

The nationalist voter in Galicia: continuities and changes in the last decades

Unlike the profile of nationalist voters in other CC.AA., the individual characteristics of Galician voters has been scantily analyzed. This paper describes the electoral evolution of the BNG and analyzes longitudinally the main sociopolitical characteristics of its voters. Data include electoral results and CIS postelectoral surveys (available 1997-2012). We use techniques of spatial representation to map the expansion and contraction of the territorial bases of electoral support, and their deepening and weakening over time, and regression analysis to determine the profile of BNG voters. We hypothesize that, given the programmatic orientations of the BNG, both identity and left-right orientations are crucial to explain the profile of BNG voters. The paper covers a period of slow but steady electoral decline that culminated with the 2012 autonomous elections and the rise of Alternativa Galega de Esquerda (AGE-ANOVA). Here we seek to examine the transfers of votes among BNG and AGE, and investigate the extent to which identity and ideological preferences (left-right) are crucial to understand the most recent changes in the Galician party system.

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The *Bloque Nacionalista Galego* (BNG), born in 1982, became the single representative of Galician nationalism in the Galician party system in 1993, after a political process of merges and coordination of a miscellanea of minor parties. The BNG electoral support consequently grew and reached its highest electoral point in the 1997 autonomous elections. Since then, the BNG maintained its position as third party in the Galician party system although it entered a slow, but steady, downward electoral cycle. However, the recent upsurge of *Alternativa Galega de Esquerda* (AGE) in 2012, and more recently *Podemos* in 2014, has dramatically threatened the electoral space of the BNG in the Galician party system. While the creation of the BNG, the political opportunity structure that made possible the success of Galician nationalist parties, and the coordination of Galician nationalist parties have been widely analyzed (Máiz 1996, Gómez-Reino 2011, Lago 2004, Vilas Nogueira 1992), the electoral bases of support of the BNG and the profile of Galician nationalist voters has received scant attention in the academic literature (Pérez-Nievas y Bonet 2006).

In this paper we seek to fill this gap and provide an empirical analysis of the electoral support for the BNG at different levels. First, we introduce an ecological analysis of the territorial strength of the BNG during this period that shows the contraction of the areas of support for Galician nationalism and their weakening over time. Second, we provide a longitudinal analysis of the characteristics of BNG voters during the period 1997-2012 based on CIS postelectoral surveys. Finally, we examine the new competitive dynamics in the Galician party system with the rise of AGE, analyzing the transfers of votes between BNG and AGE. We hypothesize that both identity and the ideological orientations along the left-right dimension are critical over time to define the profile of BNG voters, but the former plays a crucial role in explaining voting orientations in the Galician party system in 2012 and the failure of the BNG to retain its role as the single representative of Galician nationalism.

The first section describes the historical antecedents of the BNG and its electoral evolution since its origins. The second section presents the electoral performance of the party through ecological analysis and techniques of spatial representation to show its steady territorial contraction in urban areas and the coastal line, as well as its progressive electoral weakening in its strongholds during the period 1993-2012. Third, the paper analyzes the individual characteristics of BNG voters through regression analysis during the period 1997-2012. Fourth, this section examines in more detail 2012 autonomous

elections and its competitive dynamics, comparing the programs of Alternativa Galega de Esquerda and the BNG in terms of their proposals regarding Galician autonomy and self-determination and socio-economic policies, and examining the transfers of votes between 2009 and 2012 elections, through a bi-variate analysis. We conclude with the implications of the recent electoral changes for the prospects for the BNG in the Galician party system.

The electoral evolution of the BNG

Galician nationalist parties remained marginal during the first years of democratic politics in Spain (Máiz, 1996; Beramendi and Nuñez Seixas, 1996). The main cause of their electoral and institutional marginality was the great fragmentation and heterogeneity of the Galician nationalist movement (Máiz, 1996). A variety of parties and movements competing to represent Galician nationalism proliferated. Before the creation of the BNG, there were several attempts to organize Galician autonomist parties. Two competing Galician autonomist parties – the Bloque Nacional-Popular Galego (BN-PG) and Esquerda Galega (EG) secured representation in the first regional elections held in 1981.

Table 1. Results of Galician nationalist parties in regional elections (1981-2012)

	1981		1985		1989		1993		1997		2001		2005		2009		2012	
	%v	s	%v	S	%v	s	%v	s	%v	S	%v	s	%v	s	%v	S	%v	s
CG			12.9	11	3.6	2	0.4	0										
BNPG	6.3	3																
BNG			4.1	1	8.0	5	18.6	13	24.8	18	22.6	17	18.8	13	16.4	12	10.2	7
EG	3.4	1	5.7	3	3.8	2												
PG	3.3	0	4.2	1	1.4	0												
AGE																	13.9	9

