

Explaining morality policy coalitions in Spanish parliamentary votes: the interaction of the church-state conflict and territorial politics

Margarita León* , Manuel Alvariño  and Llorenç Soler-Buades 

*Corresponding author: m.leonborja@gmail.com

Manuscript accepted for publication in South European Society and Politics on September 23, 2022. Published on November 15, 2022.

To cite this article: Margarita León, Manuel Alvariño & Llorenç Soler-Buades (2022): Explaining Morality Policy Coalitions in Spanish Parliamentary Votes: The Interaction of the Church-State Conflict and Territorial Politics, *South European Society and Politics*, [DOI: 10.1080/13608746.2022.2132614](https://doi.org/10.1080/13608746.2022.2132614)

Abstract

In this article we empirically explore the impact of the state-Church conflict on progressive moral policies. Taking Spain as a case study, we analyse the parliamentary interaction of political parties in a number of policy domains that provoke a moral conflict. We examine the principle legislative acts relating to abortion, divorce, same-sex marriage, euthanasia and gender equality from the early 1980s to 2021. We look beyond the religious divide and argue that its interaction with territorial politics, which is in turn shaped by specific institutional features, explains the formation of political coalitions that are conducive to moral legislation. Furthermore, we show that political coalitions vary depending on how explicit or implicit a given morality conflict is.

Keywords

Religious cleavage; party politics; decentralisation; Southern European welfare states; Spain; same-sex marriage; abortion; euthanasia; gender equality

Introduction

In the history of European state formation, the Church was a highly prominent political actor that shaped the structure of political competition in important ways. In the 18th and 19th centuries, religious struggles were ultimately about political power and authority, and the strength of the Church, along with its relationship with state-building elites, varied across the politics of Europe. In the 20th century, this diversity of state-Church relationships yielded a variety of constellations of authority and political coalitions within states.

The expectation found in existing literature is that the legacies of state-Church conflicts will impact on agenda setting and policy outcomes in specific ways. First, the literature agrees that the presence of such a cleavage leads to conservative dominance (Manow 2013). The intense state-Church conflict which has historically dominated political competition in Continental and Southern Europe gave rise to either powerful Christian democratic parties or conservative parties with a confessional orientation (van Kersbergen 1995). This predominance of political coalitions structured around confessional parties explains the subsequent family-oriented and conservative character of welfare states in such countries (Esping-Andersen 1990; Morgan 2009). Furthermore, the existence of the religious cleavage is also held to provoke strong polarisation between left and right over the moral dimension (Rovny & Polk 2019). In such contexts, conservative agendas built around traditional gender roles and Christian values are understood to successfully block or delay the passage of progressive moral legislation (Manow 2013).

An examination of progressive moral legislation in a number of European countries seems, however, to contradict such theoretical expectations. In 2010, for example, Spain and Portugal legalised same-sex marriage ahead of countries such as Denmark, Finland, Germany, Switzerland and the UK. The same two Southern European countries also had, in 2010, more permissive regulations regarding abortion than did Finland and the UK (Knill, Preidel & Nebel 2014). Further, in 2021, Spain became one of the few countries globally to legalise euthanasia. The case of Spain begs the question as to why has the existence of a strong religious cleavage not prevented such progressive morality policies from entering the policy agenda? How can we explain this puzzle?

Taking Spain as a case study, in this article we empirically explore the impact of the state-Church conflict on morality policies. We look at the interaction between the state-Church conflict and territorial politics to understand the capacity for policy coalition building in morality policies. Furthermore, we investigate the ways in which such interaction of the religious cleavage with the territorial one is shaped by the institutional configuration of the Spanish political system.

By moral legislation, or morality policies, we refer to those policy fields which involve debates over first principles, ‘the legal sanction of right and wrong’ (Mooney 1999, p. 375). Empirical studies of morality policies usually include abortion (Calkin & Kaminska, 2020), euthanasia (Budde et al. 2018) and same-sex marriage (Knill & Preidel 2015). While gender equality has remained usually disregarded, we argue that it is also a moral matter as it challenges traditional gender norms and family values (Razavi & Jenichen 2016). Furthermore, recent political contestation of gender equality and women’s rights by conservative religious and political actors around the world has been framed around the alleged defence of traditional family values (Biroli & Caminotti 2020). Nevertheless, we may also differentiate between explicit and implicit morality policies. While the former explicitly involve value conflicts (such as life and death issues) the latter may be framed in moral terms or not (such as gender equality). Our supposition is that the space for political coalition may vary depending on the nature and strength of the morality conflict in the issues at stake.

The article is organised as follows. The following two sections review the literature on the state-Church conflict, with a specific focus on Southern European countries. Sections four and five present the theoretical framework and our main hypotheses, while section six explains our data and methods. Section seven presents and discusses our empirical analysis of parliamentary voting on policy issues characterised by a moral cleavage. The final section concludes.

The state-Church conflict, politics and policies

In the early days of comparative welfare state research, religion was granted a substantial explanatory role in the origins of social protection systems in Western countries. Flora and Alber noted that in some countries the strength of the labour movement was partly

conditioned by the presence of religious, linguistic and/or ethnic cleavages (Flora & Alber 1987). Wilensky also explored how party dominance by either Catholic or leftist parties shaped welfare development in Western countries between 1919 and 1976, concluding that: ‘(...) in contrast to leftism, cumulative Catholic power since World War I increases welfare effort’ (Wilensky 1987, p. 356). Despite this early recognition of the influence of religion and the Church in welfare development, interest in the class struggle subsequently overshadowed this important axis of social division. Welfare state scholars did continue to pay attention to the importance of religious variables over subsequent decades but this was mostly in relation to their impact on welfare attitudes (Van Oorschot 2006; De la O & Rodden 2008; Stegmüller 2013).

Recent transformations in party-voter alignment have brought to the fore a ‘New Politics’ literature that, challenging traditional theories of partisan politics, aims to re-address the multiple cultural and social divisions which structure the politics of the welfare state (Häusermann, Picot & Geering 2013). By considering the impact and interaction between various ‘cleavages’, this scholarship reaches back to Lipset and Rokkan’s account of the multidimensional character of welfare state politics (Lipset & Rokkan 1967). It is here that we can situate novel work on how relationships between the state and the Church contribute to shaping welfare regimes.

Morgan, for example, explains differences in family policy in Europe through the type of state-Church interaction (Morgan 2009). In the Nordic countries, Morgan argues, religious homogeneity and the state-Church fusion minimised socio-political conflict, enabling close alliances between liberal forces and social Protestantism. In the Catholic countries of Continental Europe, by contrast, a strong state-Church conflict dominated political tensions in the early period of modern state formation. Referring to Southern European countries, Manow, along with other authors has argued that the importance of the state-Church conflict in the history of nation-state building shaped the development of those country’s political economies (Manow 2013, 2015; Manow, Palier & Schwander 2018; Polk & Rovny 2018). While the strength of the Catholic Church and the religious cleavage is shared with other European countries, the political expression of this cleavage is not found anywhere other than Southern Europe.

This division triggered the polarisation of the political space between a clerical right and an anticlerical left while, furthermore, causing a scission within the left. As Manow has argued, the division within the political left in Southern European countries is ‘closely related to the decidedly anti-republican position held by the Catholic church in the mono-denominational Catholic countries of Europe’s South’ (Manow 2015, p. 34). The reason for this is that ‘the deep divide between a sharp anticlerical labour movement and pious farmers under close tutelage of the church left the political left without allies for a reformist strategy’ (Manow 2015, p. 34).

The divided left, together with the polarisation of the political space, have produced long lasting political consequences in the south of Europe. First, they have afforded dominance to centre-right governments, since irreconcilable divisions on the left work against leftist coalitions and increase the chances of Christian-democratic or conservative governments. According to some authors, the development of progressive majorities that were key to the creation of post-war welfare states in Western Europe were unlikely in the south because a radical competitor on the left prevented social-democratic parties from moving to the political centre with a reformist political agenda (Ferrera 1996; Hopkin 2001; Watson 2008).

Potential policy implications of the state-Church conflict

In terms of contemporary policy outcomes, these processes are expected to lead to the omission or delay of progressive policies. Moreover, this impact is thought to be especially acute with respect to policies with an explicit moral component – such as abortion or divorce – where finding common ground across parties is difficult (Manow, Palier & Schwander 2018; Polk & Rovny 2018). Nonetheless, political tensions motivated by the religious cleavage are also said to explain inaction and a lack of progressiveness with respect to other social policies with a less explicit moral dimension, such as family policy or gender equality.

This same argument is found in the comparative public policy literature studying the impact of religiosity on the introduction of morality policies. To the extent that morality policies clash with traditional Christian values and beliefs, countries with religious parties and high levels of religiosity in society are expected to find it harder to

legislate on such issues (Pavolini, Béland & Jawad 2017). Whether populations are majority Catholic or Protestant also seems to matter greatly, with the Catholic Church being a much stronger veto player than Protestant denominations (Fink 2009). A recent systematic comparative study of 15 European countries between 1960 and 2010 showed that Catholicism slows the path of reforms in abortion and same-sex partnership rights (Knill, Preidel & Nebel 2014). According to these findings, Catholicism influences the sluggishness of progressive reforms. This is consistent with other studies that suggest that pro-abortion (Minkenberg 2002) and pro-euthanasia (Budde et al. 2018) legislation is more common in countries with low proportions of Catholic population.

