ABSTRACT
The aim of this article is to assess the linkages between the Spanish new parties with groups and civil society. After outlining a short framework on the new linkages between parties and external groups in times of social and political unrest and discussing the case selection, it briefly introduces the classic patterns of interaction between Spain’s mainstream parties, the PP and the PSOE and the main interest groups since the late 1970s. Then, the paper analyses the emerging links of two new parties, Ciudadanos and Podemos, in order to provide a general assessment of the main differences between their linkages and the ones of the traditional parties, and to discuss its possible implications in times of economic hardship. The results do not show strong evidence supporting the idea of a transformation in Spanish party-group linkages: new parties tend to have weaker formal links with external groups, and prioritize their collaboration with new external groups such as identity or youth groups rather than with classic interest groups.

Introduction
The revival of the centre-periphery cleavage since the late 1990s and their intertwined effects with the austerity policies implemented in Spain after the 2008 economic crisis has favoured new forms of societal mobilization and the rise of new social movements and groups such as the indignados (indignants), the Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (Platform of People Affected by Mortgages) or the Catalan and Basque secessionist movements (e.g., Dowling, 2014; Flesher Fominaya, 2015; Oñate Rubalcaba, 2013). As a result, since the mid- and late 2000s, new parties and alliances have been slowly transforming the composition of the multi-level Spanish party system. Interestingly, these new parties were emerging at either the left and right side of the political spectre without posing a real threat for the Spanish mainstream parties till the electoral cycle started with the 2014 European Elections (Cordero and Montero,
Since then, the electoral growth of new parties such as Podemos and Ciudadanos has made a big impact in most of the regional and national party systems (Medina and Correa, 2016; Orriols and Cordero, 2016; Rodon and Hierro, 2016).

Their electoral success raises the question whether these new parties formed in a context of growing unrest and protests in times of economic hardship and several political scandals have been able to form new or alternative linkages with the Spanish civil society. And, to what extent, their electoral breakthrough might have consequences in the country’s public policies. In this respect, it is worth remembering that, as will be briefly pointed out below, in Spain links between mainstream parties and groups have been usually weak and deeply influenced by corporatism (e.g., Molins, Muñoz, and Medina 2016; Royo 2002).

To better understand these changes, the article will mainly address how new parties organize and structure their relationships with external groups and civil society. The first section is dedicated to outline an analytic framework to analyze new parties and groups linkages in times of social discontent. Then, it briefly presents an overview of Spain’s new parties and justifies the case selection. The next sections are devoted to provide both a review of the literature on the linkages between Spain’s mainstream parties and groups and, second, to properly document Ciudadanos’ and Podemos’ relationships with external groups and movements since their inception. That will allow for a more general assessment comparing traditional and new parties, and their possible implications for the Spanish policy process. A short summary will then conclude.

Party-groups linkages in a context of political turmoil

As essential intermediary actors between state and society, one of political parties’ main roles has to do with the representation of people’s demands. That said, their connections with civil society might vary substantially according to different features and the kind of groups and interest they aim to represent. In this sense, the article focuses on how parties connect with social movements, external groups and how they internally try to articulate broad social groups and minorities. Based on scholarly research, Table 1 presents an outline of the main dimensions analysed in this article.

The first dimension, deals with the party origins. Indeed, the literature has highlighted the organizational impacts of new parties emerging with or without social roots (e.g., Bolleyer, 2013). On the other hand, parties sponsoring external groups are a typical strategy in order to gain access to segments of the population with specific interests (Poguntke, 2002: 57; Verge, 2012: 47). However, these penetration strategies involve time and organizational resources, so eventually they might have to be subordinated in order to focus on the electoral competition.
Granting membership and representation rights usually corresponds to penetration strategies of either parties or external groups. Both dimensions involve the recognition of formal (statutory) rights (Poguntke, 2002, 2006; Verge, 2012; Allern and Verge, 2017). Membership rights generally imply that members of external groups enjoy collective membership and are allowed to participate (directly or indirectly) in the decision-making system of the party (and vice versa). Representation rights involve that the elites of the external groups will be ex-officio represented in the party board, other party agencies or the electoral lists (and vice versa). These features indeed portray the formal representation of the power relations between parties and external groups. External groups’ collective membership and representation rights within the party are generally a by-product of their strong involvement during the party’s inception. On the other hand, parties’ representation rights within the external group are rarely given: instead, external groups subordination to parties is generally a hidden feature (e.g., Duverger, 1959).

The third dimension focuses on how parties internally organize their sub-groups and, more broadly, how are they willing to represent social groups. This involves two main dimensions: (a) the creation of sub-groups such as affiliated and ancillary organizations (Poguntke, 2006: 398); (b) since the last decades parties have also started applying quotas to secure and properly represent social groups, and more particularly, women (Allern and Verge 2017, 1). In both cases, they are efforts to diversify their appeal to broader social interests without turning to costly penetration strategies.

Finally, the last dimension refers to the informal relations between new parties, external groups and movements. Although informal relations might also be found in penetration strategies, they are generally the result of acknowledging the mutual independence between parties and other collective actors (Verge,
Informal linkages generally entail agreements not properly formalized in the party statues such as cooperation agreements, joint coordinating committees, routine meetings. They might eventually lead to the sporadic presence of representatives of the external group at the main party bodies and party lists, not ex-officio though. The growing relevance of this dimension contrasts with the problem of how to properly present and systematize the evidences. That is probably why the literature has traditionally focused more on the formal dimensions, although they might be less relevant.