% v: percentage of vote; s: seats

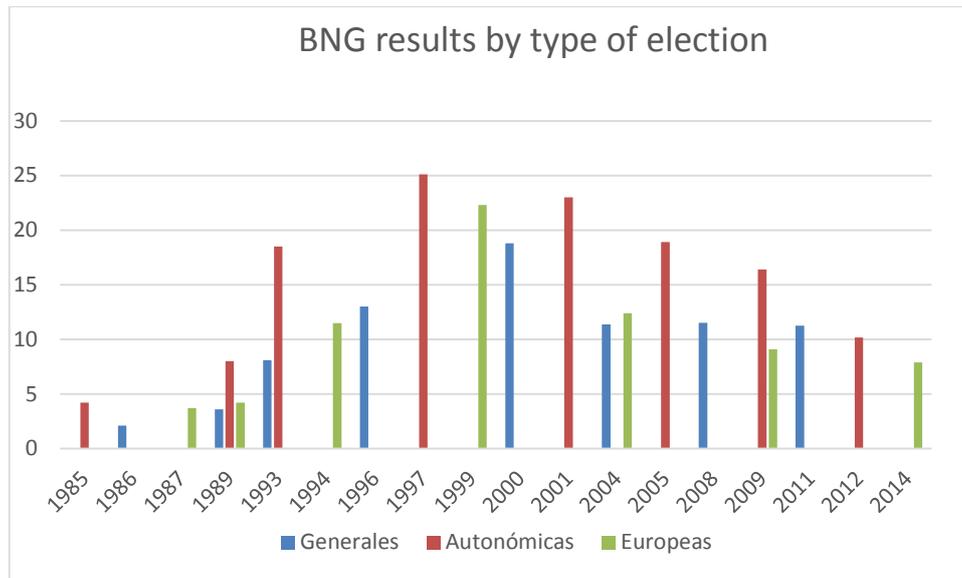
Source: Xunta de Galicia

The BNG obtained representation in the 1985 autonomous elections for the first time, when Xosé Manuel Beiras was first elected to the Galician parliament. However, the BNG competed with other nationalist parties since other Galician parties also crossed the threshold of representation during the 1980s (see table 1); in 1985 other nationalist parties (Coalición Galega, Esquerda Galega) still obtained better results than the BNG. By the 1989 autonomous elections, however, the BNG became the first nationalist party in terms of votes and seats. In 1989 the BNG became the most successful nationalist party (vis-à-vis CG and EG). This achievement paved the way for the consolidation of the nationalist movement around the BNG through the political coordination of other parties during the period 1989-1994 (Lago 2004). In the 1993 autonomous elections the BNG had become the only nationalist party with representation in the Galician Parliament, while the other nationalist parties had already entered the party-front or failed to secure parliamentary seats (Gómez-Reino 2011).

The coordination of Galician nationalist parties into a single political force was the result of the interaction of an exogenous factor (the increasing strength of the BNG vis-à-vis its nationalist competitors), and an endogenous factor induced by the BNG nature as a party-front: the integration of a plurality of groups since its creation and its formal representation within the organization (Lago and Lago 2006:39; Lago 2004). There were also systemic factors that led to the concentration of Galician nationalist parties such as the new legal threshold in autonomous elections (from 3 to 5% of valid votes) introduced in 1992 (Lago and Lago 2006:20).

These political stages in the evolution of the BNG were facilitating conditions for its electoral growth. The fact that the BNG became the second largest party in Galicia in terms of votes and seats in 1997 (overtaking the PSdeG), meant that the party was considered as a potential future coalition partner for both statewide parties (PP and PSdeG). The Socialist Party suffered the most for the increasing competition from the BNG (Jiménez 2003: 310). In terms of the PSdG's political program, the increasing electoral success of the BNG contributed at the end of the 1990s to the definition of an autonomist agenda for the first time. By the end of the 1990s the BNG increasingly counted as a potential ally or competitor of the two main parties in the Galician party system. These electoral results in autonomous elections, however, were exceptional and the BNG remained the third party in the Galician party system.

Figure I. Evolution of BNG vote in different type of elections



As figure I shows, the BNG always obtains better electoral results in autonomous elections. From the 4,2% of the vote in 1985, the party-front managed to increase its support up to 25,1% in 1997. In the 2001 autonomous elections the BNG still gathered 23% of the vote, but the following autonomous elections showed a clear decrease in its electoral support that continue in successive elections up to the 10,1% obtained in the last 2012 autonomous elections--significantly below the percentage obtained in 1993 after the merging of other Galician nationalist parties within the BNG. The downward electoral trends for autonomous, statewide and European elections are very similar. Since the past decade, the BNG has entered a steady but slow decline in its electoral support.

Mapping the electoral bases of the BNG: expansion and contraction

In this section we examine the ecology of BNG vote through techniques of spatial representation. The spatial representation offers the possibility of examining both the spread of the vote for the BNG and its strength at the territorial level. The following maps show how the BNG vote remains concentrated in specific areas and the pattern of electoral decline over time. Table 2 addresses the percentage of vote obtained by the BNG in every municipality in the period from 1997 to 2012. Table 3 contains information about the concentration of vote, and these maps were created transforming the percentage of

vote in points and analyzing their concentration in squares of 10km². Although maps in table 2 are totally comparable between them, those in table 3 have to be considered one by one, since the concentration of vote is a relative measure, and so coloured areas may not have the same specific meaning in every election.