However, the expectation that countries with a strong religious cleavage face greater difficulties in putting forward progressive moral legislation compared with those countries with a weaker or absent religious cleavage is challenged by some empirical evidence. Certain countries do not seem to follow the expected pattern of policy-making. Spain and Portugal legalised same-sex marriage earlier than countries such as Denmark, Finland, Germany, Switzerland and the UK. The same two Southern European countries also have more permissive regulation in abortion than Finland and the UK (Knill, Preidel & Nebel 2014). Further, Spain legalised euthanasia in 2021, ahead of many European countries.

Engeli, Green-Pedersen and Larsen noted and explored this contradiction, examining four countries, two of which are characterised by secular political parties – Denmark and the UK – and two by religious parties—the Netherlands and Spain (Engeli, Green-Pedersen & Larsen 2013). Their study led them to conclude that morality policies are, ultimately, more permissive in those democracies with religious parties. Precisely because competition between confessional and secular parties politicise morality issues, continuous secularisation and laggardness in morality policies prompt secular parties to confront their competitors with demands for change. That is to say, perhaps counterintuitively, policies with a morality component receive greater political visibility in religious countries.

Applying the analytical framework of Engeli, Green-Pedersen and Larsen to the Spanish case, Chaqués and Palau attempt to explain the country's fast path towards progressiveness despite it having high levels of religiosity and the presence of centre-

right parties with a clear religious underpinning (Chaqués & Palau 2012). Analysing public opinion and agenda setting, their findings show that the morality cleavage has been explicit and polarised in the Spanish party system, becoming a strong driver of partisanship. According to their analysis, the centre-left and radical-left have repeatedly politicised morality issues by including them in their manifestos and proposing parliamentary bills. Our research builds on this previous work and advances knowledge in two main ways

First, we take a broader understanding of morality policies and add depth to the analysis by desegregating two types of policy: those with an explicit moral component, i.e. matters of life and death such as abortion or euthanasia, and policies with an implicit moral component, i.e. policies which challenge traditional norms and values on sexuality and gender roles. Morality policies are generally assumed to refer to decisions about societal values (Heichel, Knill & Schmitt 2013). Gender equality is not a usual suspect in studies dealing with morality policies. However, gender equality legislation has an implicit moral component, as it frames gender norms and institutions such as marriage and the family. Hence, the presence of the state/Church conflict will intervene in the capacity of a given country to pass progressive gender equality legislation (Razavi and Jenichen 2016). Our supposition is that the space for political alliances might vary depending on the nature and strength of the morality conflict.

Second, we investigate the political and institutional elements that may bear upon the success or failure of such political initiatives. Specifically, we look at the interplay of different cleavages – the territorial cleavage in particular – and the ways in which cleavages, party competition and political coalitions are mediated by the institutional design of the political system. We thus engage with literature that calls for a better understanding of how different cleavages impact on party politics in countries with multiple lines of social and territorial conflict and more recent episodes of democratic transition (Rovny 2014; Galais & Serrano 2019). In short, we aim to develop a theoretical and analytical framework capable of grasping the functioning and implications of the religious cleavage in countries with a strong Catholic tradition.

In the following two sections we present our argument about why the religious cleavage in Spain has led to unexpected policy outputs with respect to morality policies.

We then formulate three main hypotheses, with our argument unfolding in the following way. First, as noted in the existing literature, Spain is characterised by a strong state-Church conflict that has been persistent over time. Second, this religious cleavage produces, comparatively speaking, high levels of moral polarisation. As argued in the studies by both Engeli, Green-Pedersen and Larsen, and Chaqués and Palau, this polarisation raises the relevance of moral issues for party competition, which creates incentives for the left to pursue a progressive agenda. Third, the territorial cleavage interacts with the religious cleavage in the formation of political coalitions, adding a layer of complexity to the inter-party coalitions required for advancing progressive legislation. Fourth, this interaction is shaped and mediated by several institutional rules that were created during Spain's transition to democracy in order to accommodate the pluri-national nature of the state. These rules facilitate the formation of broad coalitions of left and regional parties under left-wing cabinets. As a result, the door to progressive policies is unlocked. Not all morality policies will carry the same degree of politicisation, however, and thus we expect a differentiated support depending on how explicit the moral conflict is.

Before proceeding to our theoretical framework, it is necessary to briefly explain the multi-level organisation of the Spanish party system in order to provide context for the figures presented. One can differentiate between national-level and regional-level parties in Spain. Over time, those parties have changed their names, their structures and have eventually been replaced by similar parties. At the national level we find a far-left – consisting of PCE (Partido Comunista de España - Communist Party of Spain), IU (Izquierda Unida - United Left) and UP (Unidas Podemos - United We Can) – the mainstream centre-left PSOE (Partido Socialista Obrero Español - Spanish Socialist Worker's Party), the mainstream centre-right PP¹ (Partido Popular – People's Party), and a recently created far-right party (Vox).

Although the influence of regional-level parties is strongest in regional parliaments, most regional parties are also represented in the national parliament. Regional-level right-wing parties are PNV (Partido Nacionalista Vasco - Basque Nationalist Party), CiU-JxC (Convergència i Unió–Junts per Catalunya – Convergence

Table 1. Complete list of parties included in the analysis, providing information about party families, acronyms, names (in original language) and changes.

Party Family	Years	Acronym	Name
Far-left	1977 – 1986	PCE –	Partido Comunista Español –
	1986 – 2019	IU* –	Izquierda Unida –
	2019 – present	UP*	Unidas Podemos
Centre-Left	1977 – present	PSOE	Partido Socialista Obrero Español
Centre-Right	1977 – 1989	AP –	Alianza Popular –
	1989 – present	PP**	Partido Popular
	2006 – present	Cs	Ciudadanos
Far-Right	2013 – present	Vox	Vox
Regional left	1977 – present	ERC	Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya
	1986 – present	BNG	Bloque Nacionalista Galego
Regional right	1977 – present	PNV/EAJ	Partido Nacionalista Vasco / Euzko Alderdi Jeltzalea
	1978 – 2015	CiU –	Convergència i Unió –
	2020 – present	JxC***	Junts per Catalunya
	1993 – present		Coalición Canaria

Note: There are three types of changes in party names: UP* is a broad left coalition which includes IU, and IU* is a coalition that includes PCE. PP** was previously AP. JxC*** is a new party that occupies a similar role, party leaders and constituencies than CiU.

and Union–Together for Catalonia) and CC (Coalición Canaria - Canarian Coalition). Regional-level left-wing parties are comprised of ERC (Esquerra Republicana Catalunya - Catalan Republican Left) and BNG (Bloque Nacional Gallego - Galician National Bloc). In table 1 we provide a complete list of party names and their period of existence.

The religious cleavage and moral polarisation

In common with other Southern European countries, Spain is characterised by a deep historical conflict between clerical and anti-clerical forces. The Catholic Church opposed the state-building efforts of liberal forces during the 18th and 19th centuries (Linz 1980). In the 20th century, the authoritarian coup d'état carried out by the military was strongly supported by the Church and its religious character was heavily emphasised (Linz 1991).

During the 40 years of Franco’s dictatorship, the hegemony of the Catholic Church was ensured through the precepts of the regime’s ideology of *National-Catholicism* (Louzao Villar 2013). Meanwhile, clandestine opposition to the dictatorship was dominated by the Communist party (PCE), which held a strongly anticlerical position. As a result, the party system that emerged from the Spanish transition to democracy was characterised by a pronounced religious division. Since then, as figure 1 shows, remarkable differences in levels of religiosity between the constituencies of the main parties have persisted despite a notable process of secularisation in the country.