Our main expectation is that Spain’s new parties might have relied more than the mainstream ones on informal linkages with external groups and movements. Likewise, new parties might have engaged less than their mainstream counterparts with classic interest groups (e.g., trade unions, business groups) and more with new kinds of external groups or social movements. This is in line, for example, with Poguntke’s seminal contributions pointing out that formal ties between the Greens and external collateral organizations were weaker compared with traditional mass parties mostly because of their late origins and core ideology (Poguntke, 2002, 2006). Poguntke’s historical institutionalist approach has been complemented by Allern’s study on the new left and new right parties in Norway (Allern, 2013). Relying on surveys, Allern pointed out how Norwegian new parties did build informal links with a wide range of groups, regardless of their ideology. On South European countries, other factors might also reinforce this trend. On the one hand, some new parties might have been promoted by new external interest groups or movements protesting against the effects of the economic crisis, the austerity policies or corruption scandals. The newness and issue orientation of most of this new groups (e.g., protesting against mortgages, education or health cutbacks) might surely have distanced them of more cross-section groups such as Trade Unions and, eventually, to form close bonds with any kind of political parties. On the other hand, new political parties might have tried to mobilize the electorate through more direct channels such as social media and hence devoting more time and resources to their communication strategies than building strong links with other groups.

That said, it is worth mentioning that scholarly research has long stressed the influences of the ideology and the organizational legacy on linkages between parties and groups. The most recent example are probably the results of the Political Party Database project looking at how several political parties seek connections with civil society through formal membership and participation rights. This project presented evidences of declining formal linkages, but also highlighted the influence of the ideology or the party family (Allern and Verge 2017, 17–18). In this sense, Bolleyer and others such as Panebianco have highlighted how new parties promoted by external groups tend to favour close linkages and rely strongly on the resources of such groups. On the other hand, parties based on charismatic or strong party leaderships tend to rely much less on external groups and focus mainly on the electoral competition (Bolleyer,
More recently, several authors have pointed out the relevance of the ideology and the organizational legacy behind some European radical left parties’ societal responses to the crisis (Tsakatika and Lisi, 2013; Charalambous and Lamprianou, 2016, see also the articles of this special issue). According to these previous findings, we should expect some differences among parties in ideological and organizational terms. Hence, new parties with strong social roots might have stronger (formal) linkages than other types of parties, and left parties will have stronger and more diverse links with social groups that liberal parties.

**Case selection**

Since the mid-2000s, several new forces have been making their breakthrough at either the national or the regional levels. Table 2 provides some features of Spain’s main newcomers, excluding electoral coalitions, flash parties, re-brandings and mergers coming from fusions with old parties. Overall, four of them are statewide parties while the other ones are from several regions such as Valencia, Canary Islands, Catalonia and Galicia. Most of them are left or radical left small regionalist parties, while only Foro Asturias (Asturias Forum, FA) and Demòcrates de Catalunya (Democrats of Catalonia, DC) are centre-right regionalist forces.

**Table 2.** New parties’ basic features in Spain (2005–2016).

| Party  | Territory     | Born  | Party family        | National representation (MPs) 2016 | Regional representation (Number of Regions with RMPs) by 2016 |
|--------|---------------|-------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| Cs     | Spain         | 2006  | Liberals            | Yes (32)                          | Yes (13)                                                    |
| UPyD   | Spain         | 2007  | Liberals            | No                                | No                                                           |
| Podemos| Spain         | 2014  | Radical Left        | Yes (45)                          | Yes (15)                                                    |
| Equo   | Spain         | 2011  | Ecologist           | Yes (3)                           | Yes (5)                                                     |
| Compromís| Valencia      | 2010  | Regionalist/Left    | Podemos’ ally                      | Podemos’ ally                                                |
| FA     | Asturias      | 2011  | Regionalist/Conservative/Left | Yes (1) | Yes (1)                                       |
| NC     | Canary Islands| 2005  | Regionalist/Left    | PP’s ally                          | Yes (1)                                                     |
| CUP    | Catalonia     | 2006  | Regionalist/Left    | PSOE’s ally                        | Yes (1)                                                     |
| DC     | Catalonia     | 2015  | Regionalist/DC      | No                                | Yes (1) CDC’s Ally                                          |
| MES    | Catalonia     | 2015  | Regionalist/Left    | No                                | Yes (1) JxS’ ally                                           |
| Anova  | Galicia       | 2012  | Regionalist/Left    | –                                 | –                                                           |
| En Marea| Galicia       | 2016  | Regionalist/Left    | En Marea’s ally                    | Yes (1) En Marea’s ally                                     |

Source: Authors’ own.
Notes: N.A: Information Not available. Acronyms’ list at the end of the article.
Statewide parties are split between the liberal *Ciudadanos* and *Unión Progreso y Democracia* (Union, Progress and Democracy, UPyD) and the leftist *Podemos* and *Equo*. A large amount was born after 2008, once the global economic crisis started, but five parties were created years before. Some parties such *Equo*, *DC* and *Moviment d’Esquerres* (Left Movement) have also been involved in several electoral alliances. Actually, none of the three has so far contested elections alone. The regional and national electoral fortunes of these parties are quite diverse. Most of the statewide parties have representation at both the regional and the national level. The main exception is *UPyD* that has lost all its representatives in the 2015 and 2016 elections and only has one EMP left. All regional parties have RMPs in their regions, but they only have representation at the national level if are involved in electoral alliances with statewide parties.