Table 2. Evolution of the vote for the BNG 1997-2012

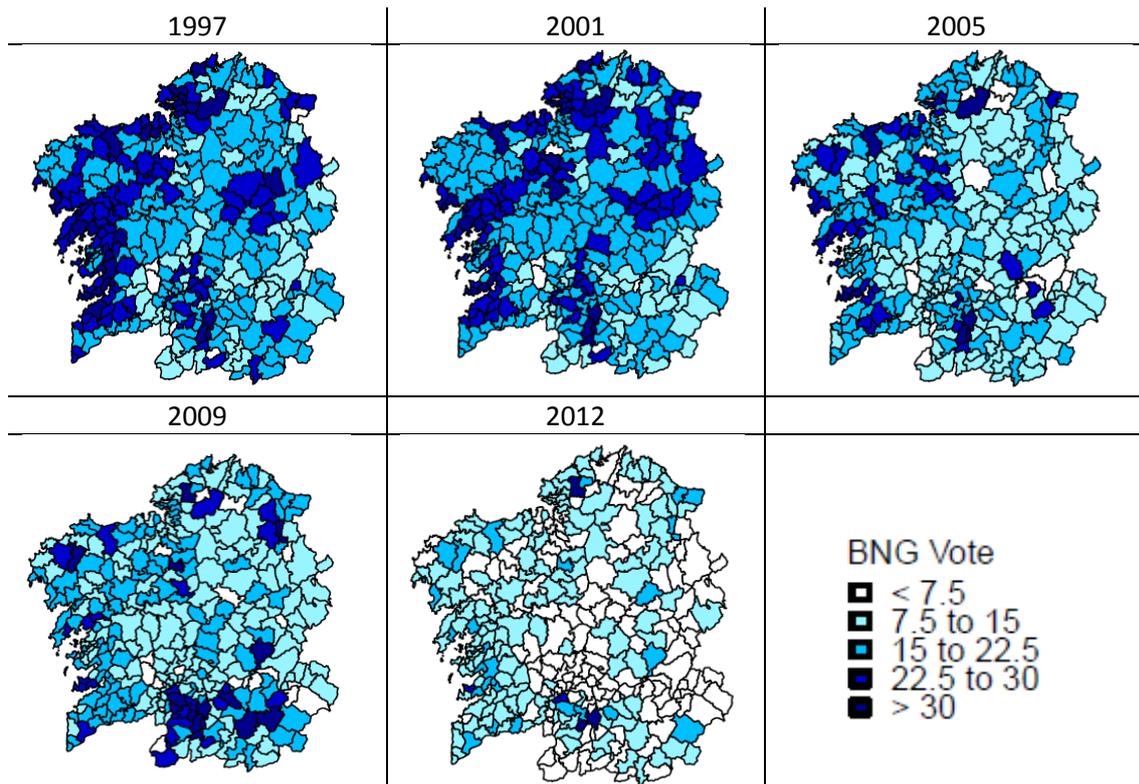
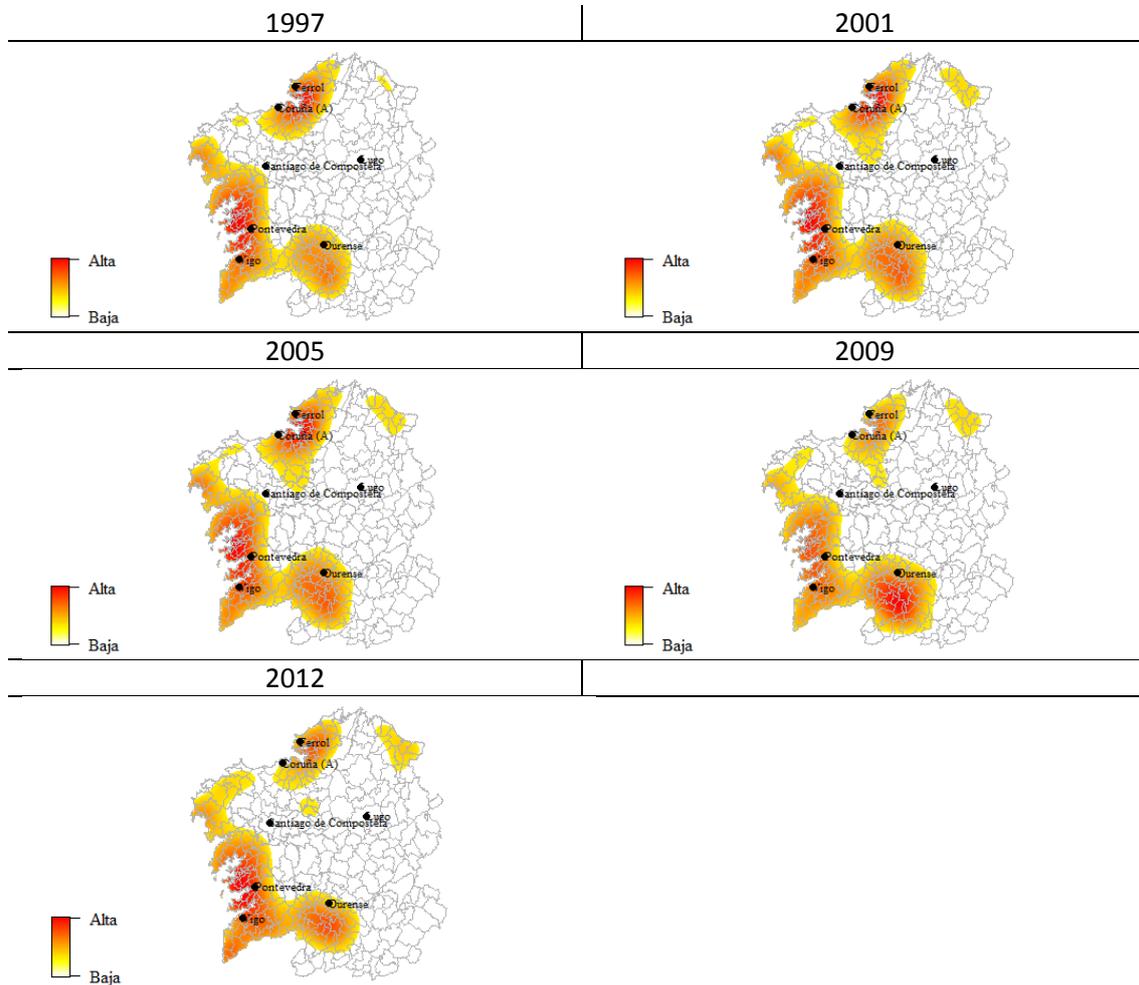


