

Regionalism after regionalisation: Regional identities, political space and political mobilisation in Galicia, Brittany and Wales.

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Abstract

Many States have introduced regional layers of government, often as a response to demands for autonomy made by nationalist or regionalist movements. Although regional autonomy is often presented as a way to accommodate ethnoterritorial conflict, and both regionalism and regionalisation have been important research themes over the past decades, empirical research on the effects of those decisions is sparse. This paper analyses the aspects of regional autonomy that affect regionalist politics through a comparison of three regions in European States where relatively recently regional autonomy was introduced: Galicia, Brittany and Wales. The states they are part of, Spain, France and the United Kingdom, introduced regionalisation in different ways: in degrees of regional autonomy, asymmetry between regions, and consideration of historical and cultural territories. This paper concentrates on the development of regionalism within the political parties within the three regions mentioned. It discusses trends after regionalisation in the representation of and utilisation of regional identities in political discourses, ideological developments, particularly on the issue of regional autonomy, and reactions to the political opportunities for mobilising support offered by the introduction of a regional political space after regionalisation. The paper analyses those elements with respect to regionalist parties, but also for regional sections of statewide political parties, which will be affected by regionalisation as well. The paper concludes with a discussion of the effectiveness of regional autonomy as a means to accommodate regionalist and nationalist conflict.

Keywords: political geography, regionalism, Galicia, Brittany, Wales, regional autonomy

Over the past decades nearly all States of Western Europe introduced administrative or political regions, to the point that by now only Luxembourg goes without some form of regional government. This ‘wave’ of regionalisation happened at about the same time of the emergence of the European level as a more mature level of administration and politics, next to that of the State. One can find many explanations of this contemporary process of regionalisation, ranging from urbanisation and the efficiency of public service provision (Bennett, 1989) via ideological motivations related to democratisation or sectional interests of political actors at the centre or at the periphery (Sharpe, 1993), to the influence of globalisation (Ohmae, 1996) and European integration (Bullmann, 1997), or simply because it has been the current fashion of government (Loughlin & Peters, 1997, p.42). Whatever the explanation or argumentation, whenever a regionalisation scheme is in any way connected to a

conflict between regionalism and national unity¹, that tends to be the issue that dominates the public and political debate. If so, promises that regional autonomy will bring an end to regionalism and separatism are matched by warnings or hopes that it will only push the country onto a 'slippery slope' leading to fragmentation of the state and will be threat to national unity. Perhaps surprisingly, there have been such heated and polarised debates in States that in other ways have very different approaches of regional identities, cultural plurality and sub-national autonomy as Spain, France and the United Kingdom. The post-Franco regionalisation of Spain, François Mitterand's decentralisation, and Tony Blair's devolution all gave rise to very similar sounding disputes.

Numerous studies present regional autonomy as an attractive way to resolve ethnoterritorial conflicts (e.g. Gurr, 1994, Lapidoth, 1997, McGarry & O'Leary, 1993). As argued by Bogdanor (1999), recognition and institutionalisation of 'the distinctive qualities of the separate parts' (p.194) of a country may diminish the support for full independence, thus actually strengthening the state. General satisfaction with the autonomy obtained, increased loyalty to the state because of concrete formal relations between state and region, and a division within the regionalist movements are seen to play a role in isolating extremists and strengthening the position of regions as integral parts of the existing state (Bogdanor, 1999). Others have stated that the drawing of boundaries and creation of political and administrative institutions will not only accommodate regionalist claims, but will also stimulate the consciousness of regional distinctiveness and help to legitimise autonomist movements (Giordano, 2000, Keating, 1998, p.80, Roessingh, 1996).

The idea of regional distinctiveness or the existence of a collective identity, connected to the political expression of regional interests is central to the emergence of a regionalist movement (Máiz, 2003, Schrijver, 2004). It requires the combination of the construction and maintenance of a regional imagined community and the politicisation and mobilisation of its members (Van der Wusten & Knippenberg, 2001). Kaplan (1999) notes that a national identity 'is situated within a hierarchy of geographically based identities that coexist and sometimes compete with it'. Not only that, but 'national identity has emerged as the single most significant' of the several scales of identity between 'global community' and individual (p.31). Regionalism signals the presence of such competing identities. Regionalisation as a response to a regionalist political project, marks the end of one episode of regionalist politics (Van der Wusten & Knippenberg, 2001), but at the same time sets the institutional conditions for the next round. The first section of this paper looks into the construction of a regional identity as a prerequisite of regionalism after regionalisation. The second part describes the ways in which the introduction of regionalisation changes the political opportunities to mobilise support and politicise regional identities.

This paper presents a comparison of three regions in three States where regional governments have been introduced, Galicia in Spain, Brittany in France, and

¹ While recognising that the terms 'region' and 'nation' have different meanings in different contexts, in this paper 'nation' refers to the level of the State, and 'region' or 'regionalism' to the sub-state level. Some of the movements for which the term 'regionalist' is used here label themselves as 'nationalists', and the term 'nation' is used in colloquial speech for the regions I describe here, although not to the same degree: for Wales universally, for Galicia this is contested, and for Brittany only by those in favour of Breton independence. This reflects differences of definition of the concept of nation in colloquial and parts of academic use in the United Kingdom, Spain and France, as well as differences in demands for independent statehood in those regions.