Among these parties, *Podemos* and *Ciudadanos* have been by far the most successful newcomers in the Spanish landscape, and share common features but also some relevant dissimilarities. Both parties have aimed to represent ‘new politics’, achieving support among the young and more-educated electorate, and making their electoral breakthrough at either the UE, regional and local arenas, achieving not only institutional representation but political relevance in all political levels (e.g., Rodríguez-Teruel, Barrio, and Barberà 2016; Rodríguez Teruel and Barrio 2016). However, they clearly differ in their ideological scope: while *Podemos*’ grassroots and voters come mostly from the left electorate deceived by PSOE and IU, *Ciudadanos* has consolidate a centre party position that has also attracted many centre-right exPP voters.

The data and evidences for building each case study come from different sources. When possible, indirect academic references (articles, books) have been in use to ascertain the paper or different external groups in their origins. When there were no academic references, current affair books and newspapers have been look up. The analysis of the formal relationships and quotas between parties and groups, sub-groups and latent groups has relied on the party statutes and, when possible, on other regulations (agreements between them, etc.). If no formal documents were available, the relationship has been tracked by insights from newspapers. The informal links have been documented through newspapers and an analysis of the public records of MPs and RPMS of these parties.

**Spain’s mainstream parties and external groups relationships**

Linkages between some contemporary Spanish political parties and interest groups have roots in the late XIXth century. The most well-known example is the extremely close relationship between the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party, PSOE) and the Unión General de Trabajadores (General Workers’ Union, UGT). That said, the Francoist authoritarian regime deeply influenced the relationships between left political parties and interest groups. First, for its corporatist, state structure banned all independent interest
organizations with the main exception of the Catholic Church and its collateral organizations. Second, because demobilizing civil society was one of the regimes’ main priorities. Prohibiting parties and interest groups blurred the differences between them, which favoured that their political and organizational strategies were intertwined: most of the PSOE and the UGT leadership were exiled and prioritized political not labour issues. On the other hand, the Partido Comunista de España (Communist Party of Spain, PCE) was the main active opposition force to Francoism and so became Comisiones Obreras (Workers’ Commissions, CCOO) a semi-clandestine and formally non-partisan union promoted by communists and left-wing Catholics in order to infiltrate the authoritarian corporatist structure (Hamann 2011: chap. 2; Martinez Lucio 1990). The PCE also promoted the growth and strongly cooperated with the neighbourhood and feminist movement (Encarnación 2003; Hipsher 1996). The PCE’s infiltration strategy was copied by the PSOE and, later on by right parties such as the PP (Verge 2012).

During the transition towards democracy left political parties, unions and social movements joined forces to promote political change. Till the 1977 elections most labour conflicts were politicized into pro-democratic demonstrations, and unions were very active in the democratic opposition cooperation structures such as the so-called “Platajunta” (Joint Platform of the Democratic Opposition). After the elections, left political parties and unions leaders were deeply involved in the broad social pacts (e.g., the Moncloa Agreements) that underpinned the elite settlement on the 1978 Constitution and on democratic corporatism as policy-making method (Gunther 1992; Royo 2002). Unions were also key actors in moderating the demands of the population and containing political discontent or unrest. Unlike unions and left parties, centre and right parties like the governing Unión del Centro Democrático (Union of the Democratic Centre, UCD) or the Alianza Popular (Popular Alliance, AP) had barely formal relationships with the newly formed business or agricultural organizations, such as the Confederación Española de Organizaciones Empresariales (Spanish Confederation of Employers’ Organizations, CEOE). The CEOE’s and other business interest groups’ linkages with the centre and right parties remained largely through informal channels such as cooperation on the development of policy proposals and the drafting of the party platform, through (anonymous) donations to both parties, or through the discrete recruitment or endorsement of candidates for public office (Hamann 2011: chap. 3; Mella 1989). A similar approach was adopted by the Catholic church’ leaders. They fully committed to a democratic regime, but refrained to give any formal endorsement to a particular political party, even to the Christian Democratic ones. On the other hand, their conservative views on morality and education informally brought closer many catholic groups such as Opus Dei to right wing parties (Brassloff 1998: chap. 5; Linz 1980).

One of the social consequences of Spain’s political instability and authoritarian past was a weak civil society and low levels of civic engagement (e.g.,
That was reflected with low levels of interest groups and even social movements activism till the late 1980s. Political parties faced this weakness with two main strategies. The first was to increase its dependence on public funding in order to compensate the weak contributions of their party members, and to allow them enough resources for their electoral campaigns and, more importantly, for the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary organizations (e.g., Biezen 2003: chap. 4). The other strategy was the promotion of their own internal groups (e.g., women, youth, elders) in order to extend their social reach. That was the case, for example, of the PSOE promoting NGO’s such as Movimiento por la Paz (Peace Movement) or feminist groups such as Federación de Mujeres Progresistas (Federation of Progressive Women, FMP). The links with the FMP and other groups were so close that the PSOE even granted them collective membership. The PCE used a similar strategy sponsoring NGOs and strengthening the work within social movements till the mid 1990s (Verge 2012, 50–52). This penetration strategy was quite useful in a context of low social engagement and allowed political parties to widen the reach of their political strategies and to co-opt new candidates and government officials.