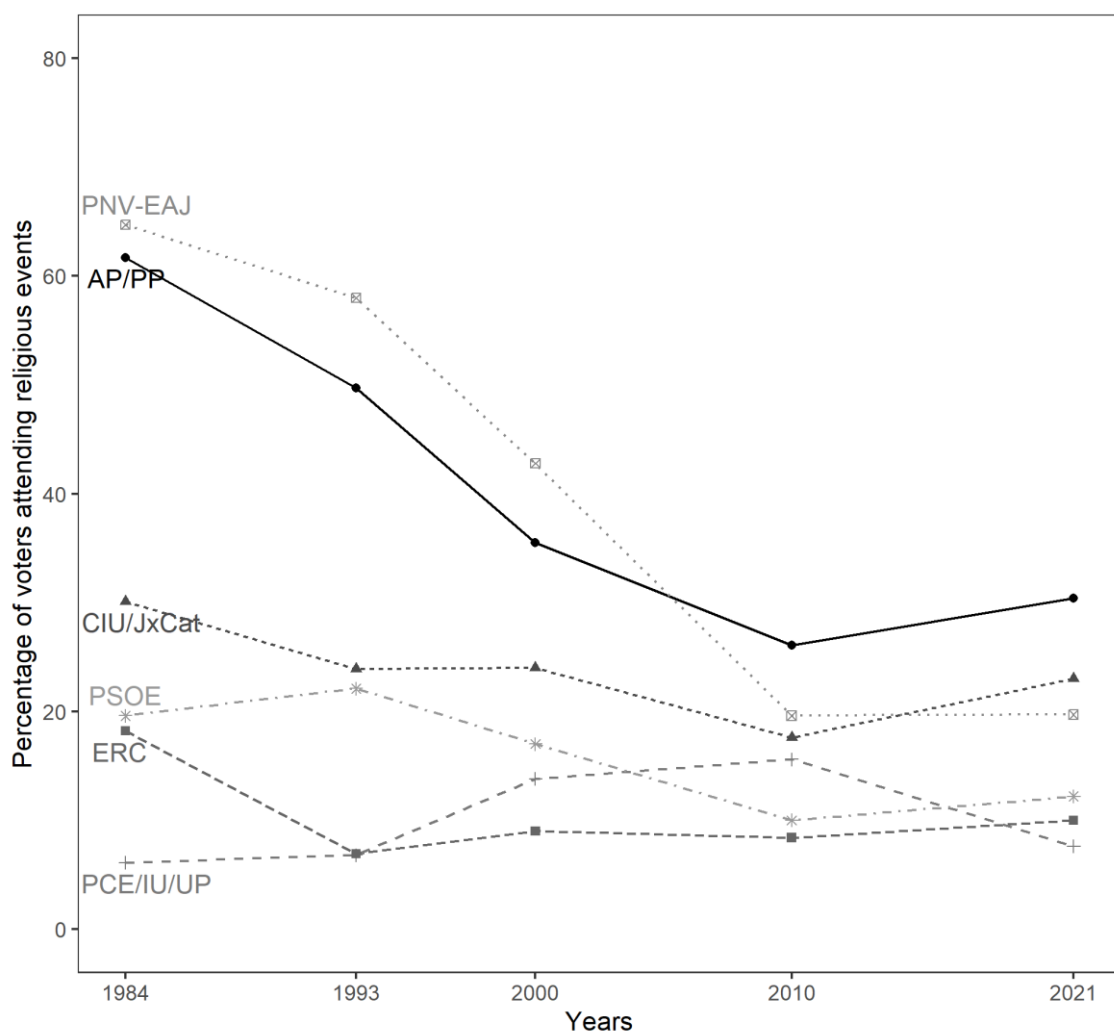


Figure 1. Percentage of voters attending at least one religious event per week, disaggregated by political party, 1984-2021. Source: author’s elaboration based on data from the Centre of Sociological Research (Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas).

Figure 1 represents the evolution of the religious cleavage between 1984 and 2021, expressed in terms of the percentage of voters attending religious events at least once a week². Attending religious rituals characterises ‘practicing’ Catholics and reinforces the correspondence between religious beliefs and political behaviour (Emmenegger & Manow 2014). At the start of the period considered, the religiosity of the constituencies of the mainstream centre-left and centre-right parties differed greatly. For example, the percentage of voters attending religious events at least once a week was around 65% for voters for the conservative AP-PP and the Basque conservative party, PNV, while it was less than 20% with respect to voters for the centre-left PSOE. On the left spectrum, the extreme left parties – represented by PCE, IU and Podemos depending on the historical period – have been associated with consistently very low levels of religiosity since 1984.

Over time, the strong secularisation process in Spanish society has significantly reduced the distance between left and right in terms of levels of religiosity. There has been a marked decrease in the attendance of religious events by voters for national centre-right and, to a greater extent, for regional right-wing parties. However, important differences nonetheless persist. The centre-right PP remains Spain’s most religious party and, overall, voters of right-wing parties are more religious than voters of left-wing parties. Differences also persist between left and right at the regional level.

The strong religious divide in the party system has led to party competition revolving around the cultural and moral dimension to a greater degree than around the socio-economic dimension. As Rovny and Polk pointed out, historical religious divides greatly explain the relative importance of cultural versus economic cleavages across European countries (Rovny & Polk 2018). In Northern Europe, the green-red alliance resulted in a consensus in favour of progressive policies, leading left and right divisions to be expressed more prominently through socio-economic issues. In Southern Europe, meanwhile, tensions and disagreements between left and right have centred on issues with a strong moral component. Polarisation around socio-economic issues has, in turn, been less acute. A quick examination of the European Social Survey, illustrated in figure 2, substantiates this claim.

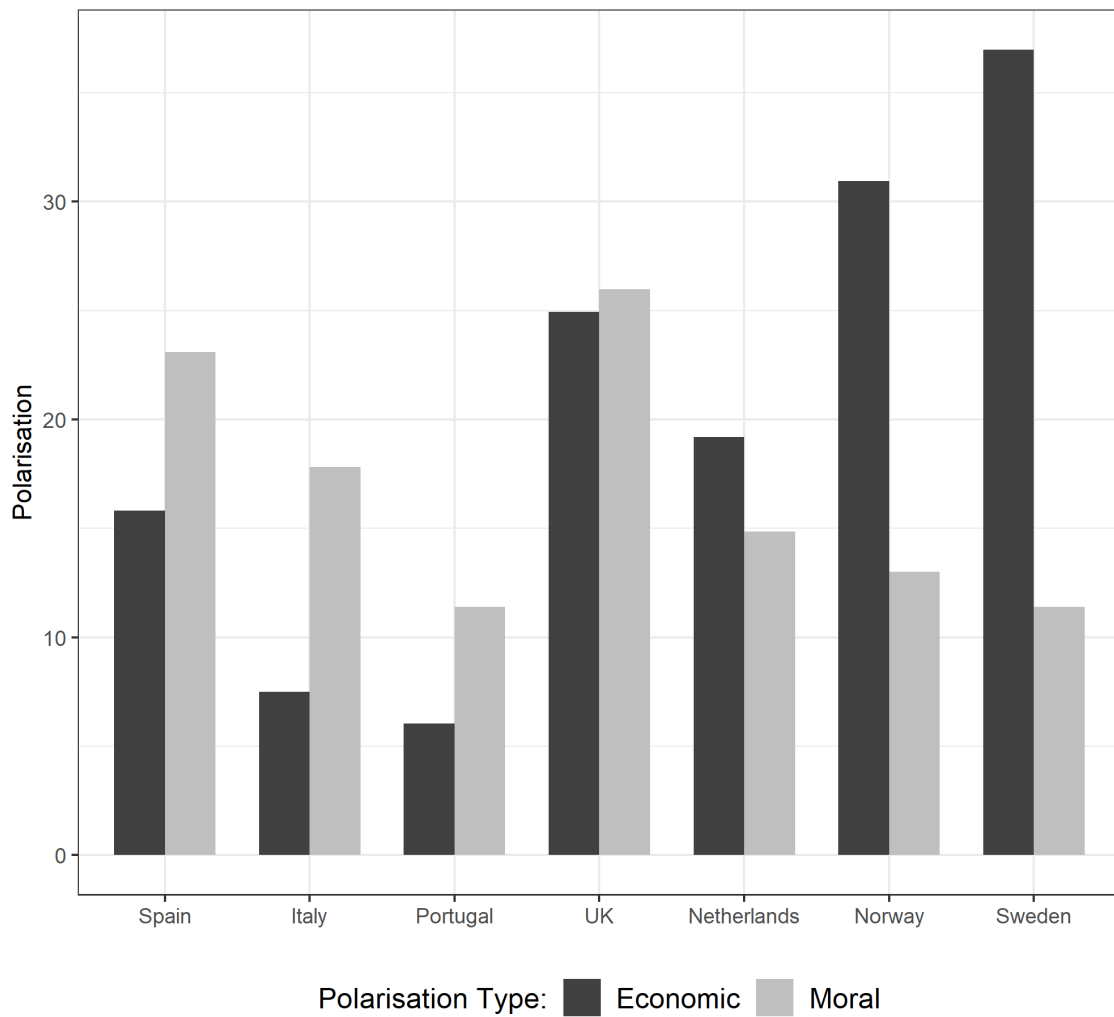


Figure 2. Economic versus moral polarisation between left- and right-wing individuals in Europe, selected countries, 2018. Source: authors’ elaboration based on data from the European Social Survey. Polarisation is measured as the difference between the percentages of left-wing and right-wing populations agreeing with the following moral and economic statements: “gay and lesbian couples should have the right to adopt children” and “government should reduce differences in income levels”. Left- and right-wing individuals are those reporting higher and lower scores than a centrist position in an ideological scale.

As may be seen, in Spain, Italy and Portugal, left and right voters are more divided on moral issues (the right of same-sex couples to adopt children) than on economic issues (the state’s responsibility for redistribution). The opposite is true in Sweden and Norway,

where left and right voters differ strongly with regards to the role of governments in addressing income inequality.