Table 3. Concentration of vote for the BNG 1997-2012



Several things can be extracted after analyzing the maps from tables 2 and 3. Firstly, it is easy to verify the progressive fall in the number of votes received by the BNG. The evolution of the general trends shows how the blue areas start to disappear. Conversely, in the year 1997 there was almost no municipalities where the BNG obtained less than 7.5% of votes, and very few remained below 15% of the valid vote. The map of 2012 shows a totally different situation, with some light blue municipalities in a white-dominated map. Table 3 complements this information and helps to highlight how the areas close to the big cities, and specially the coastal areas, are the traditional strongholds of the BNG. Santiago de Compostela and Lugo, which are the less industrialized cities in Galicia, are consistently the exceptions to this rule. Furthermore these maps allow us to

affirm that the decline in the number of votes received by the BNG has been more or less territorially homogeneous. Although they certainly lose support in the area of the big cities in the years of decline (the colored areas close to those get smaller since 2001), the general trend remains. Thus, there is no sudden earthquake in its traditional areas of support, but instead a constant and pronounced decline of the number of votes within these areas.

The characteristics of BNG voters

In this section we start examining the profile of Galician nationalist voters during the period 1997-2012. Which are the individual characteristics of BNG voters? Do these characteristics show continuity during this period? Unfortunately we lacked data from the previous period to establish a longer trend. We include here a logistic regression to analyze the characteristics of BNG voters in the autonomous elections for the period 1997-2012.

Table 4. Logistic regression for BNG voters in the period 1997-2012

	Año 1997		Año 2001		Año 2005		Año 2009		Año 2012	
Identity	0.77*** (0.17)	2.15	1.16*** (0.17)	3.18	1.05*** (0.19)	2.85	1.14*** (0.18)	3.14	0.36 (0.25)	1.43
Decentralization	s.d		s.d		0.87*** (0.18)	2.38	1.05** (0.18)	2.87	0.75*** (0.25)	2.12
Mother Lang	s.d		s.d		s.d		0.25 (0.17)	1.28	0.84*** (0.23)	2.31
Ideology	-0.76*** (0.05)	0.46	-0.59*** (0.05)	0.56	-0.46*** (0.06)	0.63	-0.59*** (0.06)	0.56	-0.52*** (0.07)	0.60
Religious	s.d		-0.55** (0.22)	0.58	-0.09 (0.21)	0.91	s.d		0.70*** (0.26)	2.01
Studies	-0.24 (0.34)	0.78	0.04 (0.22)	1.04	-0.24 (0.22)	0.79	0.25 (0.23)	1.28	-0.15 (0.27)	0.86
Social class	0.02 (0.13)	1.02	0.23** (0.11)	1.26	-0.10 (0.12)	0.91	0.09 (0.12)	1.09	-0.07 (0.13)	0.92
Manual worker	-0.19 (0.26)	0.83	0.58*** (0.22)	1.79	-0.21 (0.26)	0.81	0.82*** (0.22)	2.28	-0.29 (0.31)	0.75
Gender	0.35** (0.17)	1.42	0.24 (0.16)	1.27	0.35* (0.18)	1.41	0.01 (0.16)	1	-0.34 (0.21)	0.71
Log age	-2.17*** (0.23)	0.11	-1.48*** (0.20)	0.28	-1.46*** (0.25)	0.23	-1.11*** (0.23)	0.33	-1.45*** (0.29)	0.23
Predicted cases	83.8%		81.4%		80.4%		86.7%		90.4%	
PseudoR ²	0.54		0.45		0.40		0.42		0.27	
N	1215		1401		1018		1593		1421	

*Left column B coefficient. Standard error in brackets

** Right column Exp(B)

The following variables have been incorporated to the regression model. Besides some controls (such as gender, age, studies, social class or religion), the selected variables are expected to have an effect in the propensity of one person to vote for the nationalist party in the defined terms. We expect that those who declared themselves as more Galician than Spanish or just Galician in the so called Linz-Moreno scale are more prone to vote for the BNG. The decentralization issue is considered to be highly relevant in this aspect, since it is a central point in nationalist manifestos in Spain, and especially in Galicia, although data is available only in some postelectoral surveys. Provided that left ideology is an important character of nationalist parties in Galicia, we expect that every step to the left in the scale is linked to an increase in the probability of nationalist voting. Galician as mother tongue is expected to raise the probability of an individual to vote for a nationalist party. Being manual worker has been also included in the regression, to consider possible individual elements that are present in the ecological analysis. Since industrial areas seem more likely to vote for the BNG, we also include this variable. Every variable was included after testing possible correlations between them, due to the conceptual closeness of those regarding to the economy, or for example, Galician identity with support for decentralized positions.

The variable ideology variable follows the classical values from extreme left (1) to extreme right (10). Galician as mother tongue includes just those who declare just Galician as it (both languages codified as 0). More autonomy separates those who prefer more decentralization or even autonomy from the rest. Religion includes those identifying as religious of any confession.