By the mid-1980s, trade unions links with left-wing political parties changed considerably. The UGT leadership felt increasingly uncomfortable with the PSOE’s economic policies designed to join the European Community. By 1987 the UGT leader resigned as socialist MP after withdrawing his support to the budget, and by December 1988, a general strike was called by the two main unions: UGT and CCOO. From then on, any formal link between the UGT and the PSOE was broken (Gillespie 1990). The main impact of the socialist break-up was a rapprochement between the two main Spanish unions. They downplayed their ideological and electoral differences and reinforced cooperation and political autonomy. This also affected CCOO’s involvement in the formation of Izquierda Unida (United Left, IU), the PCE’s successor party. One of the main consequences of this shift was the stalemate of social concentration policies till the mid-1990s (Hamann 2011: chap. 6; Royo 2000: chap. 6).

The problems to soundly articulate a political alternative to the PSOE rise considerable conflicts in the right. Aznar was the first party leader able to unite all the centrist and conservative factions and to become a real alternative to the PSOE governments. In its way to the power, the PP also tried to emulate the penetration strategies of the left parties through NGO’s and feminist groups such as Mujeres Conservadoras (Conservative Women), but its main success was gaining the support of already existing Catholic groups and victims of the Basque terrorist group ETA. Although they provided some candidates and help to forward the conservative agenda, most of this new groups also kept their formal autonomy from the party (Verge 2012). The business organizations such as the CEOE shared the PP’s economic policy reforms and helped to move them forward through the social pacts (Nonell and Medina 2016).
Since the mid-1990s, mainstream parties started to implement collaboration strategies with emerging interest groups and social movements (pacifism, global justice, LGTB). That led to minor organizational changes such as designing specific posts in the party executive in charge of promoting meetings, or trying to involve these groups in drafting some parts of the party manifesto; designing new internal organizations in order to promote the participation of specific groups inside of the party; promoting closer collaboration through the parliamentary party in order to forward their demands (Verge 2012, 52–55). Both the cooperation with these new social movements and the internal recognition inside the party led to a new rights policy agenda that was a key feature of the Zapatero’s government between 2004 and 2011.

The economic crisis and the adoption since 2010 of harsh austerity policies by the two main parties, PSOE and PP, have led to important changes in the Spanish politics. Confidence in all institutions dropped, but particularly for the two main parties (e.g., Urquizu 2016). The main Trade Unions, UGT and CCOO strongly opposed the policy shift and called for several general strikes between 2010 and 2012. The big differences between the unions and the business associations (and the government) led to a new stalemate of the social dialogue since the early 2010s (Medina, Molins, and Navarro Gómez 2013). However, the main protests against austerity policies were led by the Indignados, a new movement formed around 2011 and composed by a myriad of groups such as the Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (Platform of People Affected by Morgatges, PAH). The Indignados prominence was at the expense of minor left parties such as Izquierda Unida and the two main unions, involved in several corruption scandals. In fact, as has been stated in the previous section, most of the Indignados groups quickly connected with Podemos through overlapping memberships (Calvo and Alvarez 2015; Martín 2015; della Porta et al. 2017).

**New parties and external groups in Spain: a first qualitative assessment**

**Podemos**

The literature has documented at least two main groups involved in the inception of the party (e.g., Gómez-Reino and Llamazares, 2015; Torreblanca, 2015). The first one was Izquierda Anticapitalista (Anticapitalist Left, IA), a tiny party from Trotskyite roots that contested the 2009 EU elections. IA was mainly responsible for drafting the political manifest that launched Podemos. Due to the fact that Podemos’ membership has been based on individual basis since its very inception, IA members had to register as new members of the party. After Podemos’ first conference in late 2014, IA was dissolve as a party. The second and most important one was a group of academics based at the Complutense University of Madrid and lead by Pablo Iglesias that were also involved at the Fundación CEPS, a think tank of the University of Valencia involved in political consulting.
with several Latin American governments. *Fundación CEPS* was dissolved by March 2016. The Complutense group had also links with an alternative TV producer called *La Tuerka* (the Nut). *La Tuerka* was instrumental in training Podemos’ spokespersons and spreading their ideas through the internet.  

Against common wisdom, the role of the Indignados movement in Podemos’ origins is not straightforward (Calvo and Alvarez, 2015; Lobera, 2015; Martín, 2015). Podemos party leaders were not spokespersons of the Indignados main groups such as Democracia Real Ya (Real Democracy Now, DRY), Juventud sin Futuro (Youth without Future, JSF) or the Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (Platform of People Affected by Mortgages, PAH). In addition, Podemos has not so far reached formal ties with any of these groups and has not received their public backing. However, the connexion between the party and the movement has involved more than ideological proximity as many of the Indignados groups and Podemos’ branches overlapped at the local level, particularly after Podemos first conference (Martín, 2015: 108). The personal connections are easily traceable because most of Podemos’ officials are proud to highlight their indignados’ backgrounds in their biographies.

So far, Podemos’ ties with the Sindicato Andaluz de Trabajadores (Andalusian Workers’ Trade Union, SAT) is the more relevant example of cooperation with an external collateral organization. The SAT is one of the most important farmhand trade unions in Spain. Up to now, there is no written agreement between them, so they are not formally affiliated organizations although the SAT has publically backed Podemos in several elections since 2015. On the other hand, their ideological affinity has also led to partial overlapping between their members. That is how the controversial SAT leader, Diego Cañamero, could contest against Pablo Iglesias for Podemos’ national top candidacy in July 2015. By 2016, Cañamero became a Podemos’ MP. Moreover, at least one of Podemos’ Andalusian RMPs has also ties with the SAT. Overall, the SAT seems to have successfully achieved relative influence over Podemos on some issues while keeping formal distance between both organizations.