Multidimensional party competition and the institutional structure

Decentralisation and multi-level governance in Contemporary Spain

The longstanding saliency of the territorial cleavage in Spain has its roots in the survival of peripheral nations in the state-building process (Linz 1973). The construction of modern states across Europe shows varying levels of success with respect to building ideas of 'nationhood' that mirror state institutions and territories. State territories in Europe often contained diverse sets of cultures, languages and ethnicities, generating minorities which needed to be 'assimilated' in the service of constructing a homogeneous culture or nation (Linz 1993). While in France peripheral minorities were successfully suppressed in service of a homogeneous and centralised state, it is commonly agreed that Castilians failed to do the same in what became contemporary Spain (Rokkan 1971; Linz 1973).

Despite the violent and repressive attempt made by Franco's dictatorship to assimilate peripheral national identities and institutions, the fall of the authoritarian regime witnessed a dual outcry that demanded both democracy and the recognition of all national identities (Linz 1993). The 1978 Constitution reversed the strong centralism dominant during Franco and acknowledged the pluri-national character of the Spanish state. The creation of the Constitution initiated a process of uneven decentralisation, sustained in a multi-level governance structure and leading, eventually, to a quasi-federal political system (Heller 2002).

The institutional design of the Spanish political system was required to accommodate such structure. It did so by giving an electoral advantage to regional parties, ceding significant portions of the national parliament to them (Beramendi & Maiz 2004). Nonetheless, despite ensuring the representation of regional parties, the district magnitude of the Spanish parliament is sufficiently small to favour large, national-level parties (Hopkin 2005). When the party system is not overly fragmented, as was the case up until 2015, electoral competition boils down to a race between the two largest parties, even if they often need the support of regional parties to form a functioning government.

Certain procedures, such as the relaxation of the Investiture Requirement to a simple majority in the second round (Ajenjo, 2015), allow for the formation of minority governments that have the backing of regional parties.

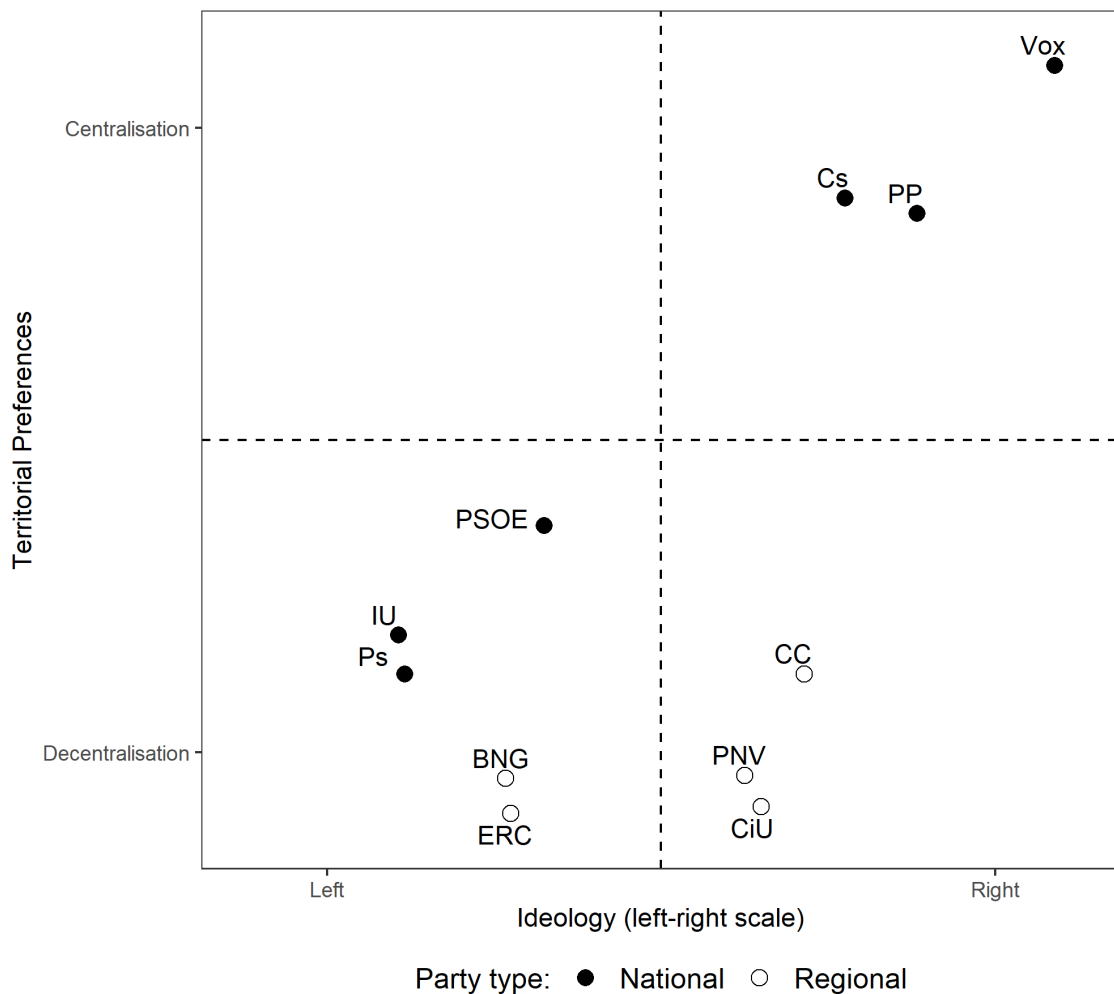
For agenda setting and the approval of legislation, this institutional architecture has two important implications. First, the quasi-majoritarian electoral system encourages ‘election oriented’ policy shifts (Estevez-Abe & Naldini 2016). That is to say, the two largest parties – currently PSOE and PP – have incentives to make specific policy promises that require delivery when they reach power—a fact that explains the ‘fast track’ nature of some of the progressive legislation analysed in this paper. A second consequence of Spain’s political institutional design is the development of a pattern of ‘mutual back-scratching’ between national and regional parties (Field 2009, 2014). That dynamic is the product of, on the one hand, the need for national governments that lack an overall majority to rely on the support of regionally-focused parties and, on the other hand, regional parties’ need for the support of Spain’s largest parties at devolved levels. This has afforded regional parties a strong influence over national politics, which they have used to gain increasing authority over regional policymaking (Heller 2002; Rodríguez-Aguilera 2017).

However, while the principal stance of regional parties in national politics is one of pro-devolution, they also take positions on the major cultural and economic issues that structure left-right political competition (Field & Hamman 2015). As a result, the territorial cleavage adds an additional dimension to the structure of political competition in Spain. In contrast to the religious cleavage, which strongly overlaps with an economic left-right cleavage, the territorial cleavage does not perfectly correlate with left and right ideology. Figure 3 uses expert survey data to show the position of parties in 2019 with respect to both ideological (left-right, 0-10) and territorial dimensions.

The interaction between preferences for decentralisation and ideological position of Spanish parties

The preferences of national level parties with respect to decentralisation largely overlap with their ideological position (see figure 3). However, regional parties share a common preference for decentralisation, while their differences lie mostly on economic

and cultural issues. Regional right-wing parties are also more moderate with respect to the ideological scale than are their national counterparts. As a result, the position of centre- and far-left national parties with respect to the territorial dimension is remarkably close to that of regional-level parties. This creates a political space which incentivises alliances between national left-wing parties and regional-level parties (both left and right). By the same token, the centralised position of right-wing Spanish parties can lead to isolation in terms of potential political coalitions.



2019

Figure 3. Position of parties with respect to left-right and territorial dimensions, 2019. Source: authors' elaboration based on the Chapel Hill Expert Survey, 2019 dataset. Data for CiU from 2014.

The distribution of the Spanish political space according to these two key dimensions – left-right scale and territorial preferences – is consistent throughout the period of Spanish democracy. Maps of the political space for 2006, 2010 and 2014 (which can be seen in figures A2, A3 and A4 in the annexe) demonstrate this consistency, with the lone exception of the arrival of the extreme right party, Vox, in 2013. We have complemented this analysis with data from the Comparative Manifesto Project, which allows us to observe the evolution of the multidimensionality of the party system from the democratic transition to the present day. That database utilises party manifestos to show the proportion of statements that fit into different categories of political positioning,