Wales in the United Kingdom². Regionalisation is not put through in the same way and with the same motivations in every instance, and this can be related to enduring differences in political contexts between different states, or differences between different state traditions (Loughlin & Peters, 1997). In France regionalisation was put through in the early 1980s, motivated mostly by functional, technocratic arguments, in a standardised and hierarchical way, with all regions obtaining the same powers, as part of a structure with several spatial levels of administration, and with the idea of the one and indivisible republic as background, limiting the level of autonomy, and ignoring as much as possible territorial claims based on cultural or historical distinctiveness. In Spain, in line with the ‘Germanic state tradition’ (Loughlin & Peters, 1997) regionalisation was part of a transition to democracy after authoritarian rule, and produced a (quasi-) federal structure. Regional autonomy was introduced in the early 1980s after the rule of Franco, and as centralisation and oppression of regional cultures was associated with Francoism, much consideration was given to the demands of regions like the Basque Country and Catalonia, with as result an asymmetrical structure with a special status for the three regions recognised as ‘historical nationalities’, the Basque Country, Catalonia and Galicia. In the United Kingdom regionalisation was put through with a pragmatic, case-by-case approach with high tolerance for administrative anomalies and cultural pluralism. As a result the levels of autonomy were largely determined by public demand, resulting in a highly asymmetrical structure with a Parliament with primary legislative powers in Scotland, an Assembly with secondary legislative powers, and unelected councils of deconcentrated administration in the English regions.

The three regions selected for this comparison have been picked because of a number of similarities before regionalisation: Galicia, Brittany, and Wales are regions with a particular recognised cultural and historical distinctiveness, and also had (small) regionalist movements prior to regionalisation, and regional cultural organisations, mainly focusing on the regional languages, Galego, Breton (and Gallo), and Welsh respectively. They did obtain some form of regional autonomy, and regionalist demands from those regions were a reason for this, although the regionalisation of the State was much more a response to conflicts in other areas (the Basque Country, Catalonia, Corsica, Scotland, Northern Ireland). They are also alike in a number of other ways: they are of similar size (both in terms of population and geographically), are relatively poor regions within their state, and peripherally located.

Regional identity and identification

The term regional identity may refer to an identity of an area or of a group of people, like the term nation, but also to the identity or identities of individuals who belong to such a group or are related to the area. As the term identity sometimes is regarded as static, whereas those identities can be changeable and may overlap with other identities, the term regional identity leaves a lot to be explained. In this respect, Paasi (1986, 1996) makes a distinction between the regional consciousness of inhabitants and the identity of a region. By employing the term regional consciousness attention

² This paper is empirically based on survey data from Galicia, Brittany and Wales, and fieldwork in those three regions. Relevant surveys have been held since regionalisation in those regions by the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, Observatoire Interrégional du Politique and the National Centre for Social Research respectively. Fieldwork included interviews with representatives of political parties, regional administration and regionalist movements, and analysis of regional and national newspapers and political party programmes.

is focused on the practices of individuals, on identification with a region as something which may change over time and can coincide with identification with other groups or places. As regionalism challenges the political power of the State and the cultural homogeneity of the nation-state, it is particularly fruitful to look into the coexistence of regional and national identification. Brittany, Galicia and Wales are regions where most inhabitants identify with their region as well as with the State. Only in Wales there is a considerable percentage considering themselves as Welsh and not as British at all, while in Brittany this category is almost non-existent.

Table 1 Identification with region and State of inhabitants of three regions

	Galicia, 2002	Brittany, 2001	Wales, 2003
Regional*, not national**	7	2	21
More regional than national	25	15	27
Equally regional and national	58	57	29
More national than regional	4	17	8
National only	5	8	9
Other/NA	1	2	6
Total	100	100	100
N	606	1007	988

Sources: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 2002, Cole, 2004a, Jones *et al*, 2004.

* Galician, Breton, Welsh.

** Spanish, French, British.

But did those regional, and national, consciousnesses change after administrative regionalisation? According to those surveys, which were held at several moments since regionalisation (see appendix), not much, at least not when making people choose between a region, nation or both. In Galicia and Wales there has been no significant increase in the proportion of people identifying themselves as Galician or Welsh, whether in combination with a Spanish or British identity or not. It should be noted that most people already did consider themselves Welsh or Galician earlier, but there has not been a trend towards a stronger or more exclusive Galician or Welsh identification. On the other hand, there has been no strengthening of the identification with the State either; people within those regions that did not regard themselves as Spanish or British at all before were not stimulated to do so after the State had been willing to grant their region some form of autonomy within the State. Only in Brittany, with a differently posed question, did the attachment to the region become relatively more important, although not at the cost of the nation, but of the municipality. The continued prominence of France as source of identification was already shown in table 1. So, the degree of identification of inhabitants of those regions with their region and/or State did not change after regionalisation, but that does not mean their collective regional identity did not change.

Not only the individual identification of people can change, although as shown above those can be rather stable as well while institutional contexts change, the identity of the region as an area or the group identity of a regional community may change as well. Paasi (1986, 2002) distinguishes three simultaneous processes through which regions ‘come into being’: the emergence of a territorial shape, a symbolic shape and an institutional shape. The regions Brittany, Galicia and Wales already existed in different ways before they became administrative regions, but those three processes are just as good a guidance to study the changes in the identities in already existing regions. As the boundaries of an administrative region are fixed (although not necessarily uncontested), while the territorial shape of other regions may be vague, administrative regionalisation is likely to affect those regions’ territorial shape. The

boundaries chosen for the administrative region may include areas which are not part of the region in other contexts, or parts of the region's territory as it used to be understood may be left out of the administrative region's territory.

In only one of the three regions are the boundaries of the administrative region contested. Administrative Brittany does not include the *département* Loire-Atlantique of Nantes, which used to be part of the historical Duchy and province Brittany, and is today still regarded as part of Brittany in all but administrative contexts. This is not a reflection of an ideological choice to split up the territories of rebellious regions, but of a functionalist approach striving for regions of a similar size, centred around urban centres (Rennes and Brest, Nantes and Angers). Unlike expected, with the functioning over nearly 20 years of the administrative region without Loire-Atlantique, the new territorial shape has not been more generally accepted. Opinion polls show persistent majority preferences for 'reunification' in administrative Brittany and in Loire-Atlantique³, and this has remained a major campaigning topic of Breton regionalist movements.