Podemos’ ties with other organizations such as the tiny trade union Somos (We are) or the still forming youth group Jóvenes en Pie (Youth on Foot) rise questions on the external nature of both collateral groups. This is because both have in common being promoted by Podemos grassroots members. Despite their website platforms are silent on the extent of their links with the party, their slogans do resemble the ones of Podemos, which might suggest that are instrumental platforms controlled by the party. On the other hand, neither Somos, nor Jóvenes en Pie have any formal agreement with the party and their societal influence is negligible.

So far, Podemos statutes have not promoted any specific sub-group. Meaningfully, the only exception is the treatment given to Podemos en el Exterior, the party expats sub-organization. To belong to the sub-group, it is compulsory to previously register as a Podemos member, so the sub-group and the party
membership are completely overlapping. The sub group has branches (Círculos) in several countries and by 2015 elected their representative that has access to the party highest representative body (Consejo Ciudadano). Podemos Madrid regional branch promoted by mid-2016 a youth sub-group called Marea Joven (‘Young Tide). However, the organization is still forming and has no formal rights granted.

Finally, Podemos has granted quotas for women not only for the electoral lists (as it is required by law), but for all the regional party agencies. The main exception has been the election of the first highest representative agency and its party board, which will probably be addressed in the coming party conferences. The selection of Podemos collective bodies and party lists is made through party primaries using the Dowdall formula, something that has not been easy to combine with the use of quotas.

A key instrument in Podemos’ relationship with the abovementioned broad range of new social movements and external groups has been the use of the social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter). In this sense, these new ICTs have been less relevant at the vertex of the organization than at the party on the ground. Podemos’ blurred definition of membership, that just requires online registration and a mobile phone number has reached large amounts of the people, and the use of new social media have allowed the horizontal cooperation and collective action between its party members, the Circles (semi-internal party agencies where Podemos’ members and non-members can interact), and the external groups and social movements. The use of “traditional”/vertical (emailing lists, websites) and new/horizontal (apps, social media) ICTs has also been instrumental in recruiting, organizing and mobilizing its own members. In this respect, Podemos has promoted the use of several platforms and apps such as Reddit, Plaza.podemos.info, Agora Voting, Appgree, Loomio (Torreblanca, 2015; della Porta et al., 2017).

Ciudadanos

The origins of Ciudadanos is closely linked to the reform of the Catalan statute by 2003. The party inception was preceded by the emergence of a group of activists in Barcelona in June 2005 calling for the creation of a new political party. The manifesto was signed by several academics and intellectuals criticizing the Catalan nationalism, the political corruption in Catalonia and the regional government’s linguistic policy. Several days after being registered, more than 2300 people joined the manifesto, being 300 of them from the rest of Spain (Baras and Orriols, 2007). Several months afterwards, a second manifesto set the programmatic ideas of the new party. By then, this promoting group had 39 branches that later on became the germ of the future party. By 2006, the new party actively campaigned against the reform of the Catalan Statute approved
by the Catalan and Spanish parliaments. Few weeks afterwards, \textit{Ciudadanos} was born as a formal political organization.

Some of \textit{Ciudadanos}’ main sponsors such as Francesc de Carreras or José Domingo had previously been linked to other groups opposed to the Catalan government linguistic policy such as \textit{Foro Babel} (Babel Forum) or the \textit{Asociación por la Tolerancia} (Association for the Tolerance). Once the secessionist process started in Catalonia by the early 2010s, \textit{Ciudadanos} and other statewide parties have been involved in the creation of a new external group called \textit{Sociedad Civil Catalana} (Catalan Civil Society, SCC). The links between SCC and \textit{Ciudadanos} are close but informal. José Domingo (one of \textit{Ciudadanos}’ first RMPs) is now on the board of SCC and Susana Bertrán (one of SCC leading figures) is now serving as an RMP elected by \textit{Ciudadanos}. Despite that both groups have partial overlapping of membership and supporters, both are independent organizations and neither \textit{Ciudadanos} nor SCC recognize collective membership in their statutes.

After some failed attempts, by 2013, \textit{Ciudadanos} successfully mobilized the discontent with Spain’s mainstream parties and quickly spread its presence in all Spain. Again, the spear head of the party was a newly created an instrumental group called \textit{Movimiento Ciudadano} (Citizen’s Movement) lead by the journalist José Carlos Girauta and a former PSOE’s Minister. This group firmly opposed political corruption, proposed institutional reforms and the defence of Spain’s unity and diversity. Once again, \textit{Movimiento Ciudadano} was a way to expand and recruit party members from civil society. Most of the members that joined \textit{Movimiento Ciudadano} were later on registered as members of \textit{Ciudadanos}, while many of their leading figures became party candidates for the 2014 EU Elections and for the 2015 local and regional elections.

\textit{Ciudadanos}’ party statutes do not recognize any intra-party agency. However, the party does have a youth sub-group called \textit{Agrupación de Jóvenes} where people under 30 are able to register. Hence, the membership between the party and the sub-organization is completely overlapped. The youth organization have its own representative bodies but they have not representation rights in any party agency. Furthermore, \textit{Ciudadanos} website also promotes another sub-group so-called Red Naranja particularly designed to attract young social media activists.\footnote{So far, the \textit{Red Naranja} seems more a loose network of activists than a proper sub-group. Finally, \textit{Ciudadanos} internal regulations do not mention any kind of women’s quotas for candidates or representation rights in any internal party agency. That allows the party board with high room of manoeuvre to comply with the Spanish legislation on women’s quotas.} Unlike \textit{Podemos}, \textit{Ciudadanos}’ membership is defined by compulsory fees, which has substantially limited the party’s growth both in Catalonia and Spain. Although the party also has social media followers in Facebook and Twitter, the party on the ground has made a very limited use of new ICTs to connect with civil society. This is partly because of the party’s strong hierarchical and
centralized organization that has prevented *entrism* and enhanced party cohesion, but substantially limited their party members’ initiatives.