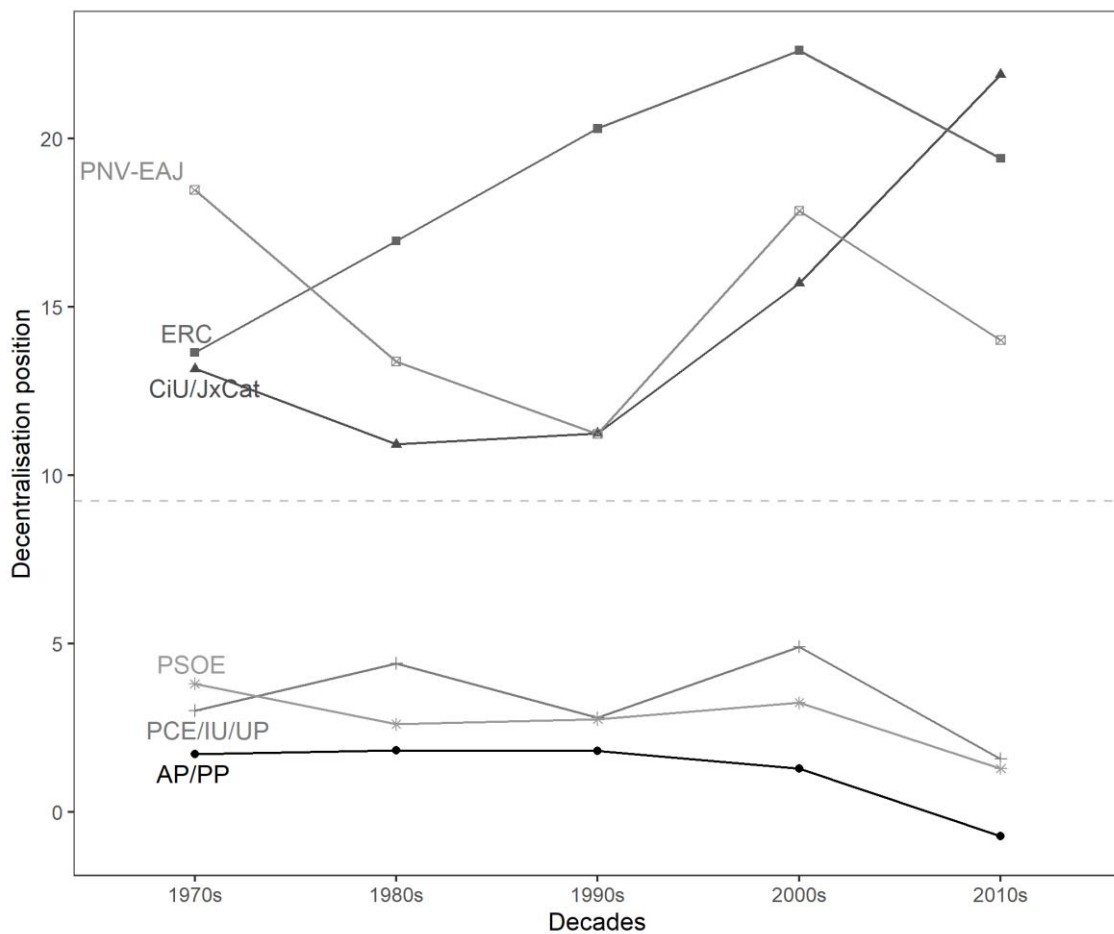


Figure 4. Party position scores on territorial issues, 1975–2019. Source: authors’ elaboration using data from the Comparative Manifesto Project party position scores were calculated by deducting the proportion of statements opposing decentralization from the proportion of those statements advocating for regional autonomy. The dashed horizontal line represents the average of all party position scores.

hence providing data that can be analysed in terms of saliency and position. In this vein, figure 4 shows the average of party positions with respect to decentralisation across time.

The position on decentralisation is derived from the share of statements supporting regional autonomy, minus the share of sentences showing opposition to decentralisation. There is a clear difference between regional- and state-level parties throughout the period. However, when considering the left-right axis, one sees that within each territorial level the left demonstrates a more favourable attitude toward decentralisation than does the right.

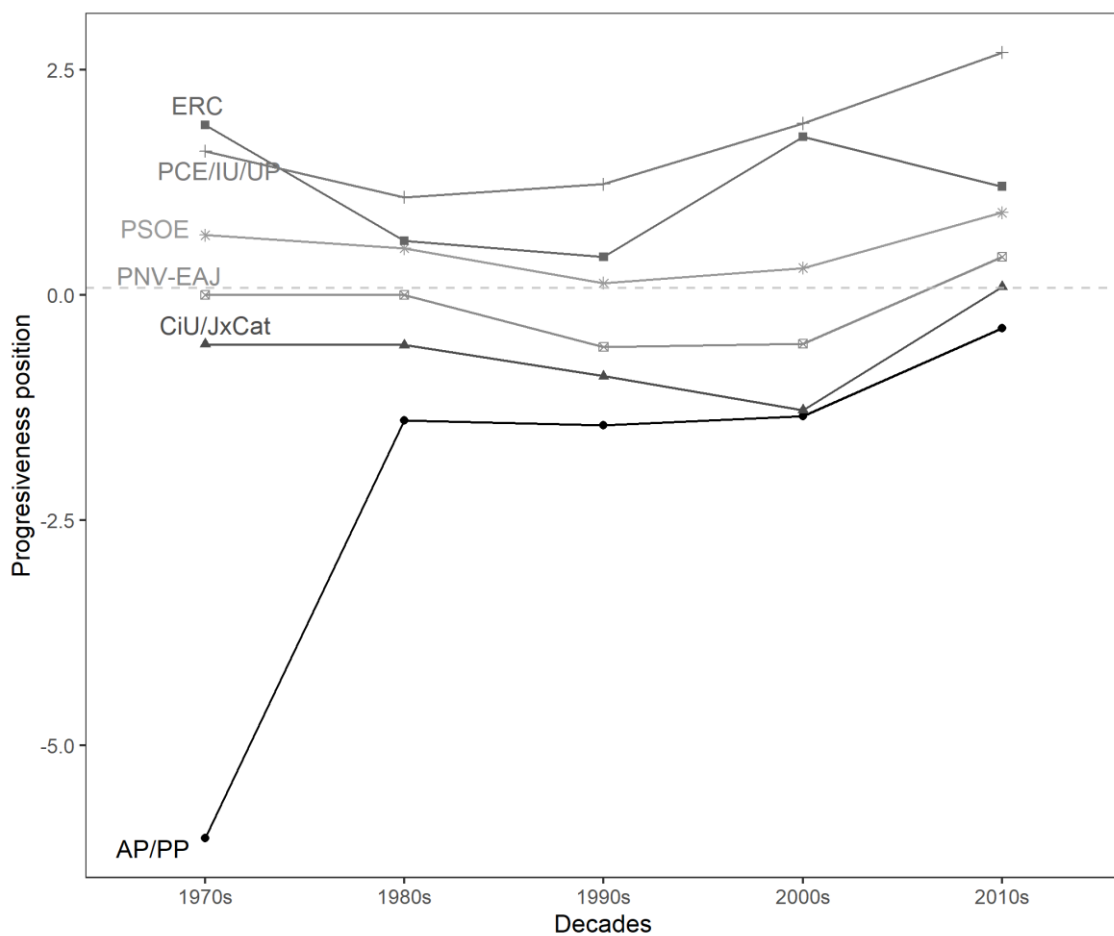


Figure 5. Party position scores on morality issues, 1975–2019. Source: authors’ elaboration using data from the Comparative Manifesto Project party position scores were calculated by deducting the proportion of a party’s manifesto statements supporting progressive morality policies and a state-church division from the proportion of those statements advocating for traditional and religious moral values. The dashed horizontal line represents the average of all party position scores.

In a similar vein, figure 5 shows the party positioning scores on moral and religious issues, which include topics like abortion, family composition and religious institutions. Here too, the differences between parties are maintained throughout the period (1975-2019). In addition, regional right-wing parties show fewer conservative discursive stances than did the national centre-right PP. As a result, there has been a greater ideological closeness between national-level left-wing parties and regional-level parties on both the left *and* the right, than there has been between national right-wing parties and regional parties.

These results resonate with Galais and Serrano's argument that the ideological and centre-periphery cleavages are not just related but in fact have a relationship of dependency (Galais & Serrano 2019). In their comparative study of voter attitudes regarding territorial identification and ideology, Galais and Serrano found that strong regional attachment is associated with a more progressive stance on the left-right axis regardless of individuals' positions on economic and cultural issues. This was especially apparent in countries where regional parties have the capacity to push the territorial dimension onto the national political agenda.

Secularisation and the convergence of left and right on gender equality

Figure 5 also shows a rather sudden jump in the 'progressiveness' position of the national conservative party (AP/PP) from the 70s—a development that we might expect to impact on the party's support for progressive policies. Following the transition to democracy, the conservative party made significant efforts to distance itself from the authoritarian, and strongly Catholic, right-wing Francoist ideology, doing so by adopting a more liberal stance that was closer to those of other centre-right parties in Europe. The change of name from AP to PP in 1989 was a clear signal in this direction.

Key to this modernisation was a profound change with regards the position of women in society (Valiente 1996). The conservative party progressively abandoned more traditional views, shifting to endorse the equal opportunities discourse and principles of gender equality. León et al. have argued that the convergence of the centre-right towards the centre-left on these issues was part of a broader secularisation of politics that explains

a move away from traditional family policy during periods when PP was the ruling party (León et al. 2016). The change in PP's electoral strategy was also driven by demand-side factors, since both centre-right and centre-left parties compete to attract the vote of women—especially those of the highly educated (Schwander 2018; León et al. 2019).