In Wales and Galicia the administrative territories coincided with what were already most commonly seen as the historical boundaries, and the regional territories are uncontested and widely recognised. This does not mean that the territorial shape of those regions did not change after regionalisation if we take internal territorial divisions into account. In Wales there is a clear distinction between the Welsh-speaking, rural Northwest of Wales, and the relatively 'anglicised' industrial Southeast. Although it did not touch upon debates about the external boundaries of Wales, the Northwest was regarded in a number of ways as 'more Welsh' than the Southeast. Although this is still the case to a certain degree, regionalisation has confirmed 'welshness' of other parts of Wales, with a focus of all political parties on both parts of the region, with bilingual road signs in the whole of Wales, whether anyone speaks Welsh or not, and with the general acceptance of Cardiff, in the South, as regional capital. In Brittany there is a similar internal division, with a traditionally Breton-speaking West, which was regarded as 'more Breton' than the Eastern part. Galicia has, like most areas, internal differences – urban vs. rural, mountainous vs. coastal, etc – but no part is considered more Galician than the other. The regional language has no historical or contemporary strongholds, and neither do the regionalist parties.

Although Brittany, Galicia and Wales already carried those names before regionalisation, they all have a different name in their regional language as well. 'Breizh', 'Galiza' and 'Cymru' are not just used as translations parallel to the other names, but have carry particular meanings as territorial symbols. Certainly in a French, Spanish or English language context the usage of those names stresses regional distinctiveness, and for that reason they are used by regionalist movements. Of the new regional authorities created by regionalisation, only the Welsh uses 'Cymru' as well as 'Wales', in line with a strictly adopted formal bilingualism. For instance, the Welsh Assembly has two websites: www.wales.gov.uk and www.cymru.gov.uk. In general, the Welsh Assembly has adopted previously existing symbols of Wales, like the flag, anthem and patron saint, and has used them in its new logos. The same applies for Galicia, dressing its publications and events up with the historical Galician flag, hymn or emblem from the start. In this way a historical continuity is created between the present autonomous region and predecessors in the

³ For instance according to a 2000 opinion poll by CSA 71% of the inhabitants of Loire-Atlantique, and 65 % of those living in administrative Brittany was in favour of 'reunification'.

past. Some of those territorial symbols, like an anthem, flag, or in the case of Wales a Welsh rugby and football team, are sometimes presented not just as co-existing next to similar symbols of the State, but on a par with them and with the anthems, flags, etc. of other nations, and therefore in potential conflict with them. An example of this role of regional symbols that emerged after regionalisation is that of visits of the regional heads of governments abroad. When the president of the Breton, Galician or Welsh government visits another State, the respective anthems are sung, and for instance the Galician flag flies next to that of Argentina, the region obtains a statelike status.

Although the new regional administration itself is a major institution in the construction of a regional identity, I have selected two other types of institutions to take a look into the development of the 'institutional shape' of regions after regionalisation, mass media and (regional) language, both particularly relevant to regionalist politics. All three regions have regional newspapers, and in Brittany and Galicia those are (by far) the most popular newspapers. In Wales the British newspapers, especially the tabloids, are dominant. Regional newspapers obviously bring regional news, but the regional scope differs and changes. Newspapers can concentrate on reporting events happening in a particular place, but can also present general reports highlighting a regional dimension. When general statistics are presented for the region only, or the weather is predicted using a map of the region, instead of the state or any other territory, this adds to the maintenance of a regional identity. Regionalisation has offered opportunities for regional media to bring news on politics and policy with a regional dimension, and in Galicia and Wales they have done so increasingly. In those regions there has been an increase after regionalisation in highlighting the Welsh or Galician dimension of certain events, sometimes not directly related to the region, such as EU enlargement or the war in Iraq. Also, the emergence of new regional media was directly related to regionalisation. In Wales the introduction of a regional Assembly inspired two British tabloids to introduce Welsh editions like already existed for Scotland (although focusing more on Welsh sport and gossip than politics). In Galicia the regional government itself was involved in the foundation and funding of a regional television station. In Brittany regionalisation altered the regional media landscape much less. The existing regional newspapers focused more on other territories, smaller (the *départements*) or larger (the 'Grand Ouest') than Brittany, and this did not change after regionalisation. So in fact there was no Breton newspaper as such to pick up on the new news context after regionalisation. The form of regionalisation in France played a role as well, with the *départements* keeping their powers, and the *région* remaining more an administrative than a political entity.

As regional language policy is mostly a policy field which is (partly) transferred to the regions, regionalisation can make a significant impact on a regional language. The sociolinguistic situation in Galicia differs from that in Brittany and Wales. In Galicia almost everybody speaks Galego – about 90 % of the population, and even more are able to understand it. Because it is regarded like a regional symbol, but also because oppression of regional languages remains highly associated with the Franco regime, stimulation of the regional language has become the norm in regional politics. In education the regional governments introduced Galego as a compulsory subject and the possibility to use it as vernacular for the teaching of other courses. The regional administration itself adopted Galego as its first working language, in debates as well as in communication with its citizens. Because virtually everyone is able to speak and understand Galego, there has not been much resistance to those policies.

They have, however changed the social status of Galego, which usage tended to be restricted to the family and other informal applications, but has since regionalisation become a formal language as well.