**Has anything changed? Comparing mainstream and new parties’ linkages with external groups and civil society in times of social unrest**

As pointed out in the introduction, our main expectations were that Spanish new parties would be more engaged than their mainstream counterparts in informal rather than formal linkages with external groups and civil society, and with new groups or social movements rather than the classic interest groups (e.g., Trade Unions). We also estimated that these linkages could be influenced by the parties’ ideology and organizational legacy. After describing and summarizing the main interactions in new and mainstream parties, the rest of this section is devoted to provide a short comparison and assessment.

Spanish mainstream parties have mainly advanced towards collaboration patterns with external groups. Interestingly, both Podemos and Ciudadanos have followed the same collaborative approach of the mainstream counterparts. In line with the results from other comparative studies, they have not particularly engaged in formal relationships with external groups. Instead, they seem to have opted predominantly for informal relations and cooperation between equals. Unlike other new regional parties (such as the CUP or Compromís, not analysed in this article) that have granted collective membership and ex-officio representation to external groups, both Ciudadanos and Podemos have required the demise of all groups and parties involved in their creation, although this doesn’t always has stopped the activity of some of them as it is the case of Izquierda Anticapitalista within Podemos. Only individual membership is allowed and no ex-officio representation is granted so far to the external groups.

On the other hand, Spanish new parties seem to differ from the mainstream PP and PSOE (and even IU) in the type of external groups in which they are cooperating. Instead of classic interest groups such as unions or business groups, new parties have formally or informally engaged with new external groups and social movements such as the Indignados (Podemos and other regionalist parties such as Compromís or En Marea, not analysed here) or new regional identity groups (that is the case of Ciudadanos and all the Catalan new parties). This indeed confirms our expectations but poses questions on whether this is due to their newness, or constitutes a deliberate strategy to limit their engagement with classic external groups. In addition, it is worth mentioning that Podemos (and others such as Compromís, not included) also seem to opt for an alternative penetration strategy sponsoring new interest groups such a small trade unions and several regional youth groups with few or no formal links to the party, but with overlapping membership. This pattern resembles the strategy followed by the Communist Party and the PSOE till the mid-1980s, but seems still early
to confirm it. Ciudadanos seemed to follow a similar path with its Movimiento Ciudadano, but this was an instrumental move to expand through Spain.

New and mainstream parties also seem to differ on how the economic crisis has impacted on the strength of their linkages with civil society. The left parties, PSOE and IU, are emerging with weaker relationships because they had troubles connecting with the Indignados movement and with the anti-austerity wave, now mainly linked with Podemos and other left-wing regionalist groups (Compromís, En Marea, the CUP, etc.). The PSOE also had to confront the opposition of the two main unions, UGT and CCOO, to its policies. Furthermore, this statement might even be true for the PP due to its involvement in several corruption scandals and, more importantly, to its front opposition to any institutional reform. This could have (partially) alienated the support of some liberal and pro-reformist groups that now might be looking forward to connect with the newly formed Ciudadanos. A prominent example of that is the broken links between the PP and its main think tank, the Fundación para el Análisis y los Estudios Sociales (Foundation for Analysis and Social Studies, FAES), lead by Spain’s former prime minister Aznar, and now closer to Ciudadanos.

Furthermore, some small differences might be pointed when assessing the kind of sub-party groups promoted by new or mainstream parties. Youth groups are indeed the preferred target group in most parties. However, new parties have also promoted other categories such as the expats in Podemos and the digital activists in Ciudadanos that do not play a similar role within the established parties. Interestingly, none of the new parties has created a sub-group for the women, something that their mainstream counterparts do have for quite some time. This seems to be related with the existence of gender quotas and might reveal an organizational trade-off in the new parties between their recognition as a sub-group or as a latent group (quotas). Indeed, all new and mainstream Spanish parties comply with the legislation on gender quotas for candidates. However, this does not mean that women as a latent group have been equally recognized. The relevance of the party family and the ideology seems the key factor here. Leftist parties such as Podemos (and others such as Compromís, or the CUP), have formalized quotas in their candidate and party executive selection rules while the liberal Ciudadanos leave this procedure to their party boards.

Conclusions

This article aimed to assess whether Spain’s new parties might have forged alternative linkages with external groups and civil society vis a vis the main traditional parties, and whether their own ideology and origins might have also played a relevant influence in their party-group links. The results do not show strong evidence supporting the idea of a transformation in Spanish party-group linkages. Spain’s new parties have hardly formalized relations with external groups and, hence, followed mainstream parties’ patterns of collaboration. And yet, some
distinctive configurations seem to be on the rise. New parties have engaged less with classic interest groups such as Trade Unions and prioritized their collaboration with new external groups such as identity or youth groups. In addition, some parties such as Podemos have also tried to implement a penetration strategy sponsoring the creation of some small external groups.

