1. FINAL PUBLISHABLE SUMMARY REPORT

Summary description of the project objectives

The central goal of this project is to investigate how the political boundary between the Spanish nation-state and the sub-state regional level has shifted over time since the establishment of democracy by investigating the discourse of the political parties in the parliamentary debates related to the Statutes of Autonomy in five Spanish regions and all the successive reforms of these Statutes. In each legislative process two political communities are in play: the large political community, Spain, and the small, the autonomous region in question. The focus will be on the conceptualizations of the involved political communities and how they are related. The goal is to investigate how these changing claims were legitimised by the political elites vis-à-vis the population to make it adhere to the new preferences and which arguments were used. Although many studies on politics and public opinion have investigated preferences regarding the territorial organization of the state, as well as patterns of identification of the population, we know little about how they changed over time, or about the arguments that were used to justify these changes. Apart from the 2006-reform of the Catalan Statute, the other Statute reforms have not been studied in any systematic way despite the fact that the legislative processes surrounding the Statutes of Autonomy of the seventeen Spanish regions and their subsequent reforms contain obvious potential for comparative analysis across the political geography of the Spanish state as well as for studies of the temporal evolution of the dynamics behind the reforms. The added value of this investigation is, firstly, to produce a series of systematic, longitudinal, and comparable empirical data on the processes of statutory reforms and, secondly, to perform a comparative sociological analysis of both the politico-structural as well as the affective dimension of the definitions of the twin political communities involved in the autonomy processes and the arguments that legitimise them. The study thus permits comparison along both ideological (political parties), spatial and temporal axes.

Description of the work performed since the beginning of the project

The first step of the work was the location and collection of the empirical data, which consisted in 22 legislative processes and 163 parliamentary debates and a total of over 3400 pages of transcribed debates. As not all the documents were readable to the soft-ware, these parts of the empirical material had to be prepared for the inclusion into the database.

The second step was the development of the codifying protocol which was built up from a research design where the general as well as the specific research objectives were transformed into research questions and concepts. For each of these, one or more indicators were identified which can be found in the texts (parliamentary debates). The adjustment between theoretical concepts and their empirical manifestation was realized through an iterative process between induction and deduction in order to make sure that the model was sensible enough to actually measure the change we were looking for. This was achieved by firstly elaborating a series of codes and a map of the relations between them which was put to the test on a representative selection of the material. On the basis of successive tests of the set of codes, the research design was refined.

Once the codification protocol had been consolidated, the process of applying it to the many pages of debate began as well as the hiring of technical assistance to assist with the process of codifying the empirical material. Once a skilled firm had been identified, the researcher had to explain the research design and the codification protocol and oversee that the codification was done correctly.

Fourthly, when the documents relating to one region, Valencia, had been fully codified the analysis of the material could begin and when the second region, Cataluña, was finished the comparative analysis could begin. These first regions were chosen with care so as to secure that the first comparative results would be as interesting as possible, and it showed successful in the sense that the presentation at conferences of the first results have been met with great interest.

The research design and the preliminary results have been discussed with peers in many places in order to receive constructive critique on the research design, the background as well as the analysis itself in order to secure the quality of the output and get ideas for further exploitation of the data produced by the project.

Lastly, the preliminary results as well as the consolidated research design have been presented at a series of international congresses in order to let the project have as many possibilities as possible to resonate with other cases and get feed-back from specialist on Spain and on as many other cases as possible.

Description of the main results

Besides the preliminary results of the comparative analysis of the two first cases it is one of the main results to have produced a tool that can be used to analyse processes in other Spanish contexts as well as in other countries.

Another outcome of this project is the potential for future analysis contained in the complexity of the analytical framework which through the codification protocol has already been applied to the entire empirical material. The number of the dependent variables and the different main axes of analysis allow for many more analyses than the ones envisaged in the project. The codification protocol has already been made available on a publicly accessible web and the results of the analyses will be made available as they are published. The entire database of 'raw' empirical material as well as the "Hermeneutical Unit" – which is the name used in ATLAS-ti for the codified empirical material on which different analyses can be performed – will be made available as well as soon as the codified material has been fully subjected to quality control and the preliminary analysis published by the author.

Although still preliminary, a number of specific conclusions from the analyses can be extracted:

- There is a clearly identifiable general development towards the 'indefinition' of Spain as a political community in the sense that imprecise forms of referring to Spain such as a state or simply as "Spain" are increasing over time in all regions analysed, even in right-wing political parties where one would not expect to find this kind of caution when it comes to defining and defending Spain as a "nation".

- At the same time we see a general tendency towards the strengthening of regional identities. In Catalonia there thus is a clear development from being defined generally as a "nationality" towards the definition as "nation". And in the Valencian region there is a parallel development from a definition as "region" towards being defined mainly as a "nationality".

- Another general conclusion is that the political parties adapted their discourse to the regional setting even as early as in 1979. This might seem unsurprising knowing what kind of institution political parties are, but given the subject theme of these legislative processes it actually means that no political party sticks to a coherent scheme of conceptualizing the co-existent political communities within Spain over a range of different settings. Not even Spain is conceptualised in the same way by the same party in different settings: in some regional settings Spain can be defined as a "nation" and terms like "pluri-national state" are avoided, whereas it is other regional settings is the other way around.

- Far from becoming less complicated since the inauguration of the *Estado de las Autonomías*, the problems with defining Spain in national terms as something other than simply a state thus seem to have increased in a dynamics which has favoured the 'small patria' in the plural or the marked identities over the common or unmarked identity.

- The investigation clearly indicates that the opposed symmetrising and asymmetrising forces in the *Estado de las Autonomías* were working against each other without ever reaching the fundamental compromise-solutions that would have been necessary to secure the survival of the system. Since the very beginning, the functioning of the decentralised State thus seems to have been guided by the pacts and deals between the principal political parties – or their absence – rather than by the institutional setup itself.

Expected final resulted and their potential impact and use

It is one of the main results to have produced a tool that can be used by other researchers to analyse processes in other Spanish contexts as well as in other countries with a minimum number of similar characteristics. Although this study represents the most comprehensive study of the dynamics of development within the State of the Autonomous Communities so far, there still remains many parts still to be investigated, both the similar processes of Statute reform in other regions as well as other processes. With respect to other countries, it is the hope that the tool can be adapted and used to study similar processes over time to identify triggers of change and stability. Although it is impossible to find a completely parallel set of sources since the Spanish constitutional set-up with regions whose constitutionally bounded autonomy arrangements are periodically revised through legislative processes represent a unique case, the tool is adaptable to other circumstances and can be made to look for similar indicators across different sets of analytical axes.

I am building up a network with specialists on other European cases – both similar and dissimilar – with a view to exploiting the results as well as the raw materials produced by the project in as many different settings as possible.