Although beyond the focus of this paper, it is also worth noting that the Spanish party system has been greatly altered since the 2015 general elections. The 2008 economic crisis, and the unpopular austerity measures that followed, generated a political crisis which led to the transformation of the system of bipartidism-plus-regional support that had characterised Spanish democracy up to that point into an increasingly polarised multi-party system (Orriols & Cordero 2016). The creation of Podemos (Ps /UP) increased the relevance of the pre-existing far-left in the Spanish party system, leading to the formation of Spain's first coalition government in 2019. On the other end of the political spectrum, the far-right Vox achieved a presence in the Spanish Parliament in 2018, occupying significantly more extreme positions on both the moral and territorial dimensions than the centre-right PP. This emergence of the far right as a political force may alter the dynamics of party competition in Spain, reinforcing political polarisation to the extent that it prevents the centre-right from joining progressive coalitions (Schwander 2018). In addition, the demands for independence by Catalan regional parties, which became prominent in the early 2010s, may have contributed to an increasing polarisation on the territorial axis that could explain the increasingly centralising positions of national-level parties.

Hypotheses

Bringing together the state-Church conflict and territorial politics

The structure of political competition in Spain may help to illuminate the political processes that have steered the unexpected progressiveness of the country's moral reforms. In other words, that structure may affect how different parties behave in the national parliament with respect to policies with a moral component. Based on the theoretical expectations outlined in the previous sections, we identified three main hypotheses.

First, the intense and longstanding religious cleavage in Spain seems to produce a high-level of moral polarisation, both at the party and voter levels. As a result, party competition across the ideological right-left axis seems to be structured around moral issues to a greater extent than around economic issues (Polk & Rovny 2018). The politicisation of moral and cultural issues may, in turn, incentivise left-wing governments to push them onto the agenda (Engeli et al. 2012; Chaqués & Palau 2012). By the same token, right-wing governments would, in such circumstances, abstain from introducing progressive moral legislation. Such a logic would explain why the introduction of progressive morality policies in Spain has been characterised as happening through ‘waves’ that coincide with left-wing governments (Chaqués & Palau 2012). In addition, the frequency of centre-left governments in Spain would explain the large extent of progressive reforms in comparison with national contexts that are characterised by conservative dominance, like Italy or Germany.

H1: *Progressive moral legislation is only introduced by left governments.*

Second, the historical relevance of peripheral national identities, along with the institutional configuration of the political system, yield a bidimensional political space where the ideological dimension intersects with the territorial cleavage. In this environment, the structure of political preferences might facilitate some political coalitions at the expense of others. Given that the national-level right shows an extreme preference for centralisation and conservative values, while national-level left-wing parties display preferences closer to those of regional-level parties, alliances between the latter seem more likely. Hence, regional conservative parties might support progressive policies despite showing high levels of religiosity and conservative attitudes.

H2: *left and right regional parties support progressive moral legislation introduced by left-wing governments.*

Third, not all morality policies involve the same degree of politicisation. A more explicit or implicit moral character may determine the support or opposition of different political actors. Life and death issues such as abortion or euthanasia relate to basic morality principles which constitute priorities for the agendas of religious groups. In practice, confessional parties and organisations throughout the world actively campaign against abortion and euthanasia (Paternotte & Kuhar 2018). Meanwhile, issues relating to family formation and homosexuality trigger a lower but persistent opposition (Verloo 2018). However, gender equality and gender violence are issues which have achieved greater consensus in western society (Verloo 2018). Besides some Christian organisations such as the World Family Forum or radical right-wing populist parties, it is rare to find mainstream political parties positioning themselves against equality rights or the protection of women against gender violence (Paternotte & Kuhar 2018). Hence, we expect the centre-right to not oppose legislation about gender equality.

H3: *All parties will vote in favour of legislation supporting gender equality.*

Data and methods

Studying parliamentary voting on morality policies in Spain

This paper is concerned with describing and explaining the political processes that have steered the unexpected implementation of progressive reforms with a moral component in Spain. As described by Heichel, Knill and Schmitt (2013), morality policies are generally assumed to refer to decisions and conflicts about societal values (Heichel, Knill & Schmitt 2013). The scope of morality policies is wide-ranging, including issues of life and death such as abortion, euthanasia and stem cell research; sexual behaviour such as homosexuality, prostitution and pornography; addictive behaviour, for example, gambling and drug regulation; and issues referring to basic decisions over the relationship between individual freedoms and collective values, such as religious education or gun control.

Although pro-gender equality legislation is not usually included within the array of morality policies studied in comparative public policy, the comparative welfare state literature does consider family policy and policies that advance the rights of women more generally to express a moral conflict (Manow 2013, p. 99). To the extent that gender equality legislation deals with the regulation of relationships of the private domain, including not just sexuality and biological/social reproduction but also marriage and gender roles, the capacity of countries to pass gender equality legislation largely depends on the strength of the state/Church conflict and the strength of conservative religious forces (Razavi and Jenichen 2016).

In this study we have included as morality policies the following bills: divorce (1981, 2005), abortion (1985, 2010), gender violence (2004), same-sex marriage (2005), gender equality (2007) and euthanasia (2021). We analyse parliamentary voting on a number of major policy reforms from the beginning of contemporary Spanish democracy until 2021. We look at final voting, as it is the procedure through which all parties with representation in parliament support or oppose a proposed law. Bills are approved when they obtain more positive than negative votes, thus making abstention an overall supportive behaviour. In the Spanish Parliament, all parliamentary groups can propose laws, although the one in government is the party most commonly proposing new legislation. Furthermore, there is extended party discipline; that is, all party members must vote the same unless the party explicitly guarantees freedom of vote (Sánchez de Dios 1996).

We primarily rely on voting data from the Spanish Congress of Deputies related to the bills analysed here. For each policy reform we address three dimensions. First, we study the content of the bills in order to identify the direction of the reforms. Following a comparative study conducted by Knill, Preidel and Nebel, we assign a description to each bill, differentiating between permissive and moderate reforms, (Knill, Preidel & Nebel 2014). Second, we record the governing party that proposed the reform. Third, we examine the final vote of each party family; that is, we record if a party has supported the reform through either a positive vote or abstention, or if, on the contrary, it has opposed the reform by voting against it. In this way, we are able to identify the political coalition ensuring the passing of each law.

Alive and polarised: political coalitions over morality issues

As predicted by Hypothesis 1, all of the progressive moral reforms analysed here were proposed by centre-left governments. Reforms have come in several ‘waves’ that correspond to periods when the left was in government, which amounts to a total of 23 out of the 44 years of contemporary democracy (see table 2).

Which political coalitions supported those policies introduced by the left? As hypothesised in H2, the large majority of reforms have been approved by a broad coalition of moderate- and far-left parties of national scope, alongside regional left- and right-wing parties. As explained above, minority governments need the support of other parties in order to pass regulation in parliament, which makes political coalitions essential for the passage of progressive legislation (Field 2014). The only partial exception to this pattern of support from the regional left and right has been the pro-abortion legislation, for which the support of the regional right has been more unstable.

The political struggle between right and left over the issue of abortion has been, and remains, highly contentious. While radical left parties proposed legalising on-demand abortion during the 1980s, the socialist PSOE finally introduced a more limited reform in 1985. The legislation was put forward with the support of left parties, but the right – both national and regional – voted against it. The 1985 reform allowed abortion in public health clinics only on three specific grounds and, at the turn of the century, abortions were mostly practiced in private clinics (Cambronero-Saiz et al. 2007). More than two decades after the initial reform, in 2009, PSOE took a further step and proposed the legalisation of abortion upon request during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, or up to 22 weeks in the case of a health risk. It also enabled women between the ages of 16 and 18 to have an abortion without parental consent. The law came into force in July 2010, after the political coalition expanded to include the conservative Basque PNV and most members of the conservative Catalan nationalist CiU (which granted its representatives a free vote). The reform faced the opposition of PP in Congress, along with the broader opposition of the Catholic Church and associated interest groups. Although PP threatened to repeal the law when they reached power, they have never done so.

Table 2. Support by Spanish party families for national parliamentary legislation with a moral component, 1977 – 2021

Year	Government	Government type	Law	Permissiveness	Vote cast by party family				
					Far-right	Centre-right	Far-left	Regional left	Regional right
1981	Suárez (UCD)	Majority	Divorce (I)	Moderate		-	+	+	+
1985	Gonzalez IV (PSOE)	Minority	Abortion (I)	Moderate		-	+	+	/
2004	Zapatero I (PSOE)	Minority	Gender violence	Permissive		+	+	+	+
2005	Zapatero I (PSOE)	Minority	Same-sex marriage	Permissive		-	+	+	+
2005	Zapatero I (PSOE)	Minority	Divorce (II)	Permissive		+	+	+	+
2007	Zapatero I (PSOE)	Minority	Gender equality	Permissive		+	+	+	+
2010	Zapatero II (PSOE)	Minority	Abortion (II)	Permissive		-	+	+	/
2021	Sánchez II (PSOE)	Minority	Euthanasia	Permissive	-	-	+	+	+

Source: authors' elaboration based on data from the Spanish Congress of Deputies. *Note:* (+) votes in favour or abstention; (-) votes against; (/) divided vote. Regional left includes ERC and BNG, among other minor parties; regional right includes PNV and CiU/JxC.