Despite being modest changes, these innovations could also anticipate more relevant implications in the future. On the one hand, Podemos and Ciudadanos arrival could favour a more inclusive policy-making approach for new groups and social movements such as the Indignados, and help them to channel their demands in the policy process. Nevertheless, this potential for change is still obstructed by the lack of cabinet responsibilities of new parties at the regional or national executives. On the other hand, the still ongoing polarizing context, now amplified by the centre-periphery divided and the challenges of the Catalan secessionist movement, somehow might reduce the extent for collaboration between the mainstream parties and the new ones still in the opposition. If this polarization permeates to the corporatist policy-making system might stall the future social dialogue as has so far blocked all attempts of institutional reform.

Conversely, the presence of strong new parties makes parliamentary majorities harder to reach and this might favour, in the coming future, the need of greater political consensus (and reforms) that may also extend to the social dialogue.

**List of acronyms**

| Acronym | Name (Spanish) | Name (English) |
|---------|----------------|----------------|
| Anova   | Anova – Irmandade Nacionalista | Anova – Nationalist Brotherhood |
| Cs      | Ciudadanos      | Citizens       |
| CCOO    | Comisiones Obreras | Workers’ Commissions |
| CDC     | Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya | Catalonia’s Democratic Party |
| CEOE    | Confederación Española de Organizaciones Empresariales | Spanish Confederation of Employers’ Organizations |
| Compromís | Compromís | Commitment |
| CUP     | Candidatura d’Unitat Popular | Popular Unity Candidature |
| DC      | Demòcrates de Catalunya | Democrats of Catalonia |
| En Marea | En Marea | In Tide |
| Equo    | Equo            | Equo           |
| FA      | Foro Asturias   | Asturias Forum |
| FAES    | Fundación para el Análisis y los Estudios Sociales | Foundation for Analysis and Social Studies |
| JxSí    | Junts pel Sí    | Together for the Yes |
| MES     | Moviment d’Esquerres | Left Movement |
| NC      | Nueva Canarias  | New Canaries |
| Podemos | Podemos        | We Can         |
| AP/PP   | Alianza Popular/Partido Popular | Popular Alliance (later) Popular Party |
| PSOE    | Partido Socialista Obrero Español | Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party |
| SAT     | Sindicato Andaluz de Trabajadores | Andalusian Workers’ Union |
| SCC     | Societat Civil Catalana | Catalan Civil Society |
| UCD     | Unión de Centro Democrático | Democratic Centre Union |
| UGT     | Unión General de Trabajadores | General Workers’ Union |
| UPyD    | Unión Progreso y Democracia | Union, Progress and Democracy |
Notes

1. On the contrary, from a sociological perspective, some scholars have defended that the return of democracy was the consequence of the strengthening of Spanish civil society, which eroded the legitimacy of the authoritarian regime and finally paved the way for a transition to democracy (Pérez Díaz 1988). In this perspective, the link between parties and civil society in Spain would have been more problematic.

2. The Complutense group has been repeatedly accused of being financed with money from other countries (e.g., Riobóo 2014), though this also remains a very controversial issue.

3. Martín stated that the first Citizens Council, Podemos’ main representative body, had 13 members with ties to the Indignados movement, 7 to JSF, 6 to several student movements (such as Contrapoder) and 3 to the PAH (Martín, 2015: 109). The biographies can be found on Podemos website: https://transparencia.podemos.info (Accessed 15/08/2016).

4. The SAT promoted and retained control over a tiny political party called the Candidatura Unitaria de Trabajadores (Workers’ Unitary Candidature) that mostly contested the local elections. Both the SAT and the CUT had strong ties with Izquierda Unida (United Left, IU) (Morales, 1998). By 2015 both organizations decided to withdraw their support from IU and backed Podemos.

5. Somos got 122 out of 200,000 representatives in the union elections held during 2015.

6. Between 2013 and 2015 around 200,000 persons decided to live abroad. They were mostly young professionals to whom Podemos tried to appeal.

7. The list with the branches can be accessed through Podemos website: https://exterior.podemos.info/circulos/ (Accessed 15/08/2016).

8. Namely, defence of citizen’s rights against territories rights; equality between citizens of different territories; liberty, bilingualism (Catalan and Spanish); laicism; defence of Spain’s Constitution and its sovereignty, etc. See: http://web.archive.org/web/20111216224443/http://www.ciudadansdecatalunya.info/main.php?id_pagina=13 (Accessed 15/08/2016).

9. See https://www.ciudadanos-cs.org/red-naranja (Accessed 15/08/2016).

10. The expats are also a relevant group in other new parties not examined in the paper such as Foro Asturias or Nueva Canarias.

Acknowledgements

This work was supported by the Portuguese Science and Technology Foundation (Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia – FCT) via the project PTDC/IVC-CPO/1864/2014. I also received funding from the University of Valencia via a Special Actions (Accions Especials) 2017 project.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

ORCID

Oscar Barberà http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2424-2605
Juan Rodríguez-Teruel http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7112-986X
References

Allern, E.H. (2013) The contemporary relationship of ‘New Left’ and ‘New Right’ parties with interest groups: exceptional or mainstream? The case of Norway’s Socialist Left and Progress Party, Scandinavian Political Studies, 36(1), pp. 67–90. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9477.2012.00297.x.

Allern, E.H. & T. Verge (2017) Still connecting with society? A Cross-sectional study of political parties’ formal links with social groups in the 21st century, in: S.E. Scarrow, P.D. Webb & T. Poguntke (Eds) Organizing Political Parties. Representation, Participation, and Power, pp. 106–135 (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Baras, M. & G. Orriols (2007) Ciutadans de Catalunya: ¿Cómo son los fundadores del nuevo partido político catalán? Paper presented at the 8th Conference of the Spanish Political Science Association, Valencia, 18–20 September.

van Biezen, I. (2003) Political Parties in New Democracies (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan).