In Wales and Brittany the regional language is spoken much less, but nevertheless there has been a linguistic policy aimed at bilingualism in Wales since the 1980s. Most measures, such as the founding of a regional language television station, co-official status of Welsh, and the language as a compulsory subject at schools, predate regionalisation, but the regional government has certainly continued this approach. The Welsh Assembly operates formally in two languages, with live translations in debates and all publications in two languages, but in practice English is dominant. Also, there is considerable popular opposition, not against the idea of preserving the regional language, but against compulsory subjects in education and giving priority in employing Welsh speakers (Cole & Williams, 2004). In Brittany, the leeway for the regional council to pursue a Breton linguistic policy is restricted by the French constitution, which establishes French as the only language of public services. The regional council has taken a positive stance towards Breton, but mostly as regional heritage, not with attempts to promote a bilingual regional administration or education⁴. Although, like in Wales, Breton as a regional symbol and heritage worth protecting is widely shared, there is just as much opposition against policies that would go beyond facilitating people who wish to use Breton to do so.

Regionalist politics

Neither the development of a region's identity nor the role the region plays in the identification of individuals with different territories is directly translated into votes for regionalist movements, or legitimacy of a regional autonomy arrangement. Questions about preferences for the level of autonomy of the state reflect the legitimacy of the powers already transferred to the regions, as well as the public support for regionalist (or centralist) proposals (see table 2). In all three regions there is huge support for some form of regional autonomy. This has not always been the case; in Wales for instance 49.9% of those who voted said no to devolution in the 1997 referendum. In none of those regions did regionalisation bring about a large or increased support for full independence. Independence is clearly more popular in Wales than in the other regions, but the support for independence did not grow since regionalisation, although it did not decrease either. However, in all three regions there is majority support for giving the region more powers, although only barely so in Brittany. In Wales and Galicia there has been a clear increase in the support for further autonomy, and at the same time a declining support for centralisation. The latter means a more general acceptance of regional autonomy as it was introduced, and an increased legitimacy of a regional government and assembly. The fact that in both regions referenda were held to decide whether or not regional autonomy would be introduced may have supported the legitimacy of the regional institutions. At the same time, the increase in demand for more far-reaching autonomy arrangements like

⁴ This applies even more to the view of the Breton Regional Council on the other regional language of Brittany, Gallo. Whereas Breton is one of a group of Celtic languages, and evidently very distinct from French, Gallo is very close to standard French, and most often referred to as a 'patois' or dialect (Le Coadic, 1998). Movements for the defence of Gallo as a regional language do exist, but at a small scale. Both regional languages, Breton and Gallo have different symbolic functions, attached to different territories; historically Gallo is only spoken in eastern Brittany, and Breton in the western part of the region, but Breton is recognised as regional symbol for the whole region by most of its inhabitants, whereas Gallo is not.

federalisation or a legislative parliament show that satisfaction with the regional autonomy offered actually decreased over time, at least in Galicia and Wales. The survey data for Brittany do not allow any conclusions on a growth in support for regionalisation, but there's no sign of a decline either. So, while regionalisation did not change the popular support for independence, it did not 'satisfy' demands for more autonomy, on the contrary, in Galicia and Wales such demands became more popular after regionalisation.

Table 2 Preferences for organisation of the State, %

	Galicia, 2002	Brittany, 2001	Wales, 2003
Centralised State	7	2	20
Autonomous regions as actually	53	44	25
Enlarged regional autonomy	27	46	36
Independence*	3	-	13
NA	10	9	5
Total	100	100	100
N	606	1007	988

Source: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 2002, Cole 2004, Jones *et al*, 2004.

* This category was formulated differently in each region: In Galicia as 'the right to independence', which produced a result very similar to asking people directly whether they were in favour of full independence of Galicia. In Brittany this was formulated as 'Brittany should become autonomous', which is not the same as independence; this category is therefore merged with the one of 'enlarged autonomy'. In Wales there were two separate responses, independent separate from the UK and EU, or independent but part of the EU. Both categories are merged here; the support for 'autonomy' in Brittany was 12 %, the support in Wales for independence outside the EU 6 % and inside the EU 7 %.

To what degree regionalisation offers new opportunities for regionalist movements, or any political group, to mobilise support or pursue a political project will depend on how much there is a separate regional political arena emerging. According to Michael Keating (1997, p.390) "a region is a political space when it provides an arena for political debate, a frame for judging issues and proposals, and a space recognised by actors as the level where decisions may legitimately be taken". One standard indicator of the importance and legitimacy of elections and a level of administration is the turnout at elections. In all three regions turnout at regional elections has been lower than at national elections, although not as low as for European elections. Especially in Wales the abstention rates at regional elections are very high.

As abstention depends on a lot of other factors as well, much more interesting is the focus of regional election campaigns. In Wales and Galicia, regional elections are mostly occasions for debate on regional issues, and national or local considerations are of minor importance. In Brittany, like in the other French regions, regional elections appear to be in the first place a national event – a mid-term test for the national government – and at the same time a focus on representing the interests of the *départements* in the regional council. So attention is divided over territories at three spatial levels – national, regional and local (*départements*), instead of predominantly on the region.

Related to this is the regionalisation of political party organisations. As mentioned, all French political parties (apart from the Greens) have departemental federations as basic building blocks in their organisations. Since regionalisation, with the need to draft regional election manifestos and come up with regional policies, all political parties in Brittany created a regional organisation, but all of them remained ad hoc coordinating bodies and platforms of discussion between party executives,

without permanent offices, and formalised links with the national party or the party members. In Galicia and Wales after regionalisation regional sections of statewide parties developed increasingly into semi-independent political parties, with their own professional organisations.

