomy and party leaders' replacements seems to follow an inverse linear pattern: regions with more autonomy have had more leadership replacements and conflicts than regions led by the majority faction (Tables 3 and 4). That might have to do with the occasional clash of legitimacies between the regional and the national level. This is probably why the number of conflicts and disciplinary actions have been higher in these regions (Table 4). In some regions, Podemos' party leadership has confronted most of these conflicts by dismissing the regional party board, appointing an interim committee and, after a while, organizing new elections. In those areas where Podemos has been allied with other parties, disagreements on this strategy might have led to even more conflicts (Table 4) and, hence, more party leadership replacements than the rest (Table 3). Overall, Podemos and Ciudadanos differ substantially on their regional branches' activity, which reflects how vertical integration and control (e.g. cross-level contamination) works in each party. In both cases, their electoral showing seems to have an effect on their regional party leaders' stability: generally speaking, achieving the threshold of influence means party leadership stability and low levels of unrest. Ultimately, Podemos' branch autonomy seems, so far, to be inversely related to party leadership stability and absence of conflicts.

5.4 Autonomy

At the national level, both Podemos and Ciudadanos have avoided strong formal links with classic external groups such as trade unions or business associations. Instead, they seem to have followed a *conventional wisdom* approach and opted predominantly for informal or personal links through their party representatives. This is also in line with what has been happening with Spanish mainstream parties during the last several decades (Verge 2012; Ramiro and Verge 2013; Barberà et al. 2019). At the regional level, some of Ciudadanos' party officials have kept personal and informal links with some think tanks and groups belonging to the anti-secessionist movement in Catalonia, such as Sociedad Civil Catalana or the above-mentioned group defending bilingualism. Podemos also devised the already mentioned Circles

as a way to engage with the Indignados movement since its very inception. The blurred nature of the Circles allows that activists and groups from the *Indignados* or other movements, such as the Feminists or the LGBTQ, could become actively involved within Podemos, mostly at the local level (Calvo and Alvarez 2015). In these regions, which have stronger regional identities (Catalonia, Basque Country, Galicia), Podemos party leaderships have also developed informal links with the regionalist movements. In any case, neither Podemos' or Ciudadanos' highly centralized decision-making systems might be easily captured by any of the aforementioned groups or social movements either at the national or the regional level, which is why it is very difficult to assess strong differences or impacts related to their electoral fortunes or to their branch autonomy.

On the other hand, Podemos' and Ciudadanos' autonomy is based on their high dependence on public funding, like the rest of the state-wide Spanish parties (Rodríguez-Teruel and Casal Bértoa 2016). Between 2014–16, both parties received large amounts of public funding, covering most (if not all) of their electoral expenses at all levels. Since their breakthrough, they also get public funding for their parliamentary groups and, eventually, central offices at the UE, at both the national and regional level. Actually, their better-than-expected results have probably allowed them to become quite financially sound organizations. So far, Podemos has not implemented any kind of membership fee, but allows voluntary membership donations to the party. To make up for lack of membership fees, it has implemented a particular payroll system by which all the party public representatives (EMPs, MPs, RMPs) have to give a fraction of their income to the central office. That is why this group has probably become Podemos' main donor. In addition, Podemos has also tried to develop a peculiar participatory system by which the money needed for the campaigns is collected through micro-credit (and not bank loans). So far, the good results have allowed them to either repay the borrowed money to their owners or converted into small donations once the public funding has been received. On the other hand, Ciudadanos has set up a compulsory and demanding membership fee system, but has not implemented any payroll system. Instead, it allegedly tried to implement quite controversial measures in order to redirect some share of public subsidies to its extra-parliamentary organization.³ Ciudadanos' territorial expansion and electoral campaigns have been financed through credits received by the banking system. Overall, the sound finances of both parties do not seem to compromise their autonomy, at least so far. That said, it is worth pointing out that their finance strategies have also been shaped by their electoral fortunes. This is clearly the case of Ciudadanos, where there are some party branches (the ones without representation) relying on the central office's economic support, while many others have plenty of economic resources to build their regional organizations. The differences are probably less striking in Podemos because all party branches have their own parliamentary groups. Finally, both parties' finances at the regional level depend on other internal factors that are loosely linked with branch autonomy. If a regional branch is factionally divided, this might mean parliamentary group splits and, hence, losing access

³ Such as 30% of the public subsidies to the local and regional groups (El Correo de Andalucía, 3-7-2017).

to important sources of funding. That has been the case for Ciudadanos in Valencia and of Podemos in Navarre.

6 Discussion and conclusions

This article has proposed a theoretical framework to better understand how several internal and external factors shape institutionalization processes in multi-level countries. Three main expectations have been derived from it: first, that through the influence of the party origins and cross-level contamination, party institutionalization processes at the national and regional level will generally be aligned; second, that they will be stronger in those regions with better electoral performance; and third, that higher levels of branch autonomy will also lead to stronger regional institutionalization processes. In order to provide some preliminary evidence in support of these expectations, this article has explored the comparative case study of Ciudadanos and Podemos in Spain.

Generally speaking, there seem to be signs of a certain alignment between the institutionalization processes taking place at both the national and regional level. A certain gap between both levels has been found in all dimensions. This is the case of the reification and value infusion, in which both parties have substantially improved at the national level, but where things have not progressed at the same pace at the regional one. Despite the scattered evidence found so far, the different paces of development of public knowledge of the Ciudadanos party leader in Catalonia and Spain are quite illustrative. The same might be said of the gap between Podemos' declining party identification at the national and regional level. The data from the structural dimensions (routinization, autonomy) also point in the same direction. Despite their different origins, routinization has certainly progressed in both parties, but their central party offices have so far made more progress than the regional ones. This is particularly the case of Ciudadanos, where regional branch autonomy and activities remain substantially limited.