Legislation surrounding divorce and same-sex marriage have been characterised by similar political coalitions. Divorce was not made legal in Spain until 1981, when the issue still created strong internal division within the right. By the time it was enacted, the law could be considered ‘advanced’ in comparative terms (Knill, Preidel & Nebel 2014), although limits to the right to divorce remained in the form of requirements such as judicial separation and the justification of a year of non-coexistence. These restrictions were abolished by PSOE in the 2005 law, which was approved with broad support and the abstention of PP. The same government introduced the legal right of same-sex couples to get married. This law guaranteed equal rights, which included the right to adoption, making it one of the most permissive regulations in Europe (Chaqués 2012). The Spanish Congress passed the legislation by a large majority comprising a broad coalition of moderate and far left parties of national scope, along with regional left- and right-wing parties. Once again, right-leaning regional parties joined the coalition to support legislation of a notably progressive nature. Even then, PP opposed the legislation and filed an appeal against the law in the Constitutional Court, which was ultimately dismissed.

Similar political alliances were built to legalise euthanasia. In March 2021, the left-wing PSOE-UP coalition government approved the regulation of euthanasia, placing Spain alongside the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxemburg as pioneering countries on the issue within the European Union. The principal requirements for carrying out the right to euthanasia are either a critical and incurable illness with no chance of relief, or a serious, chronic and disabling condition that deprives a person of their physical autonomy. The right can be requested by any person aged 18 or above, and they must do so autonomously, consciously and on a well-informed basis. The law further provides for a Commission of Guarantee and Evaluation and implies the decriminalisation of euthanasic acts from the Spanish penal code. In passing this legislation, left-leaning parties again found support from both left- and right-wing regional nationalist parties. The centre-right Cs (Ciudadanos-Citizens) party also joined the ‘progressive coalition’ on this occasion, while the conservative PP and far-right Vox declared strong opposition and claimed that they would file a constitutional complaint against the law.

With respect to our third hypothesis – that legislation promoting gender equality will be supported by all parties – the Law of Comprehensive Protection Measures Against Gender-Based Violence (2004) and the Gender Equality Act (2007) both gained support from across the Spanish political spectrum, including the conservative PP. The 2004 law addresses preventive, educational, social, welfare, health and criminal aspects of gender-based violence, making it a pioneering law in Europe. While PP adopted a critical discourse with respect to the legislation, it ultimately supported it in parliament. Three years later, the PSOE introduced the so-called Law on Gender Equality, the aim of which was to combat gender discrimination by ensuring equal treatment and opportunities in economic, labour, social, cultural and artistic domains, while also including gender quotas for electoral lists. Although the new norm received near unanimous support in Congress, PP abstained and subsequently appealed against the law at the Constitutional Court due to its disagreement concerning gender quotas.

Conclusion

The evidence presented in this paper shows that progressive alliances over moral issues have been possible in Spain despite a prominent Catholic legacy and persistent moral polarisation. Since the beginning of Spanish democracy, significant progressive moral arguments have been made by the left and have won wide political support in Congress. Our analysis has shown that ideological positions towards moral issues in Spain largely coincide with a broad left-right dimension, where the religiosity of voters carries significant explanatory capacity. As argued in the existing literature, politics matters a great deal when it comes to morality issues in countries with a persistent religious cleavage. Despite a high degree of secularisation since the transition to democracy, a trend especially apparent among conservative voters, differences between right and left persist.

Consistent with Polk and Rovny's findings when examining other Southern European countries (Polk & Rovny 2018), in the Spanish case, the moral dimension generates greater saliency and polarisation between left and right than does the economic dimension. Far from this polarisation leading to a certain laggardness in the introduction of morality policies, however, we agree with the existing studies that argue that precisely

because of the competition between confessional and secular parties over morality issues, secular parties confront their competitors with demands for change (Engeli, Green-Pedersen & Larsen 2012; Chaqués & Palau 2012)

In this respect, we were able to confirm our first hypothesis that progressive moral reforms will have been put forward exclusively by governments of the left. The frequency of left of centre governments in Spanish democracy thus partly explains the country's fast track to morality policies. This observation is insufficient, however. Minority governments in Spain are not uncommon and all of the reforms studied were approved by broad coalitions that involved not only national-level left parties but also both left and right regional parties. In order to fully understand these coalitional dynamics it is necessary to understand how the structure of Spanish political competition has steered the passing of moral legislation.

We have argued that the structure of political competition is especially significant in a multidimensional political space. Specifically, we have attempted to understand the extent to which the interaction between different cleavages that are shaped by the institutional structure of the political system facilitates the formation of the political coalitions that generate seemingly puzzling policy outcomes. Research in this field has usually ignored the territorial cleavage when analysing political competition over non-territorial issues but we argue that it plays a key role. The quasi-majoritarian nature of the Spanish electoral system, together with a number of institutional incentives for negotiations between centre and periphery parties, help to consolidate a powerful progressive alliance on policies with a moral dimension. With respect to our empirical analysis, we were able to confirm our second hypothesis in so far as the large majority of reforms were approved by a broad collection of moderate- and far-left parties of national scope, with the support of regional left- and right-wing parties, coalescing against the state-level conservative party.

Not all morality policies generate the same level of division, however. Whilst the conservatives have voted against pro-abortion, euthanasia and same-sex marriage laws, they have supported gender equality legislation. In the case of the 2004 law against gender violence and the Gender Equality Act, both put forward by PSOE, support in Congress was almost unanimous. All PP members voted in favour of the first and abstained on the

second over disagreement concerning the introduction of compulsory gender quotas. Furthermore, despite voting against PSOE's same-sex marriage and abortion laws of 2005 and 2010 respectively, the conservative PP did not counter-reform either piece of legislation.

Our findings suggest that there is a need for future research to further consider the multidimensionality of party competition when accounting for developments in public and social policy. Besides persistent class and religious divides, other axes of political division may have the potential to determine the formation of the coalitions that lead to policy change. In countries with a pluri-national character, such as Spain, greater consideration should be given to the ways in which territorial politics determine non-territorial politics and policies. Finally, future research will need to assess the extent to which both increasing political fragmentation and the consolidation of the far-right as a political force are transforming the capacity for coalition-building in different policy areas.

Notes

1. Previously named AP (Alianza Popular – People's Alliance).
2. See figure A1 in the annex for a complementary graphic showing the percentage of non-religious or atheist voters.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

The work was supported by the Institució Catalana de Recerca i Estudis Avançats (ICREA ACADEMIA 2018).

ORCID

Margarita León <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9457-5822>

Manuel Alvarinho <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4988-5121>

Llorenç Soler-Buades <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7028-5254>

References

- Ajenjo, N. (2015) ‘Why minority governments in Spain? How the party system undermines investiture rules’ in Rasch, B. Martin, S. and Cheibub, J. A. *Parliaments and Government Formation: Unpacking Investiture Rules*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp. 154-163.
- Biroli, F. & Caminotti, M. (2020) ‘The conservative backlash against gender in Latin America’, *Politics & Gender*, vol. 16, pp. 1-38.
- Budde E.T., Knill C., Fernández-i-Marín, X. & Preidel, C. (2018) ‘A matter of timing: The religious factor and morality policies’, *Governance*, vol. 31, no. 1, pp. 45–63.
- Calkin, S. & Kaminska, M. E. (2020) ‘Persistence and change in morality policy: The role of the Catholic Church in the politics of abortion in Ireland and Poland’, *Feminist Review*, vol. 124, no. 1, pp. 86–102.
- Cambronero-Saiz, B., Ruiz-Cantero, M.T., Vives-Cases, C. & Carrasco Portiño M (2007) ‘El aborto en la España democrática: la agenda política parlamentaria 1979–2004’, *Reproductive Health Matters*, vol. 15, no. 29, pp 85–96
- Chaqués, L & Palau A.M. (2012) ‘From prohibition to permissiveness: a two-wave change on morality issues in Spain’ In: Engeli I et al. (eds.) *Morality Politics in Western Europe*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, pp. 62–87
- De la O, A. & Rodden J.A. (2008) ‘Does religion distract the poor?: Income and issue voting around the world’, *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 41, no. 4-5, pp. 437-476
- Engeli, I., Green-Pedersen, C. & Larsen L.T. (2012) *Morality Politics in Western Europe. Parties, Agendas and Policy Choices*. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingtoke.