Whereas people may say yes or no to a particular issue, such as regional autonomy, in a survey, at elections voters have to balance their preferences on several issues and prioritise. The three regions of our comparison have all for a long time been characterised by the electoral dominance of one hegemonic political party: centre-right *RPR-UDF* coalitions in Brittany, the conservative *Partido Popular* (earlier *Alianza Popular*) in Galicia, and the *Labour Party* in Wales. At the moment of regionalisation, the main rivals within the region, at statewide elections or at the first regional elections, were the parties that were their main opponent in the national political arena as well: the French *Parti Socialiste*, Spanish *PSOE*, and the *Conservatives* respectively. The three main regionalist parties, the *Union Démocratique Bretonne* (UDB), *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* (BNG), and *Plaid Cymru* were still very small parties before regionalisation, getting respectively 2%, 6%, and 9% of the votes at general elections. In Brittany and Galicia there were a couple of other regionalist parties as well, all marginal. In Galicia and Wales, after the introduction of regional elections regional parties became much more important. Both *BNG* and *Plaid Cymru* rose to getting 20 to 30% of the votes at regional elections, with considerable increases in popularity at national elections as well. Both parties have become the second largest party within their region after regionalisation. While regional elections facilitated the electoral maturation of *BNG* and *Plaid Cymru*, nothing of the sort happened in Brittany. *UDB* kept getting the same sort of scores at regional elections as it had had at *législatives* earlier, 2 to 3%. Its focus on regional elections even meant that it participated less consistently at national elections, and with changeable results. Only in 2004 *UDB* made a significant improvement in the form of obtaining for the first time seats in the *Conseil Régional*. However, we do not know whether this was because more voters were attracted to the *UDB*, or because they did well in joining an electoral coalition as a junior partner of *Les Verts*; the Greens got 7 seats out of the deal, *UDB* just 3. In short, no Breton party profited from regionalisation like *Plaid Cymru* and *BNG* did.

As regional autonomy, in whatever concrete demands it is put, is one of the core objectives of regionalist parties. Regionalisation therefore means that the main goal of a regionalist party is at least partly fulfilled. In Brittany, Galicia and Wales the level of autonomy after regionalisation fell well short of the objectives of the *UDB*, *BNG* and *Plaid Cymru* at the time. None of those was a clear separatist party, aiming at full independence, although the *BNG* came close, demanding national '*autodeterminación*' (self-determination), and leaving independence as final option open. *UDB* and *Plaid Cymru* avoided the term independence, as this was not very popular with voters. The moment of regionalisation has been a moment to review the parties' objectives. Not just because part of their demands are met, and the party's ideology needs to be 'updated' afterwards, but also because the introduction of regional elections and a regional political arena means a changed political infrastructure and changed opportunities or incentives to mobilise support.

When looking at the political programmes presented by *BNG* at general and regional elections since 1981, there is a clear trend of moderation of claims and proposals (Schrijver, forthcoming). The assertion that Galicia is a nation has remained omnipresent over the years, but the consequences of this for the political proposals changed. The emphasis on self-determination and national sovereignty disappeared,

together with the total rejection of the Spanish State, the Constitution and the Autonomy Statute. The *BNG* now aims at the construction of a 'plurinational State'. At the same time, *BNG* has also drastically moderated its position on a right-left scale. From its roots as a Marxist-leninist party in the 1960s and 70s, *BNG* drew gradually towards the political centre during the 1980s and 1990s, and can now be regarded as a catch-all party of the centre-left. According to Barreiro Rivas (2003) these ideological moderations have been largely the result of strategic choices. The main background to such choices has been the changed situation after the introduction of a regional level of government, and more specifically, of elections at the regional level. The most drastic change of strategy was made at the *BNG* assembly of 1982 -one year after regionalisation - to completely abandon the idea to create an independent Galician State, and to form instead a valid instrument to compete electorally and politically in autonomous Galicia.

In Wales, the reaction of Plaid Cymru to regionalisation was initially very similar. With the opportunity to gain seats in the whole of Wales under proportional representation, instead of just a few seats representing Northwestern constituencies in Westminster, *Plaid Cymru* had opportunities to gain seats in the more 'anglicised' Southeast. To do this, the party chose to focus less on its traditional issues, regional autonomy and the Welsh language, and more on bread-and-butter topics in an attempt to attract more voters. An illustration of this move was the change of its formal part name to the bilingual '*Plaid Cymru – the Party of Wales*', instead of just the Welsh version. An additional reason to shelve demands for enlarging autonomy right away was the flimsy majority by which the Welsh Assembly was approved of in the referendum, 50.1 %; it was thought better to 'make the Assembly work' first to prove its value (McAllister, 2003). However, this did not prevent internal debates over more fundamental adaptations to its ideology and objectives, and in 2003, four years after regionalisation, *Plaid Cymru* declared full independence for Wales (with the addition 'in Europe') as its final goal. This was a big step, as the party had avoided what became known as the 'i-word' in the past. The main reasons for this move were the fact that the other, British parties had embraced regional autonomy, and even came up with plans for more autonomy, the increased criticism as the party became more important and professional in the new Assembly of what was branded as 'vague' objectives, and discontent of the party membership over the Party's strategy to focus less on what was thought as its core-issues, autonomy and language.

The *UDB* is the largest Breton political party, and the only regionalist party in the region that has consistently participated in elections over the past decades. Since the 1970s the constitutional objective of the *UDB* has not changed, and the same term has been used consistently: '*autonomie régionale*'. Regional autonomy, with a Breton directly elected assembly with legislative powers, was the demand in its political programme written in 1977, and is the *UDB*'s objective more than 25 years later. In an attempt to avoid any confusion with separatism, *UDB* does not speak of a Breton nation, but prefers the term '*peuple*' or '*pays*', as *nation* would be associated in France with the State and sovereignty. What did change in the 1980s, at the time of regionalisation, was the context in which regional autonomy was presented and the arguments used by the *UDB* to legitimate it. This coincided with an ideological shift from Marxism to a European federalist and ecologist position. The main reason for this shift was that the arguments and phrases of the 1970s ('*Bretagne = Colonie*') had lost their appeal, and new developments like European integration and ecologist politics became more popular, in Brittany, in France and in the whole of Europe

(Monnier, 1998). Regionalisation made much less impact on the *UDB*'s objectives and strategies.