From the variables included in the model, just some of them are statistically relevant to explain BNG vote in autonomous elections: age, ideology, Galician identity, decentralization positions. The rest shows no significant effect, being remarkable the lack of statistical importance of Galician as mother tongue when the rest of the variables are included as controls. Left-right ideology, Galician identity and decentralization behave in the expected sense. Age has a negative impact on the probability to vote for the BNG since the nationalist party attracts younger voters throughout the period analyzed. Almost all these variables are statistically relevant in the models throughout the period 1997-2012, showing the continuity of the main characteristics of the profile of BNG voters over time. The variable religion is statistically significant only in 1997 and 2012 but with

opposing effects (negative and positive). A final consideration has to be introduced with regard to the 2012 model. The Galician identity variable seems to be no relevant in statistical terms in this year, while having Galician as mother tongue does appear as such. This change could be the result of the great shift of votes from BNG to AGE in 2012, affecting so the traditional bases of the nationalist party.¹ Some of these changes will be addressed in the next section, trying to account for the impact of AGE in the party system.

The 2012 Autonomous elections. The BNG and the New Competitive dynamics

The background to understand the abrupt electoral decline of the BNG in the last 2002 autonomous elections is the formation of AGE. Alternativa Galega de Esquerdas (AGE) is an electoral coalition constituted in 2012 by Anova-Irmandade Nacionalista (Anova-IN), Esquerda Unida (EU), EQUO y Espazo Ecosocialista Galego (Espazo). At first, Alternativa Galega de Esquerda was the result of a coalition between the new organization created by the former leader of the BNG, Beiras, (Anova-Irmandade Nacionalista) and the, until then, marginal Galician Esquerda Unida.² Since 1982 Xosé Manuel Beiras was the visible head of the BNG, a charismatic professor of Economics who had been active in Galician nationalist politics since the 1960s. As *portavoz* of the BNG, Beiras provided stability and continuity to the BNG during a period of organizational and ideological change in the 1980s and 1990s. However, the threat of losing political influence and relevance in Galician politics post-2001 was interpreted within the BNG, and that a new political figure was needed to head the party. Thus, in the 2002 X National Assembly the leadership of the BNG changed with the separation of executive and electoral roles creating two different figures: the *portavoz nacional*, and the *coordinador da Executiva*, roles taken by Beiras and Anxo Quintana respectively. This was a first step to replace Beiras as the leader of the BNG. Then the following BNG National Assembly, the XI, in November 2003 involved the substitution of Beiras as both party candidate to the Xunta de Galicia and *portavoz nacional*. Finally in 2003 Anxo Quintana became both candidate and spokesperson, while Beiras became the president of the party, a figure specially

¹ Such a change may be observed as well in the pseudoR² value, which is considerably smaller in 2012 compared to previous years.

² Alternativa Galega was the first label agreed by Esquerda Unida and Anova, the organization led by Xosé Manuel Beiras, to name the coalition created to run in the regional elections.

created to accommodate him in the party executive.³ Beiras later resigned in April 11th 2005 as president but remained within the executive.⁴ In January 2012 the XIII National Assembly of the BNG elected the new executive, the national spokesperson and the candidate to the Xunta.⁵ Guillermo Vázquez was elected spokesperson (2.123 votes, Xosé Manuel Beiras, 1.823 votes) and Francisco Jorquera was elected as candidate to preside the Xunta (2.338 (53 %), Carlos Aymerich 2.043 votes (46 %). After these results, Beiras exited the nationalist front and created ANOVA_Irmandade nacionalista soon afterwards, in July 2012.

Beyond the impact of the issue of political leadership, that is, the presence of the historical leader of the BNG and Galician nationalism now as the leader of AGE, the programmatic and strategic choices of both BNG and AGE need to be confronted to understand the electoral changes that took place in the 2012 autonomous elections.

In the first formulation of the BNG Political Principles in 1982, Galicia was defined as ‘a nation with the right to self-determination’. The policy was an uncompromising defense of Galician self-government. As a starting point the BNG took an anti-system stand refusing to recognize both the Spanish constitution and the Galician *Estatuto de Autonomía* approved in 1981. This more militant and anti-system position turned in 1985 into a strategy of using the channels offered by institutions to advance party goals of self-government. From 1989 the BNG adopted a pragmatic attitude and moderated its radicalism (Beramendi and Núñez Seixas, 1996; Máiz and Lago 2004:34). The BNG never formally renounced its 1982 political principles though the policies endorsed by the party have significantly departed from its origins (Beramendi and Nuñez Seixas 1996; Máiz 1996). The so-called *O Proxecto Común*, the Common Project, was a synthesis of the influences of the different parties and actors integrated into the BNG. A decade later,

³ The *Permanente Nacional* is an executive organ created in 1989, was replaced in 2002 by a National Executive to be elected by the National Assembly.

⁴ Later Beiras was excluded, as many traditional politicians from the lists of BNG candidates for the 2005 autonomous elections.