Bolleyer, N. (2013) New Parties in Old Party Systems. Persistence and Decline in Seventeen Democracies (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Brassloff, A. (1998) Religion and Politics in Spain. The Spanish Church in Transition, 1962–96 (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press).

Calvo, K. & I. Alvarez (2015) Limitaciones y exclusiones en la institucionalización de la indignación: del 15-M a Podemos, Revista Española de Sociología, 24, pp. 115–122.

Charalambous, G. & I. Lamprianou (2016) Societal responses to the post-2008 economic crisis among South European and Irish radical left parties: continuity or change and why? Government and Opposition, 51(2), pp. 261–293. doi:10.1017/gov.2014.35.

Cordero, G. & J.R. Montero (2015) Against bipartism, towards dealignment? The 2014 European election in Spain, South European Society and Politics, 20(3), pp. 357–379. doi:10.1080/13608746.2015.1053679.

Dowling, A. (2014) Accounting for the turn towards secession in Catalonia, International Journal of Iberian Studies, 27(2), pp. 219–234. doi:10.1386/ijis.27.2-3.219.

Duverger, M. (1959) Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State (London: Methuen).

Encarnación, O.G. (2003) The Myth of Civil Society Social Capital and Democratic Consolidation in Spain and Brazil (New York and Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan). doi:10.1057/9781403981646.

Flesher Fominaya, C. (2015) Redefining the crisis/redefining democracy: mobilising for the right to housing in Spain’s PAH movement, South European Society and Politics, 20(4), pp. 465–485. doi:10.1080/13608746.2015.1058216.

Gillespie, R. (1990) The break-up of the ‘Socialist Family’: party-union relations in Spain, 1982–89, West European Politics, 13(1), pp. 47–62.

Gómez-Reino, Margarita. & Llamazares, Iván. (2015). ‘Left populism in Spain? The rise of podemos,’ team populism May 2015 conference. Solving the Puzzles of Populism, London, available at https://populism.byu.edu/Pages/Publications.aspx (accessed 31 May 2016).

Gunther, R. (1992) Spain: the very model of the modern elite settlement, in: J. Higley & R. Gunther (Eds) Elites and democratic consolidation in Latin America and Southern Europe, pp. 36–80 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Hamann, K. (2011) The Politics of Industrial Relations: Labor Unions in Spain (London and New York: Routledge).

Hipsher, P.L. (1996) Democratization and the decline of urban social movements in Chile and Spain, Comparative Politics, 28(3), p. 273. doi:10.2307/422208.
Linz, J.J. (1980) Religion and politics in Spain: from conflict to consensus above cleavage, Social Compass, 27(2–3), pp. 255–277. doi:10.1177/003776868002700207.

Lobera, J. (2015) De movimientos a partidos. La cristalización electoral de la protesta, Revista Española de Sociología, 24, pp. 97–105.

Lucio, M.M. (1990) Trade unions and communism in Spain: the role of the CCOO in the political projects of the left, Journal of Communist Studies, 6(4), pp. 80–99. doi:10.1080/13523279008415056.

Martín, I. (2015) Podemos y otros modelos de partido-movimiento, Revista Española de Sociología, 24, pp. 107–114.

Medina, I. & P. Correa (2016) The 2015 Spanish election: the times they are a’ changing, Regional & Federal Studies, 26(3), pp. 407–417. doi:10.1080/13597566.2016.1176920.

Nonell, R. & I. Medina (2016). Las organizaciones empresariales en España, in: J.M. Molins, L. Muñoz & I. Medina (Eds) Los grupos de interés en España: La influencia de los lobbies en la política española. Organización, institucionalización y estrategias de influencia (Madrid: Tecnos).

Pérez Díaz, V. (1988) The Return of Civil Society. The Emergence of Democratic Spain (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press).

Poguntke, T. (2002). Party organizational linkage: Parties without firm social roots? in: K. R. Luther & F. Müller-Rommel (Eds) Political parties in the new Europe: Political and analytical challenges, pp. 43–62. (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Rodríguez Teruel, J. & A. Barrio (2016) Going national: Ciudadanos from Catalonia to Spain, South European Society and Politics, 21(4), pp. 587–607. doi:10.1080/13608746.2015.1119646.
Rodríguez-Teruel, J., A. Barrio & O. Barberà (2016) Fast and furious: Podemos’ quest for power in multi-level Spain, *South European Society and Politics*, 21(4), pp. 561–585. doi:10.1080/13608746.2016.1250397.

Royo, S. (2000) *From Social Democracy to Neoliberalism. The Consequences of Party Hegemony in Spain*, 1982–1996 (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press).

Royo, S. (2002) *A New Century of Corporatism? Corporatism in Southern Europe, Spain and Portugal in Comparative Perspective* (Westport: Praeger).

Torreblanca, J.I. (2015) *Asaltar los cielos: Podemos o la política después de la crisis* (Barcelona: Debate).

Tsakatika, M. & M. Lisi (2013) 'Zippin’ up My boots, goin’ back to my roots': radical left parties in Southern Europe, *South European Society and Politics*, 18(1), pp. 1–19. doi:10.1080/13608746.2012.758447.

Urquizu, I. (2016) *La crisis de representación en España* (Madrid: Los Libros de la Catarata).

Verge, T. (2012) Party strategies towards civil society in new democracies. The Spanish case, *Party Politics*, 18(1), pp. 45–60. doi:10.1177/1354068811422648.