Regionalisation does not only mean a new political context for regionalist political parties, but for regional sections the statewide parties as well. As regionalist parties are, by definition, already focused on the region, the adaptation for the French, Spanish and British parties may have been an even greater challenge. In terms of organisation regionalisation stimulated a number of changes, as described above, with the development of more independently operating regional organisations (in Galicia and Wales) or the formation of regional platforms for discussion and coordination (Brittany). But also the incorporation of regionalist issues in their ideology changed after regionalisation. As regional elections are events where regional interests are at stake, the regional sections of statewide parties had to come up with or expand their particular vision for the region. For all major political parties, the adaptation of at least a symbolically positive view on a regional identity and culture were part of that. The regional sections of the main statewide political parties (*RPR*, *UDF* and *Parti Socialiste*, *Partido Popular* and *PSOE*, *Labour*, *Conservatives* and the *Liberal Democrats*), all started to embellish their manifestos with regional symbols, such as the regional flag or slogans in the regional language.

But, most went much further in their regional adaptation. The *Partido Popular de Galicia*, in Spain as a whole known as a party of centralisation, adopted a clearly regionalist discourse in Galicia, and brought forward proposals for more regional autonomy, regionalisation of the Senate, and direct influence for the Spanish regions in 'Brussels'. But also the *Welsh Labour Party* made an effort to highlight its differences with the British *Labour Party* as a whole, openly rejecting a number of plans from the *Labour* Government in Westminster. This included a shift in preferences for the powers Wales should have; before regionalisation *Welsh Labour* was in favour of an Assembly with limited powers, while only four years later the *Labour* government in the Assembly installed a commission to look into the possibilities of legislative powers for Wales, like Scotland had. Some parties are already in favour of regionalisation or federalisation at the national level (the *PSOE*, the *Liberal Democrats*, *Les Verts*), but in those cases the regional sections of those parties added the existence of a regional identity, history and culture as arguments for regional autonomy. The development of a 'more regional' version of the parties, including the adoption of regionalist discourses, and open opposition against their own national party, has occurred less in Brittany. The persistence of the *départements* as administrative and political entities with their own interests, the system of *cumul des mandats*, where regional councillors are at the same time also mayor, departmental councillor, MP or even national government minister, and the lack of primary or secondary legislative powers for the region provide an explanation for this difference with developments in Galicia and Wales. But, in the latter regions electoral competition of regionalist parties played an important role as well, while in Brittany the *UDB* could not pose a serious threat. In Galicia the advance of the moderately regionalist *Coalición Galega* and of the *BNG* were an important reason for the *Partido Popular* and *PSOE* in Galicia to adopt a more regionalist discourse. And in Wales, the growth of *Plaid Cymru* after regionalisation caused panic and a change of strategy for the *Welsh Labour Party*.

Conclusions

Although Galicia, Wales and Brittany are part of States with different state traditions, and their regional governments have different powers in different types of regional

administrative structures, it is possible to distinguish a number of similarities in the development of regionalism after regionalisation. For most of their inhabitants a regional identification does not rule out a national identification, and this has not changed after regionalisation. This does not mean there is no competition between both identities in certain contexts. In all three regions there is majority support for more autonomy, dismissing claims that the present autonomy arrangements would cause 'general satisfaction'. But, predictions that regionalisation would lead to increased separatism and the break up of the nation-state have not materialised either, yet, and there is no sign of a strong popular support for independence either. So, does this mean that nothing much of relevance to regionalism happened? Not exactly, but there are some marked differences in developments between those regions.

Particularly the differences between the development of regionalism in on the one hand Galicia and Wales, and on the other hand Brittany after regionalisation, and the consequences the presence of regional institutions and elections has had on them, is striking. Whereas *BNG* and *Plaid Cymru* became important political parties within their region, something they were not before regionalisation, *UDB*, and any other Breton party, remained relatively marginal. One could argue that Welsh regionalism has always had more support, but three decades ago the differences were much smaller. In a similar way, the main statewide parties in Brittany, right-wing and left-wing, did not show the necessity to develop their regional branches into fully fledged regional parties with a strong focus on their region, including the adoption of regionalist points of view, as the statewide parties in Wales and Galicia have done since regionalisation. Whereas politicians of those parties in Wales and Galicia stress the ways in which they differ from their counterparts in the rest of the State, any such regional differences are not generally boasted about in Brittany. Of course this is related to the lesser electoral threat posed by the *UDB*, but it is also directly related to the structure of, and context within which regionalisation was implemented.

The French administrative structure, with a large number of levels of administration, in which no sub-national level gets priority over the others, played an important role. The *départements* kept their importance next to the *régions*, thus forming an obstacle for the formation of a regionalised party system, a unified Breton linguistic policy in the whole region and a focus on the interests of the region, in conflict with those of the state as a whole, in a regional political arena. Also, the asymmetrical regional structure in Spain and the United Kingdom provided an opportunity for Galician and Welsh regionalists to mobilise support that did not exist for those in Brittany. The complaint that Wales deserved to be treated the same as Scotland has been a powerful argument to convince voters and politicians of other parties. In Galicia the example of Catalonia is used in the same way. Both are examples of relatively flourishing regions with more autonomy, successful regionalist parties, and an absence of violence. In France only Corsica got a separate arrangement, but was presented as a deviant case because of it being an island, while the violent conflict and poor image of Corsica makes it not very useful as an example for Breton regionalists. Those tend to point mostly to examples abroad (Wales, Scotland, Catalonia, Slovenia, the Baltic states), but that is a much less powerful argument than an example within the same state. Finally, the adherence to the unity of the republic and the interpretation of the concept of equality on the French state tradition has been a restriction of the Breton regional authorities to pursue a policy of region-building, if they had wished to do so. In Spain and the United Kingdom higher tolerance towards and a generally positive appreciation of cultural pluralism give regional authorities room to actively promote a regional language for instance.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the period following regionalisation has been a time for regionalist parties to reformulate their objectives and strategies, especially in Wales and Galicia. Regionalisation provided an opportunity for regionalist parties to get more support through regional elections, and both *BNG* and *Plaid Cymru* adapted successfully to the new situation and became considerably more influential. And, especially with increased competition from regionalist parties, regional sections of statewide parties tend to adopt their discourse, incorporating regionalist issues that are popular with voters. This includes claiming to defend the ‘interest of the region’, also when this should be in conflict with the interests of the rest of the state.