⁵ There were three separate lists: *Alternativa pola Unidade* (ApU), supported by Unión do Povo Galego (Guillermo Vázquez as spokesperson and Francisco Jorquera as candidate); the list of Máis Galiza and Encontro Irmandiño (+G-EI), with the support of Colectivo Socialista, Partido Nacionalista Galego-Partido Galeguista, Esquerda Nacionalista, Inzar, Unidade Galega y Espazo Socialista Galego (Xosé Manuel Beiras as spokesperson and Carlos Aymerich as candidate); and a list of Movemento Galego ao Socialismo (Rafael Vilar).

the success of the BNG in the 1997 autonomous election prompted further moderation in party's demands for autonomy. There was a request for institutional recognition of Galicia as a nation within a larger Constitutional reform to recognize the Spanish state as a pluri-national state. Yet the ideology of the BNG is not only defined by the demand of territorial autonomy but also by its clear location as a left-wing political party. The evolution of the party-front also changed the nature of the BNG, from an extreme left organization in the early 1980s, but still clearly left-wing organization.

The 2012 BNG program for the autonomous elections is built upon the ideological pillars of the organization. The BNG electoral program for the 2012 regional elections included three axes: sovereignty (deepening self-government), work (public investment and policies) and democracy (participatory democracy). The BNG defines itself in the program as nationalist force, 'defending sovereignty, the capacity of the peoples to decide, in particular of the Galician people' (BNG 2012 Political Program), and maintains the recognition of the pluri-national character of the state and the equality among all the nations that compose it.

The program of Alternativa Galega de Esquerda for the 2012 regional elections was framed within the 'think global, act local' perspective. AGE clearly aimed to occupy the political space of the BNG with an ideological platform that combined Galician self-government with an emphasis on social policy. In the very introduction of the program, AGE claims: 'Galician men and women as the only political subject upon national sovereignty resides' (AGE Political program 2012). The goal is clearly formulated within the tradition of Galician nationalism: 'national and social liberation for a nation without a state'. The principles of radical democracy, republicanism, ecology and political accountability also complete the programmatic proposals. The program demands a new Constituent process to recognize the full sovereignty of Galicia and the right of participation including a binding referendum and electronic vote without restriction in any matter. In the very introduction of the program, AGE defines itself as an inclusive plural left. The programmatic proposals include, among others, policies of solidarity and development (financial and fiscal reform), employment and work rights, equality, public employment, auditory of public debt, among others.

Thus, both BNG and AGE had strong similarities in their programmatic stand. Moreover, as stated above, AGE was leadered by Xosé Manuel Beiras, who had represented for

decades the BNG in Galician politics. The confluence of factors created a new competitive dynamics in the Galician party system. The 2012 elections clearly showed the electoral success of AGE and the decline of the BNG. Table 5 shows the electoral results for Galician autonomous elections in 2009 and 2012 and the *sorpasso* of the newly formed AGE in 2012.

Table 5. Galician Regional Elections: 2009 and 2012

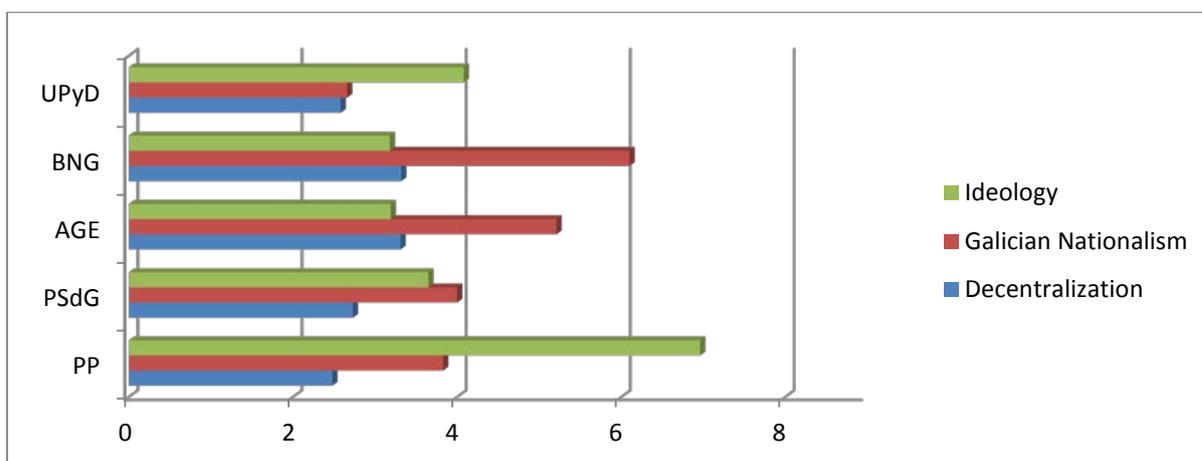
	2009		2012	
	Votes	% vote	Votes	% vote
Votes to candidates	1,662,904	62.8%	1,405,400	52.1%
Blank votes	28,071	1.1%	38,448	1.4%
Null votes	15,223	0.6%	37,531	1.4%
Abstention	942,078	35.6%	1,216,338	45.1%
	2009		2012	
	Votes	Seats	Votes	Seats
PP	789,427	38	661,281	41
PSdG	524,488	25	297,584	18
AGE	-	-	200,828	9
BNG	270,712	12	146,027	7
UPyD	23,796	0	21,335	0
EU	16,441	0	-	-

The electoral results of the 2012 autonomous elections confirmed the strength of the PP in Galicia improving its results from 2009. The PSdG suffered significant losses but the most dramatic failure was that of the BNG, whose representation was almost cut in half (from 12 to 7 seats in the Galician parliament). The BNG became the fourth party in the Galician party system in the 2012 autonomous elections, an electoral result that was confirmed, and aggravated, in the 2014 European elections. With the upsurge of Podemos, BNG was further relegated to become the fifth party in the Galician party system. To understand the bases of support for both BNG and AGE, some descriptive variables have been incorporated in table 6. This table includes information on ideology (1-10 scale), decentralization (1-5) and Galician nationalism (1-10).⁶ The data are

⁶ Ideology (1 extreme left-10 extreme right). Decentralization (1 state without autonomies, 2 state with less competences for the autonomies, 3 state with the same competences for the autonomies as it is now, 4 state with more competences for the autonomies and 5 state where autonomies may have the right to be independent). Galician nationalism (1 minimum Galician nationalism-10 maximum Galician nationalism)

extracted from those individuals who declared that they have voted for each political party in 2012.