The Spanish case has provided some evidence linking higher electoral thresholds and branch autonomy with stronger institutionalization processes. This has been particularly illustrated when considering the structural dimensions. In this respect, despite the ideological differences and origins of both parties, regional party leadership stability has been higher in regions with better electoral showing. Something similar might be said regarding internal conflicts and disciplinary actions: in both Ciudadanos and Podemos, regional branches' stability has been substantially higher in these regions where both parties have accessed influence or government positions. Finally, regional branches with higher electoral thresholds indeed might get more public funding than the ones with limited or no representation whatsoever. This is particularly the case in Ciudadanos. On the other hand, the analysis of the regional branches' autonomy is so far limited to Podemos and to the routinization dimension. Interestingly enough, Podemos' data do not seem to support our expectations: regional branches with higher autonomy have generally suffered from more party leadership instability, more conflicts and more disciplinary actions. In regions led by minority or territorial factions, this has mainly been caused by centre-periphery

disagreements on key decisions. In regions where Podemos has been nested in wider alliances and confluences, this has been mostly related to regional disagreements on how to build the alliance.

Wider lessons extracted from Podemos' evolution highlight how opting for diffusion as a territorial growth strategy, combined with direct democratic procedures and high levels of regional branch autonomy, might favour the fast expansion of the party at the beginning, but foster centre-periphery conflicts and, eventually, hinder the party institutionalization process in the medium term. Podemos' data also shows the conflicting trends between declining value-infusion patterns and the stronger institutionalization processes fuelled by the structural dimensions. On the other hand, lessons learned from Ciudadanos' evolution point out that opting for penetration as a territorial growth strategy, combined with very limited branch autonomy, might favour internal control, but limit the party's future development at the regional level or, at least, leave it at the expense of the central office's electoral fortunes. Despite the limited data from the two Spanish parties, the implications of these findings might also apply to other new parties from other Western European countries. New parties with strong party leaderships and vertical integration mechanisms that are competing in multi-level settings may likely face similar institutionalization challenges to the ones reported in the article. Further research is needed in order to properly test the relevance of this framework and the findings derived from the Spanish case.

Appendix

Table 5 Ciudadanos' results at the 2015/16 regional elections

	Votes	% Votes	% Seats	Bargaining powers	Government support	Competitor
<i>Spain</i>	<i>1,896,496</i>	<i>8.3</i>	<i>6.2</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
Andalusia	369,914	9.3	8.3	High	Yes	No
Aragón	62,907	9.4	7.5	Limited	No	PAR
Asturias	38,687	7.1	6.7	Limited	No	FAC
Balearic Islands	25,651	5.9	3.4	Limited	No	No
Canary Islands	54,375	5.9	0	–	–	CC
Cantabria	22,552	6.9	5.7	Limited	Yes ^a	PRC
Castile and León	139,954	10.3	6	High	No ^a	No
Castile La Mancha	95,230	8.6	0	–	–	No
Catalonia	736,364	18.8	18.5	Limited	No	CDC
Valencia	309,121	11.2	13.1	Limited	No	No
Extremadura	28,010	4.4	1.5	Limited	No	No
Galicia	48,553	3.4	0	–	–	No
Madrid	385,836	12.1	13.2	High	Yes	No
Murcia	79,057	12.5	8.9	High	Yes	No
Navarre	9,993	2.9	0	–	–	UPN
Basque Country	21,477	2.0	0	–	–	PNV
Rioja	17,042	10.5	12.1	High	No ^a	No

^aIndicates that some agreement was reached, but this might not still be standing

Source: www.argos.gva.es (Generalitat Valenciana) and authors' own

Notes: Most of the elections were held in May 2015, with the exception of Andalusia (3/2015), Catalonia (9/2015), Galicia (9/2016) and the Basque Country (9/2016)

Table 6 Podemos' results at the 2015/16 regional elections

	Votes	% Votes	% Seats	Bargaining powers	Government support	Competitor	Ally
<i>Spain</i>	<i>3,203,064</i>	<i>13.7</i>	<i>14.0</i>	<i>Very limited</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>IU</i>	<i>IU Equo</i>
Andalusia	592,371	14.8	13.8	Limited	No	No	–
Aragón	137,325	20.6	20.9	High	Yes ^a	CHA	No
Asturias	103,571	19.1	20.0	High	No ^a	No	–
Balearic Islands	63,489	14.7	17.2	High	Yes	MÉS	MÉS
Canary Is- lands	133,044	14.5	12.3	Limited	No	NC	No
Cantabria	28,895	8.9	8.6	Limited	Yes ^a	PRC	No
Castile and León	165,475	12.1	11.9	Limited	No	UPL	No
Castile la Mancha	107,463	9.7	9.1	High	Yes	No	–
Catalonia	367,613	8.9	8.1	Limited	No	CUP	CeC ICV
Valencia	282,389	11.4	13.1	High	Yes	Compromís	Compromís
Extremadura	51,216	8.0	9.2	High	Yes	No	–
Galicia	273,523	19.3	19.1	None	No	BNG	En Marea
Madrid	591,697	18.6	20.9	Limited	No	No	–
Murcia	83,133	13.1	13.3	Limited	No	No	–
Navarre	46,207	13.7	14.0	High	Yes	Bildu Geroa Bai	No
Basque Coun- try	157,334	14.9	14.7	Limited	No	Bildu	No
Rioja	18,319	11.2	12.1	Limited	No	No	–

^aIndicates that some agreement was reached, but this might not still be standing
Source and notes in Table 5

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