So, in two of the three regions regionalism became stronger, and political demands that before were the domain of regionalist movement, became more generally accepted. It did not lead those regions any closer to a situation where secession is on the political agenda, but the important role of other regions as examples suggests that separatism elsewhere might shift the debate on regional autonomy once again, certainly if another region in the same state would take that step. Within the United Kingdom regionalisation seems to have put the independence debate off the agenda for the short term, but developments in the Basque Country⁵ show that this is not necessarily the case in the longer term. This would, however be the start of another episode of regionalist politics, and outside the scope of this paper.

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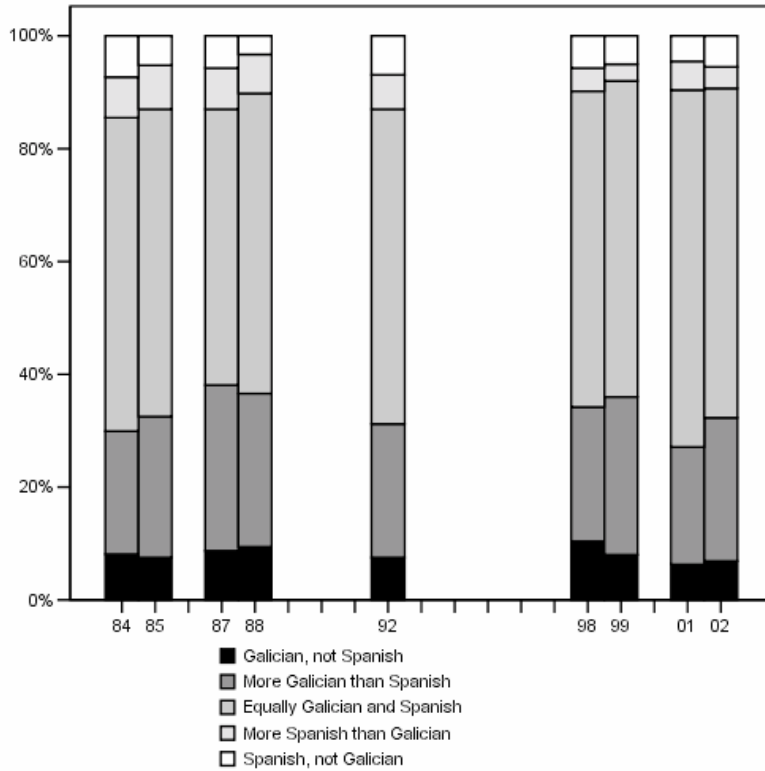
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⁵ After the introduction of regional autonomy in the Basque Country in 1979 the violent conflict did not stop, and independence did not disappear from the political agenda. Recently the president of the Basque regional government, from the moderate nationalist party PNV, presented a plan for quasi-independence built around the concept of ‘free association’ of the Basque Country with Spain. This ‘plan Ibarretxe’ will be a major issue in this year’s regional elections and a referendum on the proposal is likely to be held.

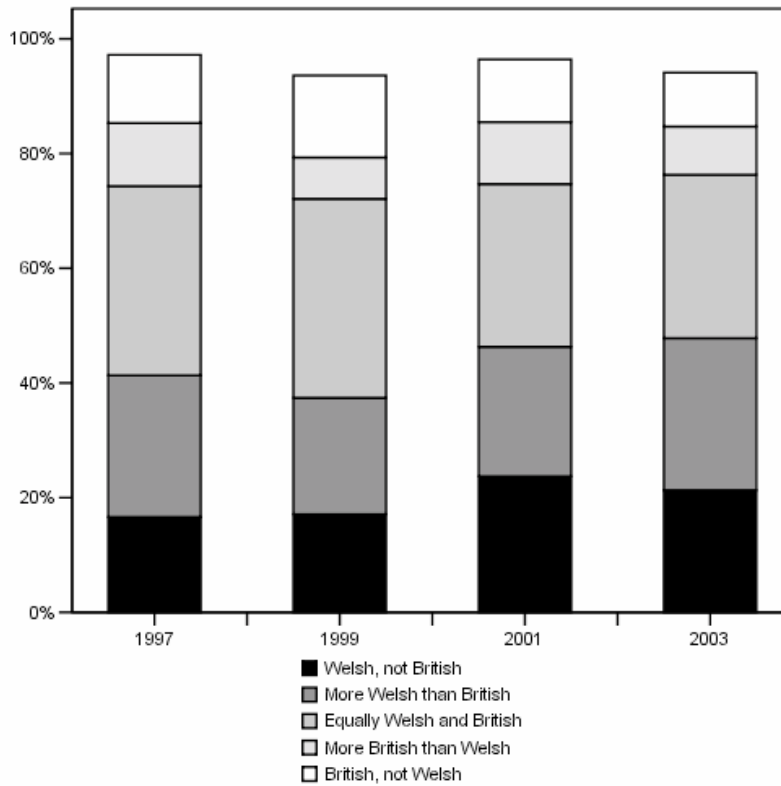
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Appendix