Table 6. Descriptive statistics for ideology, Galician nationalism and decentralization preferences.



Regarding ideology, and as was initially expected, PP voters are the ones located more to the right in the scale. They are followed by those of UPyD, and far from them, we find the voters of PSdG, BNG and AGE. BNG and AGE are especially close in terms of ideology, and they are too the parties whose voters declare to be more Galician nationalists (although the BNG voters are more nationalists). The variable that contains the preferences for the organization of the state also shows the similarities between voters of BNG and voters of AGE.

In this next subsection, we examine vote transfers from the 2009 to the 2012 regional elections. The analysis is based on the postelectoral survey 2963 conducted by the CIS. We examine patterns of loyalty in party choice between elections and vote transfers to AGE in 2012. Where did these voters come from? As we can observe in Table 7 the 2012 AGE supporters had mainly voted for three different political forces in 2009 regional elections: PSdG, BNG and EU. According to this data 75 voters change their support from PSdG to AGE, 108 from BNG and 38 from EU, grouping between them, more than 90% of those who declared their support for AGE. As a consequence of these changes the PP was the only political competitor that kept more than 90% of its previous supporters, while loyal PSdG voters represent a 64% and BNG loyal voters fell to 40%. Since EU was included in the AGE alliance it is not surprising to note the patterns of its 2009 voters regarding to 2012 results.

Table 7. Vote Transfers from 2009 to the 2012 elections

2009	2012								
	PP	PSdG	AGE	BNG	UPyD	Others	Null	Blank	NA
PP	764 (92)	8 (1)	8 (1)	10 (1)	1 (0)	7 (1)	3 (0)	11 (1)	23 (3)
PSdG	23 (5)	277 (64)	75 (17)	13 (3)	3 (1)	11 (2)	4 (1)	18 (4)	11 (3)
BNG	6 (2)	9 (4)	108 (43)	97 (38)	3 (1)	14 (6)	4 (2)	10 (4)	1 (0)
EU	-	-	38 (91)	-	-	-	-	1 (2)	3 (7)
UPyD	1 (11)	-	1 (11)	-	3 (33)	-	-	3 (33)	1 (11)
Others	1 (6)	-	4 (25)	-	-	11 (69)	-	-	-
Null	-	1 (11)	1 (11)	-	-	-	6 (66)	1 (11)	-
Blank	3 (6)	-	6 (13)	3 (6)	-	5 (11)	1 (2)	29 (62)	-
NA	12 (3)	3 (1)	1 (0)	-	-	9 (3)	5 (1)	12 (3)	319 (89)

Source: postelectoral CIS survey 2963

Row percentages in brackets

But who are the voters supporting this new political coalition in Galicia? To answer this question we conducted a bivariate analysis between the three groups identified as most relevant in the previous section, considering the declared political support in 2009 regional elections: former PSdG voters, former BNG voters and former EU voters. Table 8 shows those dimensions in which significant differences have been found between groups: level of Galician nationalism, level of Galician identity, left-right ideology, preferences for decentralization and how close they feel to AGE. The analysis was also conducted individual political and economic evaluations, both for Spain and Galicia, but no statistically significant differences were found.

Table 8. Differences between AGE voters considering previous vote

Vote for AGE	Galician Nationalism		Ideology		Galician Identity	
	M(SD)	95% CI	M(SD)	95% CI	M(SD)	95% CI
PSdG to AGE	4.65 (2.30)	4.11- 5.19	3.41(1.24)	3.12- 3.70	3.33(0.49)	3.22- 3.45

BNG to AGE	6.20 (2.17)	5.78- 6.62	2.92(1.07)	2.71- 3.12	3.53(0.65)	3.40- 3.65
EU to AGE	3.58 (2.21)	2.86- 4.31	3.25(1.20)	2.85- 3.65	3.12(0.74)	2.87- 3.36

M (mean); SD (standard deviation); CI (confidence interval)

Galician Nationalism from 1 to 10 (from less nationalist to most nationalist)

Ideology from 1 to 10 (from extreme left to extreme right)

Galician Identity from 1 to 5 (from just Spanish identity to just Galician identity)

Source: postelectoral CIS survey 2963

	Decentralization		Close to AGE	
Vote for AGE	M(SD)	95% CI	M(SD)	95% CI
PSdG to AGE	2.96 (1.11)	2.69-3.22	2.96 (1.11)	2.69-3.22
BNG to AGE	3.58 (0.82)	3.42-3.73	3.58 (0.82)	3.42-3.73
EU to AGE	3.41 (0.94)	3.01-3.73	3.41 (0.94)	3.01-3.73

M (mean); SD (standard deviation); CI (confidence interval)

Decentralization from 1 to 5 (from recentralization to more decentralization)

Close to AGE from 1 to 5 (from very close to very distant)

Source: postelectoral CIS survey 2963

With respect to the variable ‘Galician nationalism’, EU voters are, not surprisingly, the least nationalist (3.58), followed by the PSdG (4.65) and then BNG (6.20 on average). The differences among groups are significant. The variable ideology also shows differences among the groups, those who voted PSdG are placed on average more to the right than those who voted BNG (3.40 VS 2.91), as well as those who voted EU (3.40 VS 3.24). The variable Galician identity (Linz-Moreno) only shows statistical differences between BNG and EU. The differences between PSdG voters and other groups are not significant. Finally, the variable decentralization shows differences between those who come from PSdG and the other groups. They are less favorable to decentralization than those who come from BNG and EU.