- Engeli, I., Green-Pedersen, C. & Larsen, L. T. (2013) 'The puzzle of permissiveness: Understanding policy processes concerning morality issues', *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 20, no. 3, pp. 335–352.
- Esping-Andersen, G. (1990) *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Princeton University Press, Princeton.
- Estevez-Abe, M. & Naldini, M. (2016) 'Politics of defamilialization: A comparison of Italy, Japan, Korea and Spain', *Journal of European Social Policy*, vol. 26 no. 4. pp. 327–343.
- Ferrera, M. (1996) 'The "Southern Model" of welfare in Social Europe', *Journal of European Social Policy*, vol. 6, no. 1. pp. 17–37.
- Field, B.N (2009) 'Minority government and legislative politics in a multilevel state: Spain under Zapatero', *South European Society and Politics*, vol. 14, no. 4, pp. 417–434.
- Field B.N. (2014) 'Minority parliamentary government and multilevel politics: Spain's system of mutual back scratching', *Comparative Politics*, vol. 46, no. 3, pp. 293–312.
- Field B. N. & Hamann, K. (2015) 'Framing legislative bills in parliament: Regionalnationalist parties' strategies in Spain's multinational democracy', *Party Politics*, vol. 2, no. 6, pp. 900–911.
- Fink, S. (2009) 'Churches as societal veto players: religious influence in actor-centred theories of policy-making', *West European Politics*, vol. 32, no. 1, pp. 77–96.
- Flora, P. & Alber, J. (1987) 'Modernization, democratization, and the development of welfare states in Western Europe', In: Flora, P. & Heidenheimer, A. (eds) *The Development of Welfare States in Europe and America*, Routledge, New York, pp. 345-382.
- Galais, C. & Serrano, I. (2019) 'The effects of regional attachment on ideological self-placement: a comparative approach' *Comparative European Politics*, vol. 18, no. 4, pp. 487-509.
- Häusermann, S., Picot, G. & Geering, D. (2013) 'Rethinking party politics and the welfare state - Recent advances in the literature', *British Journal of Political Science*, vol. 43, no. 1, pp. 221–240.

- Heichel, S., Knill, C. & Schmitt, S. (2013) 'Public policy meets morality: conceptual and theoretical challenges in the analysis of morality policy change' *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol 20, no. 1 pp. 318-334.
- Heller, W. B. (2002) 'Regional parties and national politics in Europe: Spain's Estado de las Autonomías 1993 to 2000', *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 35, no. 6, pp. 657–685.
- Hopkin, J. (2001) 'A 'southern model' of electoral mobilization? Clientelism and electoral politics in Spain', *West European Politics*, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 115–136.
- Hopkin, J. (2005) 'Spain: Proportional representation with majoritarian outcomes', In: Gallagher, M. & Mitchell, P. (eds) *The Politics of Electoral Systems*, Oxford University Press, New York, pp 375-394.
- Knill, C., Preidel, C. & Nebel, K. (2014) 'Brake rather than Barrier: the impact of the Catholic Church on morality policies in Western Europe', *West European Politics*, vol. 37, no. 5, pp. 845–866.
- León, M., Young Jun Choi and J-S Ahn (2016) When flexibility meets familialism: two tales of gendered labour markets *Journal of European Social Policy* vol 16, pp. 344-357.
- León, M., Pavolini, E., Miró, J. & Sorrenti, A. (2019) 'Policy change and partisan politics: Understanding family policy differentiation in two similar countries', *Social Politics*, vol. 28, no. 2, pp. 451-476.
- Linz, J. (1973) 'Early state-building and late peripheral nationalisms against the state: the case of Spain', In Rokkan, S. & Eisenstadt S. N. (eds) *Building States and Nations, Analyses by Region*, Sage, Beverly Hills, pp. 32–116.
- Linz, J. (1980) 'Religion and politics in Spain: From conflict to consensus above average' *Social Compass*, vol. 27 (2-3), pp. 255-277.
- Linz (1991) "Church and state in Spain from the civil war to the return of Democracy" in Madeley, John T.S. (Ed.) *Religion and Politics*, Routledge, London and New York, pp. 353-372,
- Linz, J. (1993) 'State building and nation building', *European Review*, vol. 1, no. 4, pp. 355 - 369.

- Lipset S.M. & Rokkan, S. (1967) 'Cleavage structures, party systems, and voter alignments: an introduction', in S.M. Lipset & Rokkan, S. (eds.), *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives*, The Free Press, Toronto, pp. 1–64.
- Louzao Villar, J. (2013) 'Catholicism versus laicism: Culture wars and the making of Catholic national identity in Spain, 1898–1931', *European History Quarterly*, vol. 43, no.4, pp. 657–680.
- Manow, P. (2013) 'Religious cleavages, divisions on the left and the political economy of Southern Europe', *International Journal of Social Quality*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 78–105.
- Manow, P. (2015) 'Workers, farmers and Catholicism: A history of political class coalitions and the south-European welfare state regime', *Journal of European Social Policy*, vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 32–49.
- Manow, P., Palier, B., & Schwander, H. (2018) *Welfare Democracies and Party Politics: Explaining Electoral Dynamics in Times of Changing Welfare Capitalism*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Mikenberg, M. (2002) 'Religion and public policy: institutional, cultural, and political impact on the shaping of abortion policies in Western democracies'. *Comparative Political Studies*, vol. 35, no. 2, pp. 221-247
- Mooney, C. Z. (1999) 'The politics of morality policy: Symposium editor's introduction', *Policy Studies Journal*, Vol. 27, No. 4, pp. 675-680.
- Morgan K. J. (2009) 'The religious foundations of work-family policies in Western Europe' In: van Kersbergen, K. & Manow, P. (eds) *Religion, Class Coalitions, and Welfare States*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 56–90.
- Paternotte, D., & Kuhar, R. (2018) 'Disentangling and locating the “global right”: Anti-gender campaigns in Europe'. *Politics and Governance*, vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 6-19.
- Pavolini, E., Béland, D., & Jawad, R. (2017) Mapping the relationship between religion and social policy. *Journal of International and Comparative Social Policy*, 33(3), 240-260.
- Razavi, S. & Jenichen, A. (2016) 'The unhappy marriage of religion and politics: problems and pitfalls for gender equality' in Silvio, F., & Rinaldo, C. (2016). *Current Issues in Law and Religion: Volume IV* (1st ed.). Routledge, London, pp. 381-399,

- Rodríguez-Aguilera de Prat, C. (2017) *Manual de Partidos Políticos*. Barcelona: Huygens Editorial.
- Rovny, J. (2014) 'Communism, federalism, and ethnic minorities: explaining party competition patterns in Easter Europe' *World Politics* vol.66, pp.669-708
- Rovny, J. & Polk, J. (2019) 'New wine in old bottles: Explaining the dimensional structure of European party systems, *Party Politics*, vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 12–24.
- Rovny, J. & Polk, J. (2018) 'Welfare democracies and multidimensional party competition in Europe', in: Manow, P., Palier, B. & Schwander, H. (eds) *Welfare Democracies and Party Politics: Explaining Electoral Dynamics in Times of Changing Welfare Capitalism*. Oxford Scholarship Online, Oxford, pp. 29-60.
- Sánchez de Dios, M. (1996) 'La disciplina de partido en los grupos parlamentarios del Congreso de los Diputados'. *Revista de las Cortes Generales*, 183-210.
- Stegmueller, D. (2013) Religion and redistributive voting in Western Europe. *The Journal of Politics* vol. 75, no. 4, pp. 1064–1076.
- Van Kersbergen, K. (1995) *Social Capitalism*. London: Routledge.
- Van Oorschot, W. (2006) 'Making the difference in social Europe: deservingness perceptions among citizens of European welfare states', *Journal of European Social Policy*, vol. 16, no. 1, pp. 23–42.
- Verloo, M. (Ed.). (2018) *Varieties of Opposition to Gender Equality in Europe*. Routledge, New York.
- Watson, S. (2008) 'The left divided: Parties, unions, and the resolution of southern Spain's agrarian social question', *Politics and Society*, vol. 36, no. 4, pp. 451–477.
- Wilensky, H. (1987) 'Leftism, Catholicism, and democratic corporatism: The role of political parties in recent welfare state development' In: Flora, P. & Heidenheimer, A. (eds) *The Development of Welfare States in Europe and America*, Routledge, New York, pp. 37-80.

Authors' biographies

Margarita León (BA, MA, PhD London School of Economics (UK, 2000) is Associate professor of Political Science at the Universitat Autònoma Barcelona (UAB). Between 2010 and 2015 she was a 'Ramón y Cajal' Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Government and Public Policies of the same university. From 2003 until 2010 she was lecturer in European social policy, University of Kent. She has been Marie Curie postdoctoral research at the European University Institute in Florence (2001-03) and a Fulbright Visiting Scholar at University of Berkeley, California (2018). Her main areas of research are comparative social policy and welfare state reform. She has published in numerous international peer-reviewed scientific journals; co-edited with A. Guillén *The Spanish Welfare State in European Context* (2011, Ashgate) and edited *The Transformation of Care in European Societies* (2014, Palgrave). In 2018 she was awarded ICREA ACADEMIA for excellence in research.

Manuel Alvariño is a pre-doctoral researcher at the European University Institute (EUI). He participates in WellSIRE and EUROSHIP research projects. He holds a BA in Philosophy, Politics and Economics and an MA in Political Economy. His work focuses on the comparative politics and outcomes of Work-life balance policies in Europe.

Llorenç Soler-Buades is a pre-doctoral researcher at the Institute of Government and Public Policy (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona). He is involved in the EUROSHIP project, which investigates current gaps in social protection against poverty and social exclusion in Europe. He holds a BA in Political Science and Public Administration and a MA in Social Policy, Employment and Welfare. His research interests include comparative social policy and minimum income