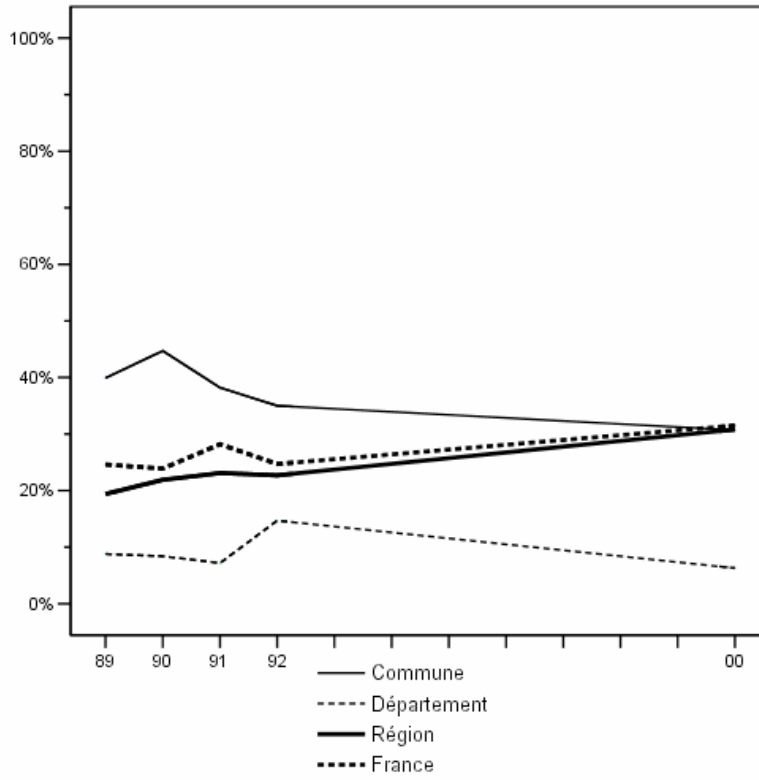
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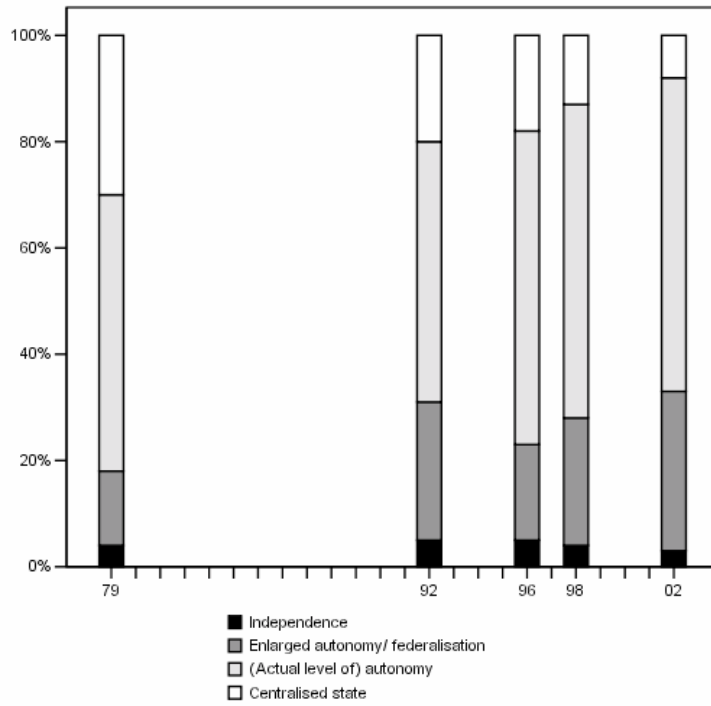
B. Identification with region and State since regionalisation (1999), Wales



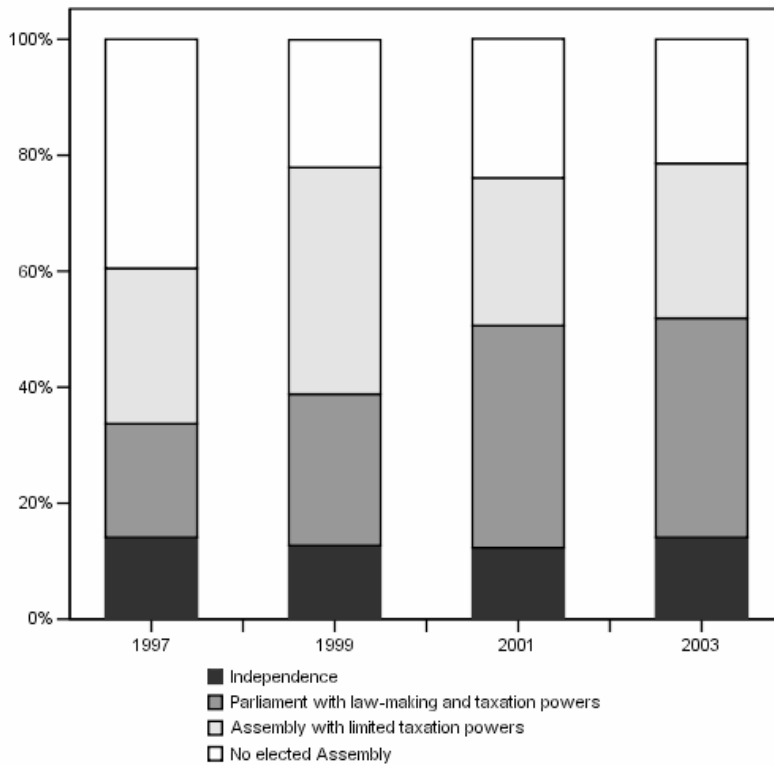
C. Identification with region, (local) community, *département*, and State since regionalisation (1986), Brittany



D. Preferences for organisation of the State since regionalisation (1981), Galicia



D. Preferences for organisation of the State since regionalisation (1999), Wales



E. Support for (further) regionalisation since regionalisation (1986), Brittany