In addition, among those who declare they were close to AGE, there are significant differences between the BNG and the other two groups, being those who voted for the BNG in 2009 the closer to AGE. The most important difference between BNG and AGE voters is in the dimension of Galician nationalism (AGE, 5.21 on average and BNG 6.10), the other variables do not exhibit significant differences. These similarities between voters help to understand how AGE enters the political space traditionally occupied by the BNG.

In order to disentangle the factors that separate BNG loyal voters and those who switch from BNG to AGE in 2012, another separate bivariate analysis has been conducted for

these two groups. The result shows no significant differences regarding decentralization, ideology, nationalism or identity between them. However, the leadership of Beiras emerges as a clear factor that distinguishes between the two groups. Beiras is much better valued among the voters of AGE (7.8 over 10 versus the punctuation of 6 that Beiras gets from the voters loyal to the BNG). Another distinction among the two groups emerges from the question related to the political identification, which asks people to classify themselves among a battery of possibilities.⁷ Although this difference did not appear in the pure Galician nationalist scale, BNG loyal voters clearly tend to identify themselves more often as nationalist (46.4% versus 31.5% of those who changed from BNG to AGE). Conversely, AGE voters in the 2012 autonomous elections that had supported BNG in the past show higher values in categories related to ideological position in the left-right scale, such as progressive, socio-democrat, socialist or communist. This qualitative approach highlights some differences that were not so evident following quantitative approaches, and shed some light over the distinctions between these two groups.

Conclusions

Our analysis shows how the nationalist voter in Galicia (mostly BNG voter at least since 1993) can be identified with a specific profile over time. Factors such as Galician identity, ideology and age have consistently played an important role in the support for this party. Although variations in the electoral performance of BNG have taken place throughout the past two decades, his main areas of influence, and the already mentioned profile of his voters had not substantially changed until recently. Our expectations regarding the crucial role of identity and ideology have been confirmed.

We also provided an empirical analysis of the 2012 autonomous elections. Are Galician nationalist voters indistinctively voting for both political parties, BNG and AGE, in 2012? The emphasis on the continuity in the leadership of both organizations in 2012 (the presence of Beiras now in AGE) and the programmatic choices, also provides an image of substantial continuity in the profile of their voters. In this paper, we tried to uncover the similarities and differences of their voters in 2012. The elections of 2012 seem to be

⁷ Conservative, Demo-Christian, Liberal, Progressive, Socio-Democrat, Socialist, Communist, Nationalist, Feminist, Ecologist or Others.

a turning point in this tendency in a double sense. On the one hand the BNG is no longer the only party receiving the vote of those more identified with Galician nationalism. The irruption of AGE (and Xose Manuel Beiras) set the BNG as the fourth party in the Galician party system. On the other hand, the stable characteristics that identify the BNG voter might have changed, although future electoral process will provide us with more information to support this change.

Pallarés and Lago (2009) underscore the importance of the left-right dimension as opposed to the nationalist dimension to explain vote orientations in the Galician party system. Our findings suggest that there is an open-ended scenario in the Galician party system that on the one hand shows the potential of the political formula that combines nationalism with socio-economic policies (BNG and AGE), and on the other hand, the traditional limits of the political space of Galician nationalist parties. As we mentioned above, the decisions regarding nationalist preferences and leftist positions may incline these parties for different electorates as potential targets.

Finally, the political space in the Galician party system is currently fluid. Since the autonomous elections First, AGE has experienced several problems with the emergence of different factions. The members of the Fronte Obreira Galega (FOGA) decided to leave Anova first and then the members of Cerna, a critical faction created in June 2014, also voted to leave Anova (75% in favor). At stake in these internal battles is the issue of maintaining the formula AGE, the coalition established between Anova and Esquerda Unida (EU), or abandoning party discipline with open nationalist candidatures.⁸ Despite these internal organizational problems, AGE is currently the third party in the Galician party system after the PP and PSdG. The results of the 2014 European elections confirmed this position. Second, the success of Podemos in the 2014 European elections further relegated the BNG and threatened its stability in the Galician party system. Third, during this period the BNG faced difficult choices regarding its program (independence), the

⁸ Since the rise of AGE in 2012 there have been problems in the workings of the coalition for both strategic and ideological reasons. AGE has lost two representatives in the Galician parliament, one from ANOVA in disagreement with the pacts with EU and one from EU who refused to give her seat to a candidate from ANOVA in 2013. Anova was divided on the issue of the pacts with EU and a new critical faction within Anova, Cerna, was created.

internal organization, leadership and electoral coalitions. The result is not only a more fragmented nationalist camp in the Galician party system, but also the potential risk of marginalization of the BNG.

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